



March 9, 2016

Dear Friends in Christ,

As you are probably aware, the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania published a report of the Thirty-Seventh Statewide Investigating Grand Jury on March 1, 2016. It reported the unconscionable behavior of clergy who abused children and young people in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown and also addressed how diocesan and local civil officials responded to the evidence of abuse in the diocese.

To say I am disturbed by this report does not begin to describe my level of anger, shame and disgust with the findings. My heart goes out to all the victims whose traumatic experiences, perpetrated by predatory priests, have led to unbelievable pain. The report indicates that the reputation of the Church, sadly, was at times put before the needs of innocent children by people entrusted with their protection.

I pray for the victims of the abuse described in the Grand Jury Report and for all victims of clergy misconduct toward children and young people wherever and whenever it has occurred. I ask each of you reading this letter to pray for their healing from the sins and abuses committed against their innocence by our Church's spiritual leaders.

I am reminded of the statement of Our Lord: "For there is nothing hidden that will not become visible, and nothing secret that will not be known and come to light" (Luke 8:17). I believe that shedding light on dark situations will show us the path to walk forward because Jesus also said, "(T)he truth will set you free" (John 8:32).

The Grand Jury Report makes it clear that the investigative process was not an attempt to denigrate the good and noble faith of our Catholic Church. Yet many of us in the Church may feel some shame by association. This is natural. May we be strengthened by our faith in Jesus Christ.

In addition to the direct victims of clergy abuse, I am also praying for the victims' families, the faithful members of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, its good priests and deacons, the outstanding employees and volunteers of the diocese, its parishioners, and for its shepherd, Bishop Mark Bartchak. May the People of God in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown continue on a forward path to ensure that what is detailed in that report never happens again. May they find their direction in Christ, the Good Shepherd.

I was a pastor before I was a bishop. I was a campus minister before I was a pastor. I was a member of a parish before I was ordained a priest. I was a young person before I took on the responsibilities of adulthood. I understand the vulnerabilities of those who are weak and defenseless. I accept the responsibility to protect and defend them.



As Bishop of the Diocese of Greensburg, I have reviewed how our diocese deals with cases of clergy sexual misconduct with children and young people. I can assure you that no one is serving in active ministry as a priest or deacon in our diocese who has a credible accusation or has a criminal record related to child sexual abuse.

All clergy, employees and volunteers who work in the diocese, its parishes, schools or related entities have passed criminal background checks and successfully completed VIRTUS child protection training and mandated reporter training. Whether clergy or laity, employee or volunteer, every accusation of suspected child abuse will continue to be reported to PA ChildLine and local civil authorities for investigation according to the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

I want to be very clear about this. Protecting children and young people who come to any of our parishes or church entities has been, and will continue to be, one of my top priorities. In fact, protecting children wherever they may be, in public or private schools, on playgrounds or in the family home, should be a top priority for all of us. This scourge of child abuse, which is so prevalent in our society, must be removed everywhere it exists. As members of the Church, we must offer the grace and healing of Jesus Christ to anyone harmed by the evil of child abuse.

We are all responsible for the care of children and young people and must always remain vigilant. If you see something, say something. If you suspect that a child or young person has been abused by anyone, you should contact ChildLine immediately at 1-800-932-0313. You can reach someone there 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Additionally, if the suspected abuser is functioning in a parish, school or diocesan position as clergy, religious, paid staff or volunteer, you are also requested to contact the Bishop's Delegate for Matters of Sexual Misconduct only after you have called the ChildLine number and made a report there. The Bishop's Delegate may be reached at 724-837-0901, ext. 1221.

If you have ever been abused by a priest, deacon, employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Greensburg, please accept my heartfelt apology and sincere desire for your healing. Let us know if we can help you in any way. Please call the Bishop's Delegate, who will connect you with the Victim Assistance Coordinator for pastoral care.

Protecting children from abuse is our common responsibility. Not reporting suspected abuse, hiding it or ignoring it is not an option for any of us. May what has been recently revealed in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown and other places never be repeated there or anywhere. May our children be safe in our churches, schools, institutions and homes. May we be ready to come to their assistance and defend them when they are in danger of any kind of abuse, whether sexual abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse or neglect. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me." May no one, child or adult, be afraid to approach the Lord through any one of us as we exercise our ministries in God's Church.

Yours in Christ,

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The Most Reverend Edward C. Malesic, JCL
Bishop of Greensburg