



THE DIOCESE OF KALAMAZOO
Office of the Bishop

August 19, 2018
20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we join together to celebrate the 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time, many of us do so with a sense of shock, shame, and sadness in our hearts in light of the widespread recent news coverage of past clerical abuse by individuals in leadership within the Catholic Church. This news includes the allegations against former Cardinal, now Archbishop McCarrick, as well as the devastating Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report compiling allegations of sexual abuse by 301 priests in six Pennsylvania Dioceses over a period of 70 years.

First and foremost, our thoughts and prayers are with the survivors, praying for their healing. We are inspired by their courage, and we stand with them in our resolve to do whatever it takes to root out this heinous evil within the Church, and to ensure that it never happens again. I take this opportunity to urge anyone who has any knowledge of any case of sexual abuse by clergy, or anyone, to contact Deacon Pat Hall, our Victim Assistance Coordinator, directly at (877) 802-0115.

We cannot help but ask ourselves, how is it possible that one who is ordained to represent Jesus as a priest or bishop disparages that position and betrays that trust?

The simple answer is that no priest or bishop should ever do harm, and such betrayal has no place among those called to the Priesthood. Yet, we are faced with the stark realities before us. As we know, all human beings are imperfect and sinful, but we also know that all followers of Jesus are called to a higher standard of behavior, not just striving to avoid sin, but pursuing a life of virtue. Those ordained as Deacons, Priests, and Bishops are expected, without question, to be above reproach.

Here in our Diocese, we adhere stringently to the “National 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People”. In doing so, we have trained, and continue to train, all volunteers and those who work in the Church’s vast array of institutions and ministries to recognize predatory behavior toward children, and proactively create safe environments in our churches, schools, and institutions. We also conduct thorough background checks on all those who work with our children, which includes all of our clergy. Our seminary formation programs not only rigorously screen, but also prepare our men to live healthy celibate lifestyles, in purity and integrity, ensuring that only those who have demonstrated this gift and ability are recommended for Sacred Orders.

In light of this reprise of these past sins and failures, we clearly need to avoid all complacency and to strengthen all our efforts to reach the goal of zero incidents. With that goal in mind, I am encouraged by the announcement from Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, calling for a renewed and concerted effort to review all current policies and procedures and address any structure that poses deterrents from reporting any and all cases of sexual abuse by priests and bishops, and also calls for more substantial involvement of laity with various areas of expertise [see Cardinal DiNardo’s full statement on our Diocesan website].

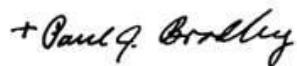
In my own name, and in the name of the Church, I can only offer my deepest apologies to our entire Diocesan Family of Faith for any brother priests or Bishops who have committed such abuse, and that we all must endure, yet again, the effects of this awful scandal and breach of trust. Beginning with myself, I ask my brother priests and deacons in our Diocese to renew our own commitment to be who we were ordained to be: the compassionate and healing Face of Jesus to those entrusted into our care. In addition to that, being mindful of Jesus' teaching that the forces of evil can be overcome only by prayer and fasting, **I urge all our ordained clergy, and all people of good will, to join with me in voluntarily offering the next nine Tuesdays (from August 21st, the Feast of Pope St. Pius X, to October 16th, the Feast of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque) to be days of more intense prayer and fasting, as well as to pray an extra Rosary on each of those Tuesdays as a weekly novena, meditating on the Sorrowful Mysteries.** We will pray and fast for healing for all victims of sexual abuse, for a conversion of mind and heart on the part of those in need of repentance, and for a renewal in our individual commitment to follow Jesus with conviction, joy, and purity of heart. I am also urging all our priests to gather with me this coming week for a Holy Hour in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and for a time to share with one another our own particular sorrows over this scandal which negatively reflects on the Priesthood in general, and to discuss ways that we can become even more committed to our holy vocation, and to maintain extra vigilance about protecting all young people and being good examples to all in our pastoral care.

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, in the midst of the sorrow, embarrassment and even anger we are currently experiencing, I ask you to resist the temptation to turn away from or to doubt the gift of our Catholic faith, or from the Church which is our spiritual home, since our faith and Church find their origin in Jesus, not in man. Instead, we must stand together in such trials firmly united in our love for Jesus and His Church, even in these times that are difficult and dark. Let us allow the Light of Jesus' Truth, and the fact that God's Holy Spirit continues to guide the Church, to be our strength.

May the words of St. Paul to the Ephesians (Eph.5:15-20) in today's Second Reading be advice that we heed as well: *Watch carefully how you live...because the days are evil. Therefore...try to understand what is the will of the Lord, and be filled with the Spirit...giving thanks always and for everything in the Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, to God the Father.*

Asking for the Holy Spirit's seven-fold gifts to be poured out upon each of us, and our entire Diocese, assuring you of my daily prayers, and humbly asking for your prayers for me as well, I remain

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Paul J. Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo