



August 16, 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is with a heavy heart that I address the latest report in the scandals of sexual abuse by some members of the Catholic clergy. This report both saddens and angers me because of the abuse suffered by the victims and the harm caused to the Body of Christ. These latest revelations are contained in the Pennsylvania grand jury report. This report covers the last seventy years and includes all of the dioceses in the state of Pennsylvania.

In the words of Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Bishops, "The report of the Pennsylvania grand jury again illustrates the pain of those who have been victims of the crime of sexual abuse by individual members of our clergy, and by those who shielded abusers and so facilitated an evil to continue for years and even decades. As a body of bishops we are shamed by and sorry for the sins and omissions by Catholic priests and Catholic bishops."

This report will no doubt anger and trouble many persons, including myself. Our prayers and hearts go out to the victims of these crimes. We hope that in telling their stories to the grand jury, the road to recovery can begin for all those victims of sexual abuse. Again in the words of Cardinal DiNardo, "We pray that all survivors of sexual abuse find healing, comfort and strength in God's loving presence as the Church pledges to continue to restore trust through accountability and justice."

For close to twenty years now reports of sexual abuse have caused disruption and dismay among Catholics. Some of these so severe that they caused some to leave the Church. These crimes are heinous and contemptible. But at the same time the entire Catholic clergy should not be painted guilty.

In the words of Cardinal DiNardo, "In 2002 the U.S. Catholic bishops adopted the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which commits us to respond promptly and compassionately to victims, report the abuse of minors, remove offenders and take ongoing action to prevent abuse". Which is why every Diocese in the U.S. has adopted some program to prevent sexual abuse by clergy and laity. In our Diocese that program is called "Virtus". No one, volunteer or paid, clergy or lay, may associate or work with minors without having first gone through Virtus training.

Let us pray for the healing of those victimized by some members of the Catholic clergy. In this sad scenario everyone is a loser, all of us are troubled. But the mission of the Church is too important to be derailed. With God's help and grace let us continue to share the Gospel of life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Fred Nijem". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Fr. Fred Nijem