



Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
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FROM THE DESK OF FATHER JONATHAN

August 19, 2018

My heart is sick this week, having read the findings of a grand jury report in Pennsylvania, about the sexual abuse of minors in that state by clergy over a seventy-year period. It concluded that 301 priests during a period of seven decades abused over 1,000 children. The details of the abuse and the cover-up by the bishops were heart-wrenching and sickening. There is no defense of the indefensible. Nor do I have any desire to try to defend any of it. I would be appalled and embarrassed by the idea of a single act of harm to a child by a fellow clergy member, but the proportions of this report make my shock and shame nearly overwhelming.

We do a lot of youth work at our parish, including our altar server program, youth choir, high school youth ministry, camps, retreats, and beginning this Fall, an after-school program for high school students. We also continue to give spiritual guidance and support to Our Lady of Mt. Carmel grammar school. In light of these scandals, the easiest thing for us to do would be to shut down this work. It would be the surest way of protecting us priests and parish staff from any problems. But that is the easy way out. Today more than ever, we have a moral obligation to minister to our youth.

What I promise you is that I will act swiftly and decisively if I have even the slightest hint that one of our children is at risk of being hurt in any way. If any substantive accusation of inappropriate behavior is made I will report it immediately to the police first, then to the Archdiocese. I will fire anyone who does not follow our strict safe-environment policies. Please help me do this. You know you can reach me by calling the office or by sending me an email at ILOVEOURPARISH@GMAIL.COM if you ever want to tell me anything in this regard.

Every one of our staff members who work with youth have completed a background check and safe environment training, but that isn't enough. We need to stay vigilant. In my work outside the parish, in the Archdiocese and beyond, I also promise you that I will be very vocal in asking our Church leadership for an independent investigation, by professionals, of how such abuse (not only in Pennsylvania but also in the case of Cardinal McCarrick and beyond) could have been covered-up by so many bishops for so long. Specifically, I will voice my opinion that this investigation, if it is to be real, must include the Vatican itself opening up its archives to show who knew what and when.

In closing, by way of this email I want to apologize to you for how the institutional church and clergy have failed you over and over again, in this regard. I am sure you feel the shame I feel, but as a priest I owe you an apology for the actions of my fellow clergymen who abused their power and took advantage of children. My apology won't make anything right, but I hope you know by it that I am deeply sorry for your hurt.

I love you all very much.

God bless, Father Jonathan