



TIMOTHY CARDINAL DOLAN

August 15, 2018

Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Dear Member of the Family of the Archdiocese,

Yesterday's report of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury that investigated cases of the sexual abuse of minors committed by priests and deacons once again brought forward the pain and suffering of those who experienced that abuse, and the shameful way that those in positions of authority, including bishops, responded – or failed to respond – when informed of the abuse, and in many cases permitted it to continue and new victims to be harmed. I am sure that everyone, particularly victim-survivors and their families, but also the laity, good and faithful priests and deacons, and, yes, even bishops and cardinals, is feeling nauseous, hurt, and betrayed by the details contained in the report.

Although the report focused on six dioceses in Pennsylvania, we have thus far found three clerics from this archdiocese mentioned in the report. In case you have not seen the report itself, I wanted to share with you what the report contains, and let you know the status of each of these cases.

1. Fr. James McLucas was alleged to have sexually abused a 14 year old girl. However, we have an affidavit from the woman involved who states that a sexual relationship did not begin until she was in her 20's and in college. This does not excuse the behavior in any way, which is unquestionably and categorically wrong, but it is not a case of abuse of a minor. McLucas has not had an assignment since this came to our attention.
2. Deacon James Rush was alleged to have had an inappropriate relationship with a 14 year old girl. He was ordained a deacon for the Archdiocese of New York in 1979, but has not served here since 2002. He has been living and working in the Diocese of Harrisburg since that time. The Diocese of Harrisburg determined that there was no sexual abuse, but that grooming had taken place. Rush was suspended canonically by the Diocese of Harrisburg in 2016, and the Diocese then alerted the Archdiocese of New York to the suspension. The archdiocese immediately suspended him as well.
3. Ed Parrakow was a priest of this archdiocese who, in the 1980's, was found to have committed multiple acts of abuse of minors. He was sent away for treatment, and then given an assignment in the Diocese of Greenburg, where he continued to abuse. As much as it pains us to admit it, this is clearly an example of the wrong way that these cases were handled in the past. Parrakow was eventually suspended, and then laicized.

While I have not had time to read the entire report, it clearly lays out the pain experienced by victim-survivors, pain which continues to this day, and the terribly wrong way that these incidents were usually handled by the Church in the past which contributed to their suffering. While it is true that the abuse of minors was badly handled by all segments of society, if there is one segment that **should** have done a better job, it is the Church. And while the Church in the past may have been an example of what **not** to do, today I believe it is a model of what **to do** to prevent sexual abuse, and how to respond when an accusation comes to light.

Although the situation in the Church is very different today, especially since the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* in 2002, that does not mean that we can become complacent or think this is all behind us. We must continue to do all that we can to address the pain and suffering that victim-survivors continue to feel. That is the reason that the archdiocese instituted the Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program (IRCP), as way to help bring a sense of healing for those who were harmed. We must also continue to be ever rigorous in performing background checks and safe environment training, so that, as much as possible, we can prevent abuse from happening again in the future.

I believe that the recent case involving Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, as gut-wrenching as it was, exemplifies the progress that has been made in dealing with such cases. When the Archdiocese of New York received the complaint, we followed our normal protocol as we would for any priest, and everyone involved – from the Vatican on down – agreed that we must deal with the case openly and honestly. It is hard to imagine that such would have been the case 30 years ago.

Let me close by not only offering an apology to those who were harmed by such abuse and the response they may have received when coming forward, but also my gratitude that they did come forward, especially those who testified before the grand jury, participated in our IRCP process, or otherwise made their voices heard. And I would invite other victim-survivors in this archdiocese to come forward, to notify law enforcement, and contact our victim assistance coordinator (victimassistance@archny.org). I assure them that they will be met with respect, compassion, and understanding.

Our God can make good out of evil. He proved that most dramatically on that first Good Friday. It surely feels as if we are experiencing another Good Friday today. Fortunately, we know that the darkness of Good Friday did not have the last word, and that the light of Easter Sunday was not far behind.

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tim. Card. Dolan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York