



Bishop filled with 'sadness and anger' upon learning of abuse

The following article by Anthony Mestas appeared online at the Pueblo Chieftain's website, www.chieftain.com on Aug 15, 2108

Diocese of Pueblo Bishop Stephen Berg on Wednesday said he was heartbroken to hear results of the two-year grand jury investigation in Pennsylvania issued Tuesday that said more than 300 Catholic priests in Pennsylvania sexually abused more than 1,000 children over seven decades. The report accused church leaders of covering up the wrongdoing.

Berg spoke about the issue during a noon Mass celebrating the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He offered prayers for the victims and the Catholic Church.

In a statement from the Diocese of Pueblo released Wednesday afternoon, Berg said: "It is with great sadness and anger that I have received the latest news about what's going on in Pennsylvania. I know that we all share in the pain of our church and what is being revealed at this time.

"I am heartbroken to know that our leadership has allowed this violation of trust and caused grave damage to the lives, health and faith of God's people; most especially the harm to the children and vulnerable." The bishop said the evidence being revealed is graphic, tragic, despicable and compounds what he has known in the past.

"We were all stunned by the earlier revelations about (Theodore E. Cardinal McCarrick) last month. As well as the silence of bishops, priests and others who knew of his condition and activities," Berg said.

Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of McCarrick, the former archbishop of Washington, from the College of Cardinals last month, ordering him to a "life of prayer and penance" after allegations that the cardinal sexually abused minors and adult seminarians over the course of decades.

"I agree that justice requires that all of those in church leadership who knew of these crimes and misconduct be held accountable, morally and legally, for their actions."

Berg said the diocese has acted vigorously to set in place training, structures, and vigilant supervision so that such abuse does not happen here. "I pledge to give my best and utmost efforts to a safe environment in parishes, schools and communities," Berg said. "It is incumbent on us all to take this firm pledge and follow through with vigilance for the safety of the little ones among us."

During his homily, the bishop told the congregation: "How painful this is to address today, on this Solemn Feast of Mary, our Mother." "Her Assumption into heaven was precisely accomplished by God, that we the church would see an unblemished mother, assumed into heaven body and soul, uncorrupted. She is with us, at the foot of the cross on our own modern day Calvary, and she gives us hope to hold on to as we seek to weather this awful storm."

The bishop said as a small, yet powerful gesture of solidarity with the victims, and as a sign of how seriously the diocese is taking responsibility in safeguarding minors and bringing healing to the wounded, as shepherd he is requiring every Catholic parish in Southern Colorado to begin immediately offering one Mass intention every month as such: "For the intentions of the victims of clergy child abuse, and in reparation for the crimes of the perpetrators."

anthonym@chieftain.com