



Go Make Disciples

## OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

July 30, 2018

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The bitter fruits of the sexual revolution continue to wreak havoc on human society, the family and the Church. Fifty years ago, Blessed Paul VI warned in his prophetic encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, of the disastrous consequences of separating sexual intimacy from fertility and its divinely ordained place within the sanctity of marriage. He warned of a growing disrespect for women, increasing marital infidelity and a general lowering of morality in society.

Perhaps not even Blessed Paul VI foresaw the bitter fruit that we have had to confront in the Catholic Church and in society due to the scourge of sexual abuse of minors and young people. This horrible, indeed diabolical, rejection of God's plan for human dignity and sexuality has wrought incalculable harm. It is even more egregious when these crimes are perpetrated by members of the clergy and those in positions of trust. These are among the most bitter fruits of sin.

In 2002, the bishops of the United States met to address the scourge of sexual abuse of minors committed by clergy. Meeting in Dallas, the bishops produced and endorsed the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The Charter establishes a framework for educating, monitoring and reporting abuse committed by clergy. It is a pledge of greater oversight, accountability and transparency in dealing with these crimes. It is a step in the right direction.

The recent acknowledgement of credible allegations of abuse committed by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick has been a further painful blow for all of God's people. The allegations include abuse of a minor some fifty years ago and abuse against seminarians, which led to monetary settlements years later. Archbishop McCarrick has since been forbidden to exercise any public ministry, urged to embrace a life of prayer and penance as he awaits a canonical trial, and has resigned from the College of Cardinals.

How could these allegations have remained under the radar for so long? It seems that many heard rumors of his alleged criminal and sinful behavior. Part of the problem is a gap in the Charter itself. The Charter does not provide clear means for reporting and responding to allegations of abuse committed by bishops. This gap has contributed to the erosion of trust and confidence in episcopal leadership among priests, deacons and the lay faithful. Repairing this gap by creating consistent standards and procedures for all, including bishops, will go a long way toward restoring that trust.

In a July 24 letter to Cardinal DiNardo, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I highlighted this concern and my hope that the upcoming Administrative Committee meeting in September would address this crisis of trust and these deficiencies in a clear and robust manner.

While procedural and canonical changes may be necessary, they will not be enough. What is needed is humble repentance and continuing conversion for all of us who are in positions of leadership in God's Church. Blessed Stanley Rother, pray for us!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley  
Archbishop of Oklahoma City