



OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP CHURCH

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September 23, 2018

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

The September 9th bulletin contained a message from our Bishop concerning the recent announcements regarding the clergy sexual abuse scandal. I have not made a broad public comment to date because like many of you I'm still struggling to process my anger, frustration, disappoint, shame and various other emotions.

There is no excuse for the abhorrent behavior of some clergy and ministers with the Church. There are no explanations that can justify or whitewash the harm done nor can any explanation hasten the long road to healing. Still, I do believe one clarification to the recent reports should be made clear. Some of the news reports could lead the faithful to believe that hundreds, even thousands of new cases and victims have been uncovered. This is not the case, in fact, the Pennsylvania report was principally about cases that were already known and made public. What is new is the evidence of a much greater failure of some Bishops and other leaders in the Church to properly deal with the allegations and offences.

There is much accountability that must be taken. There is much penance and repentance that must be made. And first and foremost there is much healing that must be facilitated among those who have been abused. It could be easy to throw up our hands in defeat and despair.

Despair, however, will not bring healing to the victims who desperately need and deserve it. Despair will not bring justice to those who perpetrated harm against the victims, most among the most vulnerable of our communities. Despair will not lead us to the love, mercy and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he alone is the one who brings true and lasting healing; he alone is the one who brings judgment; and he alone is the one who can restore us in faith, sustain us in hope and renew us in love.

Further, while there is much work to do regarding accountability for past offences, continuing to assist in the healing process of victims, and rebuild the trust of the faithful, the Church has done much to prevent future abuse.

The mechanisms in place through the Safe Environment Program strive to make every feasible effort to not only prevent any future abuse within the structures of the Church but also to help ministers identify signs if children and vulnerable adults might be experiencing abuse at home, at school or other venues in the community. While no system is 100 percent foolproof, the current efforts of the Safe Environment Program go very far to attain this goal.

The Church in her members is made up of sinners. Each and every one of us have our struggles and trials whether laity or clergy. Certainly I am aware of my own sinfulness and failures to heed day in and day out our Lord's commandment to love God and neighbor. This fact has been true throughout the history of the Church and indeed throughout all of salvation history.

Still, while the above is true, what is also true is that God can bring good out of every evil, He can heal and bid up every wound, and He can bring peace to adversity and strife. At times of disillusionment one can have the inclination to disengage, to cut ties with what seems to be diseased or even terminally flawed, and strive out on one's own. I am sure that many have and many will apply this philosophy to membership in the Church. I would, however, say that at times such as these we need the Church more than ever; not her flawed members that she has always had and always will have, but the Bride of Christ where the Holy Spirit resides, where the sacraments provide a constant experience of the love and mercy of God, where even in our brokenness we can find rest in Christ who is head of the Body of Christ and groom to bride, the Church.

Now is not the time to disengage but to seek to find Christ in the Church all the more. In times of struggle we need the strength and sustenance of the Eucharist. Also, it is a time to experience all the more the sacrament of reconciliation. Forgiveness is always hard, but also so necessary to find healing in our own weakness that helps us to let go of the pain and resentment that close us off from God. Embracing God's love and mercy for us, helps us to slowly move us to offer it to others which is a necessary element for true and lasting renewal.

In this trying time, know of my prayers for you. And I ask for your prayers. I ask your prayers first and foremost for the victims of abuse. I ask your prayers for the offenders that they may acknowledge their offenses, seek penance for themselves and restoration for those they've harmed. This type of prayer is extremely difficult, but beneficial for our own healing. Finally, I humbly ask for your prayers for me and the clergy of the Diocese, our country and throughout the world: the vast majority of whom, though sinners, strive daily to reflect and witness to the love of God and must rely completely, assisted by your prayers, upon the grace of God to answer His call.

Yours in Christ,



Fr. Robert

You Are Invited

As the Church is in need of healing, purification, and renewal, you are invited to join in prayer for repentance for the sins of the Church, for the healing of all victims and renewal in the Church as the radiant Bride of Christ.

Tuesday, September 25th
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church
5:30 PM Mass
6:00 PM Holy Hour