



ARCHDIOCESE OF LOUISVILLE

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OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As I have met with groups of Catholics over these last several days I have experienced (and I share) the righteous anger and embarrassment over the revelations of such terrible crimes by those who violated vulnerable children and youth, abused their authority, and were untrue to their promises of chastity. Catholics also are justly appalled by the lack of prompt response by Church leaders who were in positions to address these issues. At the same time, I also have witnessed the resolve on the part of priests, religious, and lay Catholics to reform our Church.

In his “Letter to the People of God” released this week, our Holy Father forcefully states our failing: “We showed no care for the little ones; we abandoned them.” In our Archdiocese and around the country, we are hearing once again from persons hurt by someone whom they trusted as a spiritual leader. So first, I want to address all those who were sexually abused by a representative of the Church. I cannot begin to imagine the pain you suffer because of the terrible evil that was committed against you. I am profoundly sorry for all that you have endured. I apologize for the times when the Church—by inaction, denial, or apathy—added to your pain and caused you to feel revictimized. Please know that I am in solidarity with you, and your wound is my wound. I pledge to work tirelessly to prevent abuse in any form, and I pray that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will be a source of healing.

In his letter, our Holy Father also speaks of the path forward: “Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and vulnerable adults.”

Last week, Cardinal DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, announced a plan to take concrete steps for reform. I look forward to working with the U.S. Bishops on these efforts to protect all persons from abuse and harassment, to act transparently, to hold us bishops, as Church leaders, accountable for our response to these situations, and to recommit ourselves to chastity.

Next week, our Archdiocese will be participating in its annual audit of our commitment to the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The *Charter* commands robust responsiveness: to victims, to notification of law enforcement, to the removal of offenders, and to measures such as background checks, codes of conduct, and training for those who work with children. All of these safeguards are important and should continue to inform our efforts.

As we pursue needed action, I join with our Holy Father in his call for prayer and fasting as a way to encourage solidarity with victims of sexual abuse and with each other as we work to reform our Church.

Sincerely yours in our Lord,

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.
Archbishop of Louisville