



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
OF CHARLESTON
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Aug. 17, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Anger, shame, sorrow and grief – that is what I feel in the face of the sins committed by so many bishops and priests. I find it truly sickening and heartbreaking to know that children and adults have been betrayed and harmed by clergy and Church leaders whom they trusted. I join other bishops in apologizing for what we “have done and failed to do.” This is a grave sin.

Countless clergy and laity across the United States are horrified by the news reports in the last several weeks, especially this past week. I fully understand that you have lost trust in the leadership of the Church. We are all horrified and humiliated that far too many bishops and priests, who were consecrated to God by solemn promises and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, have betrayed the grace of their ordination and failed to live as faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus. This has been done in ways that have seriously injured innocent young lives and the faithful of God. However, for Christians, anger, shame and disgust should never have the last word.

Now is a time for contrite, heartfelt confession and a firm commitment to make amends and reparation for our sins. This begins with repentance and begging forgiveness from God, and receiving His forgiveness with the intent to go forth and sin no more.

To all who have suffered sexual abuse at the hands of predatory priests and complicit bishops, I am profoundly sorry. We have failed you and you were robbed of your childhood. By coming forward you have enabled others to know that they are not alone in their anguish. You have awakened the Church and in doing so have protected, and will protect, many other children from this horror.

To all whose faith has been undermined, I share your outrage and feelings of betrayal. I humbly ask your forgiveness. I need your help so that we can move forward together as the Body of Christ.

Where do we go from here? The work of conversion includes all of us and especially bishops and priests. In fact, specifically in our own diocese, it must begin with me. I give you my word as your shepherd that in the coming months and years I will work with my fellow bishops, the priests of our diocese, and all Catholics of good will to seek reform within the Church. I promise you that in the Diocese of Charleston we are working diligently to insure that these vile crimes never again happen here.

As people of faith we rely upon the Gospel as we move from darkness to light, sin to redemption, despair to hope. We journey together in the context of a believing community. We rely not on our own efforts but on the Holy Spirit who strengthens and sustains us in the most difficult of times. In the face of this challenge, we remember the words of St. Paul in his letter to the Philippians, “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13).

Please pray for me and let us all pray for one another.

In the Lord’s Peace,

The Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmo
Bishop of Charleston