

September 18, 2018

The Most Reverend George V. Murry, S.J., Ph.D.  
Bishop of the Diocese of Youngstown  
144 West Wood Street  
Youngstown, Ohio 44503

Dear Bishop Murry,

We, the Parish Pastoral Council and Parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Aurora, do hereby affirm our faith, call for decisive action by Church leaders, and demand institutional change that will stop abusive, evil, and illegal harm to others, especially children and vulnerable adults.

First, **WE REAFFIRM OUR COLLECTIVE FAITH.** While individuals and organizations within the Church can be corrupt, our Faith is not.

- We celebrate the Eucharist as the center of our lives.
- We offer a warm welcome to all.
- We are committed to life-long formation in the Gospel.
- We are a diverse community seeking Holiness.
- We are faithful stewards of the gifts entrusted to us.
- We strive for biblical justice in everything we do.
- We joyfully spread the Good News of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Our hearts go out to all those who serve and have served our Church and our Faith Communities with honor, compassion, and faithfulness.

Now, we turn to your letter of August 22, 2018 and its response to the despicable, disgusting, and abhorrent news of sexual abuse coming out of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury and many other places around the world. We believe your letter did not go far enough.

Recent and past leadership and management failures have damaged the lives of abuse survivors and their families, challenged the trust of the laity, affected the morale of lay and ordained Church leaders, further alienated the relationship of young people with the Church, and compromised the Catholic voice of moral authority locally, nationally, and internationally.

Asking for or promising “thoughts and prayers” is not enough.

As parishioners, **WE EXPECT...**

1. A new culture of leadership and management that is transparent, competent, and grounded in justice in order to restore trust and safeguard the essential mission of the Catholic Church.
2. Transformation within the leadership and management culture of the Diocese, the parishes, and other Diocesan institutions, with the inclusion and expertise of the laity. Leadership Roundtable has provided programs, practices, and models that the Diocese needs to implement immediately.
3. The protection of children and vulnerable adults, the provision of justice to those who have been harmed, and that offending leaders be held immediately accountable.

4. Zero tolerance, clear statement of policies, promotion of policies throughout the Diocese, stringent training for all employees and volunteers, and an unwavering commitment that all verified offenders and those found to enable repugnant behavior shall be met with immediate dismissal from Church duties and be directly reported to law enforcement. The recommendations and revisions provided by the National Review Board should be implemented immediately.
5. Checks and balances at multiple levels of the Church with credible oversight that includes lay leadership working together with our religious.

**IMMEDIATELY, WE REQUEST that you:**

1. Exhaust every effort in reaching out to victims, survivors, and their families without hiding behind any civil statute of limitations. The pain of rape, abuse, and terror has no expiration date.
2. Convene an independent panel of lay experts from a range of disciplines and demographics as the Diocesan panel that will work with our Victims' Assistance Coordinator and local authorities in response to any allegation of abuse of children or vulnerable adults. The Diocesan Department of Child Protection should be staffed by laypersons, not clergy.
3. Initiate a Human Resources committee of lay experts to review, create, and improve our selection, training, assignment, evaluations, and continuing assessments and compliance of all employees and volunteers within the Diocese. This committee should include a representative of the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association. We cannot hide behind old practices or claim that VIRTUS training or other existing programming has been or is sufficient.
4. Release the names and current locations of priests, employees, or volunteers that have or had reported claims of inappropriate behavior going back to the furthest known date. There should be no delay and no need to wait for the "coming months" as mentioned during your September 4 press conference.
5. Establish a Victims Assistance Fund to help restore lives impacted by these victimizations. This restricted fund will help the abused and those in the professional community who assist them.

To do nothing is to be complicit in any wrongdoing. Each time one Church leader fails to act, the entire Church is tainted.

The universal Body of Christ has been betrayed by these crimes and the failure to act. As lay, religious, and ordained leaders, the solution rests with each of us in the Church to live up to our respective responsibilities. This cannot and should not be left to only the ordained, for it is a blind reliance on the ordained that caused many of these troubles. As Cardinal DiNardo noted in his August 16 statement, "we already know that one root cause is the failure of episcopal leadership." All faithful must be included and represented. In an interdependent, complex world, diverse groups make better decisions than homogenous ones.

The time for platitudes is over. Together, we must chart a new path ... now.

We invite you to come to Our Lady of Perpetual Help to report changes you are implementing. We look forward to understanding your action plan to move our Diocese forward without delay.

**Respectfully, we request a response to this letter within 10 days.**

Faithfully,

The Parish Pastoral Council of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and the undersigned

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