



September 21, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

By now you will have learned that our State Attorney General has launched an investigation into the Catholic Church in Michigan in regard to acts of sexual abuse of minors by clergy, and the ways these cases were handled by bishops and others in authority. Once again, I affirm:

The Archdiocese of Detroit welcomes the Attorney General's investigation and is prepared to fully cooperate. We have worked closely with authorities from all six counties within our archdiocese since 2002, when we shared past case files involving clergy misconduct and committed to turning over all new allegations regardless of when the alleged abuse occurred. The Attorney General investigation is the next phase of our commitment to transparency and healing.

We have full confidence in our safe environment policies put in place and carefully followed for more than 15 years. We remain committed to protecting everyone – especially children and vulnerable adults – and therefore look forward to working closely with officials to determine if there is more we can do to accomplish this goal.

As shepherd of our local church in Detroit, I want to offer my most heartfelt apology for the shame I know you must feel that, because of failures in the Church's leadership, we have come to this point. While shame and embarrassment might be an initial reaction, they are not the most important. First and foremost, in the beginning and throughout, we must keep our focus on the healing of the victim-survivors and on our efforts to keep everyone safe in our parishes, schools and all other dimensions of the Church's life. I renew to you my pledge to lead all of us in striving ever more vigorously to achieve these goals.

Most recently, our response to the sexual abuse crisis has led to establishing new action steps to hold bishops accountable for our own personal behavior and for how we have dealt with cases of abuse. The U.S. Bishops' Conference has already shared some important decisions about this, and I fully endorse them. Further, I will meet soon with all the priests in the archdiocese to discuss further actions we can take to ensure that my pastoral ministry is characterized by integrity, transparency and accountability.

**UNLEASH THE GOSPEL**

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What I have mentioned so far concerns the actions that need to be taken to strengthen the organizational side of our faith-community. While not seeking to skirt the issue of the need for action, as your pastor, I need also to speak to you about the personal, spiritual response to which God the Father calls us in our current situation. I hear him inviting us to renew our faith in him: that he has raised Jesus from the dead and made him Lord of history, not least the history of our time and place; that in the death and resurrection of Jesus is the power to conquer evil, even sins as heinous as those being uncovered because of this crisis; and that in the outpouring of his precious blood he gives us the singular grace to atone for these sins and heal the wounds that have been inflicted on Christ's Mystical Body, the Church.

In that light, I ask that you enter into a moment of prayer – kneel if you wish – and in spirit join with the priest in this prayer from the Chaplet of Divine Mercy, which I've edited to focus on our community's need for mercy:

Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for ***the sins of clergy sexual abuse and the failure of those who should have prevented it.*** For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and ***give healing to all victims-survivors, their families, and to the whole world.***

As I close, I offer again my apology, first of all to victim-survivors and all others so grievously wounded by the sexual abuse of minors by clergy, and for these crimes and failure of leaders to prevent them. Also, I apologize to all of you, members of the Catholic community, for the hurt these sins have caused you. With the help of God, I will continue to lead us on the path toward being the family of faith God calls us to be.

Saint Anne, pray for your Church in Detroit.  
Blessed Solanus, pray for us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron  
Archbishop of Detroit