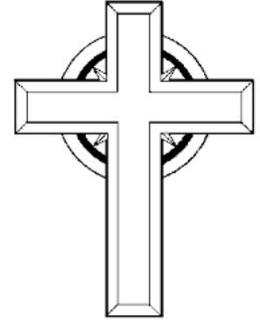


Brothers and Sisters in Faith,

It has now been several weeks since we have learned about the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report detailing the sexual abuse by clergy in the Catholic Dioceses in Pennsylvania, with the exception of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, for the past seventy years. Like many of you I was shocked at the report then saddened, and finally, angry. Moreover, when news of seminarian abuse was additionally reported about Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, (now Archbishop Theodore McCarrick), my anger grew even more. I felt profoundly hurt, betrayed, and left to consider how we move forward from this point. I wondered what I should say to the faithful people of Redeemer. I could not find the words.



The fact that priests were shuffled around without due process in Pennsylvania those years, and the possibility that the Pope may have known about Cardinal McCarrick and yet never acted added to my confusion. All of these revelations have put myself and my brother priests in the discomfoting position of having to ask for forgiveness for the sins of our leaders and brother priests who abused. The scandal also distracts from the true reason we come together each week to pray and partake in the Eucharist; to become one in our communion with Christ with our Redeemer community.

Recently, all priests of our Diocese attended a meeting with Bishop Knestout. At this meeting, we were able to express our anger, frustration, fears, and utter disgust. His Excellency shares our feelings. Soon, there will be an audit of all priest files at the Diocese of Richmond, to make sure there are no past abusers that have not been previously adjudicated.

I can share with you that there has not been an accusation of child abuse by a priest in our Diocese since 2002. And even then, the accusation could not be substantiated. That priests remains out of ministry today. Bishop DiLorenzo was excellent in maintaining priest files, and was quick to act if there was impropriety of “any” kind. He died leaving the Diocese in good shape.

Clergy in our Diocese are required to complete VIRTUS. VIRTUS is the brand name that identifies best practices and programs designed to help prevent wrongdoing and promote “rightdoing” within religious organizations. Clergy undergo fingerprinting and background checks every three years. In light of the recent scandal, these checks will help make our Diocese safe for all, and a beacon of hope and light for all. Moreover, all church volunteers and employees must complete VIRTUS.

I hope we can begin the process of healing as a Catholic community. I pray for justice and peace for the victims of these unspeakable crimes. I know it will take some time to restore our collective faith in the leadership of the Catholic Church, but I think we will become a better church for it. We move forward more determined than ever to ensure this never happens again in our faith community through our newfound awareness, I ask that you pray for the victims, pray for the church, and pray for my fellow priests.

I know that many of you, our beloved Redeemer faithful, have questions and concerns as well. Please know that I, along with our deacons and staff, are available to discuss those feelings. I have not given up on the Catholic Church. I pray that you too will not give up on the Catholic Church either. After all, together we are “the Church,” the walking and talking embodiment of Christ in the world. I am ever thankful for the faith of our Redeemer parish. I find comfort in knowing God’s justice, love and mercy continues. God is good.

Thank you for your kindness and friendship to me. Your prayers and support mean so much. We will move past this, and be a better Church for it!

*Rev. Jay Wagner*

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” –Micah 6:8