



ARCHDIOCESE OF
NEW ORLEANS

October 16, 2020

Dear Faithful of the Archdiocese of New Orleans,

Today the priests of the Archdiocese gathered with Archbishop Aymond at Notre Dame Seminary in order to discuss the recent scandals involving two priests. Aside from an open and honest dialogue with us, the Archbishop had the opportunity to spend time in prayer with us before the Blessed Sacrament. We, with the archbishop, renewed the promises we made at our ordination. He exhorted all of us to pray regularly for victims of sexual abuse. At the end of his remarks, all of us present stood in unanimous support of Archbishop Aymond.

While there have been some people questioning his leadership, we, the Council of Deans and the Presbyteral Council, are writing on behalf of all 335 priests in the Archdiocese in support of Archbishop Aymond. We emphatically support Archbishop Aymond and his leadership of our local church. Archbishop Aymond is a dedicated, faithful, and holy priest of Jesus Christ. He has always faithfully served the people of God throughout his priesthood.

While the archbishop did not create the problems of sexual abuse, he has always courageously addressed the issue. Two years ago, he took the bold step of publishing the list of all credibly accused clergy. While opening past wounds has been painful, it is necessary for the wounds to heal properly. Even after publishing the list, the archbishop has swiftly responded to any new allegations and added additional names to the list. While the last few years have been difficult, we believe that his leadership is helping to shed light on the darkness of the past, to heal past wounds, and to renew the Church in New Orleans.

Although a small number of priests have betrayed us and you, we commit ourselves and our lives wholeheartedly to the mission of Jesus Christ made present in the Church. We pledge to be faithful to our priestly promises, to daily prayer, and to you, the Body of Christ. Be assured that the Church cannot and will not tolerate any sexual abuse or misconduct on the part of any cleric.

Even though the last two years have been challenging, we earnestly encourage all of the faithful to remain steadfast in your faith. When some of the disciples faced difficulties and decided to stop following the Lord, Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life!" (John 6:68).

Sincerely in Christ,

Very Rev. Charles Benoit, O.S.B., J.C.L.
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