



## AMERICAN NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

20 August 2018

### **A Pastoral Letter from the Presiding Bishop George Lucey, FCM on the clergy abuses in Roman Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania**

In the name + of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

Last week brought yet another horrific revelation of the sexual, psychological, and physical abuse of children perpetrated by spiritually unworthy Roman Catholic priests and covered up by timid bishops. A grand jury report, in the making for two years, disclosed that over 1,000 children in six Pennsylvania dioceses had been molested by 300 priests over a seventy-year span. The grand jury concluded that there were likely many more cases of abuse that were never reported or never recorded.

Along with people of good will everywhere, and especially in solidarity with the victims of abuse and their families, I wish to express my shock and grief at this latest disclosure of the unspeakable damage clerical secrecy and ecclesial hierarchy can inflict upon Christ's church. The sins of the abusers and the bishops who did little or nothing to stop them brings to mind the prophet Habakkuk's rebuke: "The very stones in the walls cry out against you, and the beams in the ceilings echo the complaint." (Hab 2:11)

I am mindful that all of us fall short of who God wishes us to be, that all of us one day will stand before the heavenly judgment seat to answer for our sins, that all of us hope that on that day God's justice will be tempered with mercy, and that we therefore are likewise called to do the same when responding to the sins of our brothers and sisters. But I'm also mindful that the Lord commanded us on numerous occasions to be especially protective of those in our midst who are the most vulnerable: the poor, socially marginalized, disabled, and adrift. Surely innocent children top that list.

Accordingly, the people of the American National Catholic Church join their voices to that of their sorrowful Roman Catholic sisters and brothers in calling for a full accounting of clerical abuse, an open-hearted and good faith rethinking of protocols and procedures for dealing with it, and a sincere examination of the ways in which ecclesial secrecy and hierarchy in the Roman communion has contributed to so much child abuse.

Inspired and led by the Holy Spirit, the American National Catholic Church has from its very inception offered itself as a place of refuge for the oppressed as well as a healing place for those who may have been betrayed and wounded by unworthy pastors or oppressive religious institutions. We take as our own St. Francis of Assisi's calling to rebuild God's church in order, as he said, "to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way." Consequently, we sincerely welcome with compassion and love all who feel spiritually orphaned by this or past revelations of clerical abuse in the Roman Catholic Church, just as we continue to offer prayers for that communion's healing.

Given on the Memorial of St. Bernard of Clairvaux

The Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM  
Presiding Bishop