



DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

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September 7, 2018

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

Many words have been said regarding the crime of sexual abuse of minors and the scandals that these crimes have produced, words that are needed to give expression to the grief, anger and confusion that we all feel. However, words alone are insufficient. The time for action has come.

I write to you today to share the first in a series of actions that I will take as your bishop to address the crisis as it impacts our Diocese. My hope is that these measures will begin to heal the wounds that we feel, address the legitimate desire for real change and restore your confidence in every level of leadership so that we can fully realize the divine mission of the Church.

These measures also build upon the extensive work we have done since 2002 to reach out to and support survivors of clergy sexual abuse in our Diocese and to provide the training and safeguards to protect our children and ensure that adults recognize the warning signs of any potential sexual abuse of minors.

To this end, it is my desire to attack this evil in a variety of ways, starting with a series of spiritual initiatives and administrative actions. The spiritual efforts described below focus on the grave need for the clergy to seek reparation for the past sins of those who have sinned and harmed innocent children and young people.

1. I will lead a **Holy Hour** and offer a **Clergy Mass of Reparation on Saturday, September 15th, Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows, at Saint Augustine Cathedral. The Holy Hour (with Rosary) will begin at 9:30 AM, followed by Mass at 10:30 AM.** I have invited all the priests and deacons of the Diocese to participate. You are also invited to attend so that our entire diocesan family may turn to the Lord in this hour of need and seek the grace of reparation and renewal.
2. I have asked all pastors to celebrate a **local Mass of Reparation** in their parish no later than October 31, 2018. A complete list of these Masses will be published on the Diocesan website.

3. **We must recognize that we find ourselves in the middle of a great spiritual battle, for which we need God's help. For that reason, I have mandated that the Prayer to Saint Michael the Archangel be recited at the end of every Mass celebrated in the Diocese, beginning on September 15th. The official version of this prayer can be found on the Diocesan website.**

It is my hope that these measures will foster a spirit of reparation and conversion in the lives of all clerics and throughout our Diocese. Recognizing that all of us have different healing needs during these difficult times, there will be additional spiritual initiatives announced in the coming weeks.

There is an urgent need for administrative action. To this end, I announce the following initiatives:

1. **Accountability of the Bishop.** When the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was adopted in 2002, a separate *Statement of Episcopal Commitment* was approved. Recent events make it clear that the provisions in that *Statement* need to be strengthened. While we wait for this to happen on the national level and reaffirming the fact that no one is above the law, including the bishop, I hereby submit myself to these additional provisions. Effective immediately, if an accusation of sexual abuse against a minor or a failure to act on an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor is made involving the bishop, an independent Review Board from outside our Diocese will exercise the duties and responsibilities enumerated in the *Charter* and will report its findings to the Holy See. A detailed summary of this process, including the Review Board that will serve in this capacity, will be published shortly on the Diocesan website.
2. **Diocesan Accountability Report.** I have also authorized that a comprehensive accountability review be assembled addressing two important areas:
 - a. **Transparency regarding past incidents of sexual abuse of a minor:** I will ask a qualified, independent firm to perform a comprehensive review of the sexual abuse of minors by Diocesan clergy to inform the people of the Diocese. I will provide information on the details and the timing of this review in the next few weeks.
 - b. **A financial report regarding the past sexual abuse of minors:** We will issue a complete financial report on settlement amounts for past claims of clergy sexual abuse of minors from the establishment of the Diocese to date, including the sources from which the money was obtained to settle those claims. We will also publish a verified account of the financial support currently provided by the Diocese, and the source of that support, to any priest who has been accused of sexual abuse of a minor and who is currently on administrative leave or has been laicized. This financial report will be issued no later than October 30, 2018.

Allow me to conclude by offering a personal reflection. My heart breaks at the damage done by predator clergy and incompetent or complacent leadership. I wish to express my heartfelt apology to all those affected by this tragedy. I also recognize that restoring trust will require the heroic witness of holiness on the part of every priest, especially myself. I am confident that the Lord will heal and strengthen us, one person at a time.

During these troubling days, please be assured of my prayers for you and your families. I also ask that you continue to pray for the lay leadership of the Church, our clergy and for me.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport