



DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

August 18, 2018

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the recent scandalous events regarding the crimes of sexual abuse against minors have come to light in the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report and the earlier revelations regarding Archbishop McCarrick, I have been sick to my stomach. Words like horrifying, betrayal, and diabolical come to mind describing the evil abuse that was perpetrated against children, who were robbed of their innocence, and often of their faith and future. The failure of some bishops to report this evil is equally stunning and deeply sinful.

I believe that the Church is facing a moment of crisis that demands honesty and repentance from the bishops and decisive action to ensure that these failures will never happen again. The credibility of the bishops has been tarnished in the eyes of many, including many of our faithful. For some, it has even provoked a personal crisis of confidence in the Church itself, leading some to consider leaving their parishes. This is a wound that has been inflicted upon the Church that will not heal easily.

I invite you to join me to accompany one another during this time of sadness and anger and to strengthen one another in our Catholic faith. The strengthening of faith requires that the bishops of the Church acknowledge past failings among their brother bishops and hold everyone guilty accountable for their failures and crimes, whomever they may be.

The betrayal we feel concerning the cover-up of abuse pales in comparison to the suffering endured by the victims of sexual abuse—our sisters and brothers, nieces and nephews, relatives and friends, who have been so deeply wounded and have struggled with the lifelong consequences of abuse. To those who suffered the evil of abuse, I wish to say that I am deeply sorry for the pain and suffering that you have endured. I am sorry for the times that you came forward and were not heard. I am sorry for the silence of those who could have stopped what you endured. I am sorry that you were betrayed at the hands of those who were to serve as your fathers in faith.

We stand with you and will continue to accompany you with our prayers and resources to find healing and peace. We must make this a defining moment for all those who have suffered, by doing everything humanly possible to root out the sin of sexual abuse from our Church.

Over the past few days, I have read intently many of the concrete proposals that bishops and lay leaders have put forward to address the past failures in leadership and to strengthen the measures already in place ensuring that our children, young people and vulnerable adults are safe and can flourish in our midst. Some of the proposals are innovative and merit greater reflection. It is my hope and prayer that through honest dialogue and careful reflection, the Church's clerical and lay leaders on every level can create a plan to bring purification and renewal to our Church.

Despite the raw emotions that we may be feeling during this difficult time, I would encourage us to resist the impulse to despair or dismiss the sacrificial work of so many good priests whom you have come to know in your life of faith. For our good priests are also suffering because of the sins of their brothers.

It is also important that we not lose sight of the tremendous protections now in place in our diocese and other dioceses across the country. For over fifteen years, our Safe Environment programs have been effective in preventing abuse, encouraging early reporting, and ensuring swift removal of perpetrators through the Diocesan Review Board. Contact information for our Safe Environment Office can be found on the diocesan website and in the back of the Church. In our Diocese, we have also established a Misconduct Review Board, composed principally of lay members, to review any allegations of adult misconduct on the part of clergy.

Perhaps we have never been so aware of our frailty. Yet, while this is a serious time of challenge and crisis in the Church, there is always hope. I don't come to you with an easy solution to a complex evil, but I believe that if we move forward in the solidarity of faith, a spirit of transparency and commitment to absolute accountability, we will renew the Church.

My friends, I am praying for you and your families each day at Mass during this difficult time. Please pray for me and my brother priests as well.

May the great Mother of God, our protector and intercessor, accompany us as we move forward to purify and renew our Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Frank J. Caggiano

Most Reverend Frank J. Caggiano
Bishop of Bridgeport

THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT

STEPS FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OF A MINOR

OR VULNERABLE ADULT

All Members of the Clergy, Seminarians, Religious Sisters and Brothers, Lay employees, Volunteers and Independent contractors are required to make a report to the Diocese and to Civil authorities of any suspicion of sexual abuse, other forms of child abuse, elder abuse, abuse of a vulnerable adult, risk of injury or knowledge of someone in possession of child pornography.

If you have actual knowledge of or have reasonable cause to suspect abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult, or any allegation of abuse or misconduct involving a member of the Clergy, Seminarian, Religious Sister or Brother, Lay Employee, Lay Volunteer or Independent Contractor of the Diocese of Bridgeport, (whether the incident occurred recently or in the past) report that information immediately to:

Erin Neil, L.C.S.W., Director of Safe Environment & Victim Assistance Coordinator
Office: (203) 416-1406 Cell: (203) 650-3265 eneil@diobpt.org.

or

Michael Tintrup, L.C.S.W., Victim Assistance Counselor (203) 241-0987

AND

The CT Department of Children and Family (D.C.F.) Child Abuse and Neglect Care-line within (12- Hours) of first becoming aware.

1-800-842-2288

For a report involving a vulnerable adult, call Protective Services for the Elderly at the Department of Social Services

1-888-385-4225.

After business hours or on weekends or state holidays, please call Info-line at **2-1-1**

If you would like to report a situation in which abuse or neglect is suspected concerning an individual with an intellectual disability between the ages of 18 and 59, please call **1-844-878-8923**

Mandated Reporters are required by law to report directly to D.C.F. or to the Police any suspicion of abuse of a minor, risk of injury to a minor, child pornography, exploitation or neglect. This document is in addition to CT mandated reporting guidelines. *As of Oct. 2015, mandated reporters who fail to report suspected abuse of a minor or risk of injury within 12-hours of becoming aware, will be reported to the Chief State's Attorney and may be charged with a felony. Third party information is reportable to D.C.F. and proof is not a requirement for reporting.* All information will be handled with a high level of confidentiality however full anonymity cannot be guaranteed in cases involving abuse of a minor. Mandated Reporters must complete a written report within 48-hours. Please visit our diocesan website at www.bridgeportdiocese.com/safeenvironment

WARNING SIGNS: If you have any concern about the safety of a child or if you have observed an early warning sign of inappropriate conduct or a violation of the Safe Environment Policies, please call the Safe Environment Office with what you know.

THE STATE OF CT MANDATED REPORTING ONLINE TRAINING & CERTIFICATE (40 minutes)

<http://www.ct.gov/dcf/cwp/view.asp?a=3483&Q=413540>