



DIOCESE OF  
LONDON  
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

1070 WATERLOO STREET  
LONDON, ONTARIO N6A 3Y2  
CANADA  
519-433-0658  
FAX: 519-266-4353

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The media has given much attention to the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report which was recently released. The report investigates clergy sexual abuse of minors in six dioceses in Pennsylvania dating back to 1947. It found that 300 priests engaged in the abuse of more than 1000 children. The extent of the abuse is shocking. People have reacted with anger and shame, and grief for the many victims.

It is devastating to read the accounts of profound evil that occurred in our Church. Since I have been bishop, I have met with survivors of clergy sexual abuse and their families. It was heart-wrenching to listen to their stories of the pain and the sufferings they have endured throughout their entire lives – sometimes for 30, 40 or 50 years after the abuse occurred.

The Grand Jury Report details the failures of the bishops who covered up the abuse by moving priests around. The cover up was terribly wrong. Catholics are rightly outraged that the bishops failed to put a stop to the abuse. How could they have failed so grievously in their calling to be shepherds of their people and in their responsibility to protect the most vulnerable among us?

The report investigates what happened in the Pennsylvania dioceses over the past 70 years. Our Church has learned from the mistakes that were made in the past. Bishops have acknowledged these tragic mistakes. We have apologized to survivors and asked their forgiveness. We have compensated them for the harm they suffered and provided counselling.

Since 1989, our diocese has implemented a strong, comprehensive Safe Environment Policy. It is periodically updated and improved. It includes a number of sound procedures to prevent abuse from happening. A priest who commits an offense against a minor or any other vulnerable person is removed from ministry.

My goal is to protect people against abuse. A Safe Environment Policy for our diocese, and the steps we have taken to prevent sexual abuse and to protect our children and the vulnerable, are available on our diocesan webpage at [www.dol.ca/safe-environment-policy](http://www.dol.ca/safe-environment-policy).

The clergy abuse crisis has brought to light the brokenness in our Church. For these wounds to heal, we must first acknowledge our brokenness before the Lord. We must do penance in reparation for the grave sins committed. And, we – bishops, priests and lay people – must be courageous in carrying out the reforms needed in our Church.

In his letter to the People of God on 20 August 2018, Pope Francis said, “No effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated”.

The pope calls all of us to penance and prayer which, he says:

- ❖ opens our eyes and our hearts to other people’s sufferings;
- ❖ opens our ears to the cries of pain felt by children, young people and the disabled;
- ❖ makes us hunger and thirst for justice;
- ❖ impels us to walk in the truth;
- ❖ leads us to be committed in truth and charity with men and women of good will to combat all forms of abuse.

On Thursday, 13 September, our annual Mass for the Survivors of Clergy Abuse was celebrated in the parishes of our diocese as a votive Mass in honour of Our Lady of Sorrows. People who have participated in this special Mass over the years have told me how moving it is. On that day, our whole diocese is united with Mary at the foot of the Cross. Together, we join in prayer for the survivors of sexual abuse and their families, for the perpetrators and for healing in our Church and in our communities.

May the Holy Spirit, through the intercession of Our Lady of Sorrows, grant us the grace of conversion and the resolve to combat the grave sins committed in our Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B.  
Bishop of London