

April 20, 2010

Dear Friends,

The recent revelations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy of various countries throughout the world have reminded us of those particularly painful events, beginning in 2002, when the Church in the United States was rocked by reports of the same kind of horrific acts against children and young people. I am deeply saddened by these revelations and by the fact that they have happened, that more young people have been victimized, and that trust has been betrayed. I know that you are also saddened and, yes, outraged by these reports.

There can be no excusing or rationalization of the efforts on the part of some in the Church's leadership to ignore or cover up the terrible misdeeds by priests and others in authority. We know that there is no cure for pedophilia, and that the current policy of the Church in the United States, commonly called "Zero Tolerance," is, in the end, the only way we can deal with members of the clergy who have been credibly accused of sexual abuse of a minor. Once a member of the clergy (deacon, priest or bishop) is credibly accused and, after a full investigation, found to be guilty of any such act of abuse, that cleric must be forever barred from any form of ministry in the Church.

The Diocese of San Jose remains committed to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults from any form of abuse.

- We remain committed to the psychological screening of candidates for ordained ministry so that, as far as it is humanly possible, we will prevent predators from entering the priesthood or diaconate.
- We remain committed to the "Safe Environment" programs that are in place in all of our parishes, schools and catechetical programs.
- We remain committed to performing background checks for all clergy, employees and volunteers who work with children and young people in the Diocese of San Jose.
- We remain committed to reporting all allegations of sexual abuse of a minor to the appropriate civil authorities – Child Protective Services, local Police or Sheriff offices, and the office of the District Attorney, as soon as we receive those allegations.
- We remain committed to upholding the principles of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* that were adopted by the Bishops of the United States in June of 2002, and to the continuing adherence to the *Essential Norms*, the legal framework that assists diocesan bishops to act in a deliberate manner with every member of the clergy who has committed any act of sexual abuse against a minor, so that the offending cleric will not be allowed to become a repeat offender.

For many years now, the Diocese of San Jose has been well-served by the independent Diocesan Review Board, chaired by Justice Edward Panelli. I rely upon the Board to investigate fully the allegations that relate to possible abuse and, following their findings and determination, to advise me in the disposition of cases, whether those cases are current or from years past.

I am also extremely grateful for the service of our diocesan Office for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults and its director, Bernard Nojadera, who spearheads our efforts to educate and train

clergy, religious, employees, volunteers, parents and children in the many aspects of the avoidance of sexual abuse, reporting requirements, and ensuring that our parishes and schools are all safe environments.

But I am particularly grateful to you, the parishioners of the 53 parishes and missions of our Diocese. I share your distress at the news of even one more case of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest or deacon – no matter where in our world that abuse occurred. When one member of the Church suffers, we all suffer and, indeed, Christ himself suffers. At the same time, we try as best we can to be strengthened by our prayer and, by that very same prayer, to strengthen our sisters and brothers who suffer even now. I know that you look to your parish clergy – to the deacons and priests who serve you – for leadership and guidance. Like you, they have been wounded by the horrific acts against children that members of the clergy have committed, and they are shamed by those acts.

Some of you are especially troubled these days by reports that Pope Benedict XVI, while Archbishop of Munich and later Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, may have been involved in questionable acts of judgment related to clerics who were accused of sexual abuse. Like you, I rely upon the reports of the media for the information that has come to me. For this reason, I am compelled to note that in so many of these cases, we are never given the benefit of all of the information. It is difficult – no, impossible – to judge the Pope's actions, or those of any other bishop or cardinal without having knowledge of all of the circumstances and facts of any particular case. To rush to judgment in such situations is not only unwise; it is uncharitable. What we do know is that the Holy Father, even before he was Pope, moved decisively against many abusing members of the clergy, as he has continued to do during this papacy.

We have said often in the past that the Church is in many ways a human institution, that it has defects and that its members are all sinners. This in no way explains, excuses or absolves the terrible crimes that have been committed against the innocent. It does, however, allow us more than ever to realize and admit our need for repentance and cleansing, so that we might respond ever more vigorously to the only reason the Church has to have hope even in dark times: the abiding presence of the Risen Lord in our midst. If we lose sight of Him, then everything else we do, no matter how admirable, will be empty and in vain.

In closing, I would ask that you join with me in prayer for all victims of sexual abuse and those who are charged with seeking justice for them. Please pray that the Lord will give them strength and courage in their actions. Pray, also, for our Church that it will weather the current storms and that humbled, perhaps, it will be better able to be a sign to all people of the goodness of God, made manifest in Jesus, the Christ, and abiding with us in the power of the Spirit. May God bless you all.

With every best wish and kind regard, I remain,

Sincerely yours,



Patrick J. McGrath
Bishop of San Jose

You may find additional information and resources on this subject at the following website:

http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/april_cap_month_2010.shtml