



October 4, 2018

## Archbishop Jerome ListECKI discusses Clergy Sexual Abuse in a letter to the Faithful

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Once again the Catholic Church faces the evil, sinful scourge of criminal sexual abuse of minors by clergy, harkening back to the watershed year of 2002. Having seen and heard the news stories once again, it reopens those wounds we thought were starting to heal, especially for those who have been violated.

As your Shepherd, you should know three things about me. First and foremost, you should know I am a believer. I believe in the testimony that Jesus Christ gives us and in the love that He offers us. I believe in the teachings of the Church and I know that I will be held accountable before God for my actions.

Second, I love the Catholic Church. Not the brick and mortar that makes up the buildings, but rather our brothers and sisters who through their baptism come together to profess their faith, who form the Body of Christ, and live as Christ's presence in the world.

Third, I know and I am confident that God will not abandon us, especially in our time of need. It is His promise to us that He will be with us until the end of time.

So when things like the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report become public or we hear reports about former Cardinal McCarrick's reprehensible behavior, it breaks our trust. There is no doubt that the handling of allegations by bishops and others, and the attempted cover-up by bishops and the institutional Church, has led to the destruction of innocent lives.

Sin is real. Is there any doubt why the devil attacks the Church? There is no justification for allowing evil into the Church. There is no justification for thinking that if only we could cover things up, it would be better the next day.

The problem is that once sin is rooted into the lives of a community, it is destructive for everyone involved. We have seen the destruction happen. We have seen how trying to protect the institution took precedence over protecting our young people; how a clerical culture protected offenders and exposed children and youth to harm.

Because I am a believer, because I love the Church, and because I know Christ will not abandon us, I accept the collective responsibility of the Church that committed sin; of the individuals who took advantage of innocent individuals; and for Church leaders who hid that sin for decades. For those actions, I apologize to anyone who was abused by someone in the Church, especially those who were children.

Like you, I am angry, disgusted, ashamed, embarrassed and betrayed. One never expects to find sin anywhere, especially in the Church. The brave victims who have come forward — and it has been my privilege to hear some of their painful stories — have already helped us to be a different Church. Imagine the courage that it takes to come forward and expose the predators in order that others might be spared these atrocities.

The silence of Church leaders in the face of sin and crime keeps the Church in darkness and does harm. It is only the light that can dispel the darkness of evil. We must now shine a light on this darkness within the Church.

Keeping children safe from sexual abuse is a priority of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and we have taken important steps to make sure our priorities are in order to implement initiatives designed to guard against anything like this in the future. Since this news reemerged this past summer, I have been asked continuously, "What is the Church going to do?" Here are some of the actions implemented by the archdiocese to keep children safe:

- No priest with a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse of a minor serves in public ministry in any way in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Religious order priests are subject to the same standards.