



The Catholic Community of St. Mary and St. Ann
807 Saint Mary's Blvd | Charlotte, MI 48813

August 17, 2018

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The recent release of the State of Pennsylvania grand jury report with regard to the history of child sexual abuse by priests in six Pennsylvania dioceses has led to feelings of both anger and sadness on the part of so many Catholic faithful, myself included. I am deeply sorry that so many have been affected by these crimes.

It is important to understand that the grand jury's report deals with crimes that occurred up to 70 years ago and the role that many in the Church's leadership took in concealing these crimes. On a certain level, the report is no different than what was reported by the *Boston Globe* in 2001 and 2002. What is different is how the Church responded in the wake of the 2002 scandals.

In the years since 2002, the Church has worked diligently to put into place policies and procedures for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. Credible accusations of misconduct are handled directly by civil law enforcement authorities. In addition, priests, seminarians, teachers, parish staff members and volunteers who have regular contact with children have undergone criminal background checks and have received necessary training and ongoing formation to make sure that our parishes and schools provide a safe, supportive environment for our children. Children also receive regular training and formation to help them to be safe. These policies and procedures and our compliance with them are audited regularly by outside non-Church experts in order to ensure compliance.

At the same time, our diocese has a victim assistance coordinator who can be reached at any time and whose sole function is to assist anyone who has been harmed or sexually abused by anyone representing the Church. Counseling and other assistance is made available in order to assist any victim on their journey of healing.

Ultimately, and unfortunately, what the Pennsylvania grand jury report points to is that more work must be done, especially to create even greater transparency and accountability among the Church's leaders, particularly with regard to how these crimes have been handled in the past. Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the governing body of the Catholic bishops in the United States, is working with the USCCB leadership to create a system led substantially by the laity in order to address and rectify these failures of leadership.

Finally, I think we all must keep in mind the power of Christ's Paschal Mystery—namely, that the death of Christ on the Cross for us and for our sins also led to something new and beautiful—the new life of the Resurrection. Through these events, we, as a Church, have been experiencing the Paschal Mystery. We must trust that somehow, in ways we cannot fully understand, even in a time of great sorrow and anger, God is working to bring forth a renewed Church. Let us continue to pray for all those affected by these scandals and for the ongoing work to bring healing and renewed life to the Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Dwight Ezop, Pastor