

August 18, 2018

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In the recent weeks we have heard a series of very disturbing news: in early June news circulated about cases of sexual abuse of children by priests in the Diocese of Rochester, in July, the pope suspended Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the former archbishop of Washington from any public ministry after accusations of sexual misconduct surfaced, and finally this past week a Grand Jury in Pennsylvania published a report accusing 300 priests in the state of abusing over 1000 children over a 70 years' time period and many of the Bishops of covering such abuse. I personally feel hurt, ashamed, disgusted and shaken by this news. There is really no words that can convey how wrong this is. How could we do this to our children? How could bishops and priests entrusted with the eternal souls of the people cover up something like this? The questions and confusion just keep building up and I am saddened, discouraged and angry.

My guess is that many or all of you feel similarly. Some among you might even be questioning your belonging to the Church. All I can say is that we have to stand firm in our faith. The institution of the Church might have failed us in this way, but Our Lord will never fail us. Like any family in times of trial we stay together, we support one another, we somehow get through. Please stay close to Jesus and please stay in the Church, our Lord needs you, the Church needs you, I need you. If we all pray and work, if we all repent and help the church face the truth and bring the truth to light we will grow better out of these trials.

We especially have to hold one another in prayer, as we are all hurt by these horrible sins on the part of our church leaders. We must especially hold in prayer all who have been victims of sexual abuse and their families. I encourage any victims to come forward and bring their cases into the light before civil and church authorities so that healing can take place.

Our pope, cardinals and bishops, have been clear of how ashamed they are of this moral catastrophe in our Church and on their commitment to bring everything to the light. May we surround them and work to make this happen, may we allow the Lord to purify our Church.

In our Diocese of Rochester since 2002, 24 credible cases of abuse have been brought forward. Most of these cases are related to abuse that happened in the 70's. In all cases priests have been removed from public ministry. The two most recent

credible cases were brought forward in 2010, regarding abuse in the 70's and 80's. These two individuals: Dennis Shaw (who ministered in Auburn) and Paul Schnacky who ministered in Hornell were removed from ministry in 2010.

The diocese has made great efforts to create a safe environment for our children so that abuse never again happens in our churches, and to implement ways so that cases can come to light always encouraging victims to bring accusations before civil authorities. You can find complete information on the Diocesan Website or on our own website: [www.netcatholic.org/safe](http://www.netcatholic.org/safe). We all have to work together to make sure our churches are a safe environment for all, to create a culture in which we do not look the other way.

Because of how sensitive this issue is I decided it would be best to address it in writing and to follow up on it personally. So, if you want to talk more about this please feel free to contact me. Please keep me and all priests and bishops in your prayers and know that you are in mine. Please do not lose hope!

Your ashamed, yet hopeful brother, A.M.D.G.,

Father Daniel Ruiz

***If you have been a victim of sexual abuse, you should contact the appropriate civil authorities.***

***To receive help and guidance from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, please contact Deborah Housel, victim assistance coordinator at (585) 328-3210, ext. 1555 or (toll-free) 1-800-388-7177, ext. 1555 or by e-mail to [victimsassistance@dor.org](mailto:victimsassistance@dor.org).***

If you have any concerns about keeping our children safe in our parishes please contact our N.E.T. Catholic Safe Environment Coordinator Dawn Burdick via email at [dawn.burdick@dor.org](mailto:dawn.burdick@dor.org) or by phone at (607) 288-2476.