



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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**29 October 2018, 11:32 AM**

**An update on the response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis**

With regard to the crisis caused by the recent scandals related to clergy sexual abuse, it is I believe good to keep everyone informed as to what is happening:

First of all, the US Department of Justice Attorney for the eastern district of Pennsylvania is investigating possible violations of federal law there. As part of that process (though I am not sure why), on 23 October 2018, he issued a request to all the bishops in the USA that each in their own diocese preserve in their current form and condition documents related to sexual conduct involving a minor. There is no request at this time to *produce* documents.

Here in the Archdiocese of Dubuque, we have not, nor will we “destroy, discard, dispose of, delete, or otherwise alter” (that’s how the DOJ attorney put it) the documents in question.

In fact, prior to receiving this request, in view of the possibility of being subject to an investigation like that in Pennsylvania, we have worked hard to make those records accessible.

Secondly, speaking of attorneys general, the bishops in Iowa took the initiative to offer to meet with the Iowa Attorney General. Our purpose is to explain what we have been doing, are doing now, and will do (until Jesus comes again) to protect children and young people from sexual abuse. I am scheduled to meet with him on 5 December 2018, along with Monsignor Thomas Toale, our Vicar General, and Mr. Paul Sigwarth, archdiocesan legal counsel.

Thirdly, also on 23 October 2018, our Holy Father Pope Francis requested all bishops in the USA to make a spiritual retreat together, from 2 to 8 January 2019, to pray and to strengthen our unity with one another and with the Pope. The Holy Father is providing the retreat master: Father Raniero Cantalamessa, the preacher to the Papal Household. The retreat will take place at Mundelein Seminary, outside of Chicago. I will of course be in attendance.

Finally, the bishops in the USA will gather for their regularly-scheduled fall meeting, from 12 to 15 November 2018, in Baltimore. This year, however, the agenda is almost entirely devoted to addressing clergy sexual abuse.

For example, in a departure from past meetings, the first day will be a full day of prayer about this. The second and third days will be almost entirely devoted to presentations

and proposals in response to clergy sexual abuse. The last day will be for regular business of the USCCB.

In preparation for this meeting, from 5 to 11 November 2018, all the bishops are asked to dedicate themselves to prayer and to some form of sacrifice or fasting.

The aim of this is two-fold: to provide for an examination of conscience, especially about the need to do more in response to clergy sexual abuse; and to beg God for three things (as formulated by the President of the USCCB):

- 1) For the healing and support of all victims of clergy sexual abuse;
- 2) For the conversion and just punishment of the perpetrators and concealers of sexual abuse;
- 3) For the strength of the bishops to be holy shepherds in protecting and leading their sheep from all harm.

Please join me in praying for these intentions. If you would, please include them in the Prayers of the Faithful at Mass on Sunday, 11 November 2018.

And during the meeting, as well as the week leading up to it, please pray (and maybe even do some kind of sacrifice or fasting) for me and the other bishops, that we will listen to and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Interestingly, in his communications with bishops about our response to clergy sexual abuse, the USCCB President always quotes James 1:22, "be doers of the word and not hearers only." I have also been making reference to the Letter of James, Chapter 1, in my comments on the way forward, in this way:

The apostle James writes about the word, that is, the faith planted in the hearts of Christians, which we are to hear, and to put into practice by protecting and providing for those who cannot do for themselves.

This is the heart of the message Jesus preached (Luke 6:27). This is the basis on which God will judge us at the end of our days (Matthew 25:40). This, writes St. James, constitutes the practice of pure and undefiled religion.

It is my personal belief that this same word of faith – to protect and provide for those who cannot do for themselves – is what we are talking about when we pray in preparation for Holy Communion: but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

We will find spiritual healing for ourselves, and in a manner of speaking for the whole Church as well, when we devote ourselves to healing, protecting, and providing for those who have been abused, scandalized, or driven to mock us as a poor excuse for a Christian.

Things like a new oversight structure for bishops, or a third party reporting mechanism may be good and necessary, but they won't bring about the substantive change that is needed.

Such change will only happen when each of us – not just the Pope, a bishop, priest, deacon, or religious, but each of us – opens ourselves to the Spirit's work of conversion.

And that will happen when each of us hears and puts into practice the word of faith: to protect and provide for those who cannot do for themselves, no matter who the person is, whether or not he/she is deserving, asks nicely, is aware of the cost to us, or is grateful.

Let us ask St. Raphael, the angel guardian of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, to pray to God for our healing and conversion:

*St. Raphael, of the seven angels who stand in the glorious presence of the Lord, ready to serve as the bearer of God's healing. The Lord has filled your hand with balm from heaven. We beg you, therefore, to help us in our needs and in the sufferings of this life, as once you helped the young Tobias on his travels. Soothe our pains, cure our sickness, both physical and spiritual, make us fit to be temples of the Holy Spirit, and guide our steps when doubtful of our ways! Amen.*

Michael Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque