

# Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish

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May 29, 2021

Dear Parishioners,

This past week, Bishop William Byrne mailed a letter to all registered parishioners regarding the upcoming release of an expanded list of priests, deacons, religious, and lay employees of the Diocese of Springfield who have had credible allegations of sexual abuse against minors made against them. The allegations are not new, but the expanded list reflects new criteria for a finding of credibility of abuse allegations and the Diocese's desire for complete transparency, communication, and accountability about them.

This past week, we also learned of the Hampden County District Attorney's findings against the recently deceased defrocked priest, Richard Lavigne, in the death of Danny Croteau back in 1972, a case that has been hanging over our Diocese and especially the Croteau Family for almost half a century.

So, we have a lot to take in as the people of the Catholic Church in Western Massachusetts. What we have learned and what we will learn in the next few days will cause us anger, profound disappointment in individuals and leadership, sadness, and even a challenge to our faith. These are normal responses to the harm caused by sinful and evil acts on the part of people in whom we had placed so much trust.

I would ask, as you deal with your feelings about the sins of those who perpetrated these acts and the failures of Church leadership to act openly, effectively, and responsibly, that prayer be a part of your response.

First, pray for the victims and their families, and for all victims of any kind of abuse worldwide. May they experience justice, healing, and peace.

Second, I would ask you to pray for the members of the Croteau Family who have endured so much in the last 49 years, for the repose of the souls of Danny, his parents, Carl and Bunny, and his brothers, Gregory and Michael. May they find rest and peace.

Third, please pray for Bishop Byrne and those assisting him to bring our Diocese to complete transparency, communication, and accountability with regard to these difficult, disturbing, and painful matters: that they will do so with due diligence, with a sense of hope, as well as faithfulness to victims and to us, the faithful people of God.

Finally, let us pray for ourselves, the Church, the People of God, the Body of Christ on earth. That Body is deeply wounded and needs healing. May that healing help us to hear the voice of Christ, calling us to be together as Church. May that healing help us to be compassionate and understanding of the pain of victims and their families. May that healing be aided by the completion and fruition of changes that Church leadership is making in the ways of accountability and justice. May that healing lead us to a spirit of mercy, as called for by the Gospel and the very life of Jesus Himself.

God Bless,

*Fr. Jack*