



Dear Friends in Christ:
A LETTER FROM OUR PASTORAL COORDINATOR

May Christ's peace, joy and hope be with you all!

This Tuesday's closing prayer for "Morning Prayer" in the Liturgy of the Hours was the following:

God, our Father, hear our morning prayer and let the radiance of your love scatter the gloom of our hearts. The light of heaven's love has restored us to life: free us from the desires that belong to darkness.

I don't think that there's a time when this isn't true. God's love is radiant and God alone (and his grace) can authentically scatter our gloominess. God provides us with the free will to accept his offer of loving-kindness and respond to his grace or to reject it. The path of least resistance is to choose to lose heart, to lose hope, to give into the evils of our culture, to give in to "this present darkness" when we face challenges. The greater calling of our baptism is to follow our Lord Jesus confident that He has restored all of creation through the passion, death, and resurrection of his Son. Grace however doesn't work like magic. Regardless of the will of the recipient, the efficacy of magic relies on the correctness of the incantation (check out the Harry Potter books). With regard to grace, God respects our freedom and offers us restoration and eternal life. Since we have a choice, we must choose Christ, not once but every minute, every hour, every day!

Given what we have seen in the last few months in the life of the Church: the evidence of horrific sexual abuse of minors by priests and bishops, records of thousands of people who suffered abuse, accusations, increasing polarity, deceit, distrust, public humiliation, and disingenuous leadership; we all know that we are engaged in a temporal and spiritual battle. Certainly, there is a cost to discipleship, but despite the sacrifices, we can be assured that God has triumphed over the reality of sin and evil, regardless of what is happening around us. More than ever we must stand up for God's people.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Christians at Ephesus, writes particularly sound advice to us. God informs us through this letter to act and uses the metaphor of a first century soldier to teach us how to respond to this spiritual battle in which we are engaged.

Finally, *draw your strength* from the Lord and from his mighty power. *Put on the armor of God* so that you may be able to *stand firm* against the tactics of the devil. For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens. Therefore, *put on the armor of God*, that you may be able to *resist on the evil day* and, having done everything, to *hold your ground*. So *stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace*. In all circumstances, *hold faith as a shield*, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And *take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Ephesians 6:10-17 emphasis mine).

Many have stated in Catholic media that this is the greatest crisis in the history of American Catholicism. I would agree. This tragedy is one of terrible abuse as well as a crisis in leadership. The National Review Board was established by the Bishops of the United States in 2002. It advises the US Bishops "in preventing the sexual abuse of minors" by paid staff and/or volunteers in the Church. Our Safe Environment policies in this Seattle Archdiocese, since 1990, are examples of the attention

and procedures our recent Archbishops in Seattle and their staffs have put in place for the protection of those we serve. We also have a hotline (1-888-446-7762) to call. “Anyone who has knowledge of sexual abuse or misconduct by a member of the clergy, an employee or volunteer of the Archdiocese of Seattle is urged to call the archdiocesan hotline. The Archdiocese of Seattle has a longstanding commitment to transparency, accountability and assistance to persons sexually abused by clergy or by anyone working on behalf of the Church” (Archdiocese of Seattle).

But there remains this crisis of leadership. We have a more foundational problem. Some of our bishops and Church leaders have hidden sexual abuse. Archbishop Sartain has stated that “anyone responsible for such an act or shielding those who do, including bishops and other Church leaders, must be held accountable for their actions.”

We must be more committed than ever to our life of daily prayer, intercession, and penance in our desire to cooperate with God’s grace. We must also act and reach out to Archbishop Sartain and Bishops Elizondo and Mueggenborg, the current Papal Nuncio for the United States, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, and the President of the USCCB, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, with letters of encouragement and support but also pleas to take strong action at the USCCB meetings in November.

This action, which I ask you to prayerfully consider is to recommend to our leaders (noted above) to “pray for the Church and most especially for the victims/survivors and their families who have been wounded by this terrible scourge,” but also “take concrete action to address the systemic problems underlying the problem of sexual abuse in the Church” (Statement of National Review Board 28 Aug. 2018). This concrete action would take the form of a lay-led independent investigation (which Cardinal DiNardo proposes) of our practices and especially our leadership.

We must pray for healing and forgiveness, but we must also re-pledge ourselves to complete transparency, admittance of guilt where appropriate, justice for those who have been abused. Those who have acted criminally “must be held accountable.” We may even need an international Synod to address this or a Church Council, like a Vatican III, to address this.

More than ever, we must pledge ourselves to our faith in Christ Jesus who is our hope to free all of us from the “desires that lead to darkness,” and that all of us radiate God’s love more and more as living sacraments of God’s grace in the world.

In God’s great love, hope and mercy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deacon Jim". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Addresses:

Archbishop J. Peter Sartain, Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, and Bishop Daniel Mueggenborg can be written at 710 9th Ave. Seattle, WA 98104-2017

Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States
3339 Massachusetts Ave. NW Washington DC 20008

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, President of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1700 San Jacinto, Houston TX 77002