



Go Make Disciples

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

October 3, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

My heart breaks to have to write this letter. Events of this past year, beginning with revelations of the scandal surrounding then-Cardinal McCarrick followed by the release of the Pennsylvania grand jury report, have sent shock waves throughout the Catholic Church in America. We are challenged to face again the crisis of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults at the hands of clergy, and examine how we have dealt or failed to deal with this societal scourge within our Church.

The long and the short of it is you trusted us, and we failed. Though we have made significant progress on many fronts since the 2002 publication of the U.S. bishops' "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," we must do better.

I want to begin by expressing my profound sorrow and most sincere apologies to each person who has ever been a victim of sexual abuse by anyone representing the Church. I also am sorry for the complicity and negligence of those who failed to respond adequately to reports of abuse, for whatever reason, whether they are bishops, priests, deacons, religious or lay persons representing the Church.

The effects of such abuse have had devastating consequences far beyond individual victims and survivors. Marriages, families and parishes have been adversely impacted. I have had the painful and humbling experience over the past few months of meeting and speaking with clergy sexual abuse survivors as well as their parents and spouses to hear firsthand how devastating this sin – this crime – has been. In each of those meetings or conversations, my purpose has been to listen, to express sorrow and to offer support to those who have been traumatized by this evil.

As a bishop, I also have been grieved for the countless faithful, dedicated and generous priests who have faced ridicule and suspicion because of the terrible crimes of their brothers. This too is a bitter fruit of this injustice.

I recognize the damage that has been done to the faithful whose trust and faith have been shaken by the sins of their leaders.

In response to the deterioration of trust that clergy sexual abuse represents, a new level of transparency and accountability is required to demonstrate the seriousness of our commitment to creating and maintaining safe environments and addressing the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by clergy.

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As a next step in restoring trust through greater transparency, I ordered a review of our priest personnel files by an independent law firm. Accompanying my letter, you will find a report detailing the cases of substantiated allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. You also will find information providing the answers to many questions that might arise.

As part of its investigation, the law firm has reviewed hundreds of files of priests who have ministered in the archdiocese since 1960. The archdiocese also provided full access to all records, including electronic files. In addition, we already have begun the process of reviewing files of priests who ministered in the archdiocese prior to 1960.

As the graphics demonstrate, we have made progress in that the number of substantiated instances of abuse has dropped dramatically since 2002 for which I am grateful. But, we must do more and remain vigilant in our fight to do all we can to protect our most vulnerable.

Please continue to pray for the healing and purification of the Catholic Church and especially for all who have ever been victims of abuse by those who represented the Church. Please pray for your priests, deacons and seminarians. Please pray for me.

If you or anyone you know has been abused by a member of the clergy or anyone representing the Church, please call the Archdiocesan Pastoral Response Hotline – (405) 720-9878.

With the assurance of my continued prayers, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Paul S. Coakley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley
Archbishop of Oklahoma City