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Statement on Clergy Sexual Abuse

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The grand jury report released in Pennsylvania on August 14 states that more than 1,000 victims had been sexually abused by some 300 priests over a span of seven decades in six dioceses. The report also highlights efforts by Church authorities to conceal or ignore the abuse. This is added to the reports made earlier this summer of sexual misconduct perpetrated by the former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. Yes, these days are evil.

Sexual abuse is a grave attack on the person, which is a grave evil. There must be zero tolerance for clergy sexual abuse. Victims of clergy sexual abuse have made me aware of the unspeakable harm done to them. The damage goes beyond words. Many people have been harmed. On behalf of the Church, I offer a sincere apology to anyone who has been abused by clergy, and I offer a sincere apology for the failures of us bishops to address the problem effectively.

The brunt of the responsibility for the clergy sex abuse crisis that has plagued our beloved Church lies in the hands of bishops who did not protect their flock from wolves. The Lord has entrusted us bishops with the duty to shepherd the people of God on their journey of faith. Guarding and defending the faith of the people requires protecting them from clergy who would harm them and their faith by evil deeds. We bishops must repent and be held accountable.

Thus, I fully support the following course of action proposed by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in his statement of August 16:

- A full investigation of questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick.
- Make reporting of abuse and misconduct by bishops easier.
- Advocate for better procedures to resolve complaints against bishops.

Cardinal DiNardo's complete statement may be read here: <http://usccb.org/news/2018/18-139.cfm>

These changes are crucial, but a far deeper renewal is necessary. A new initiative or program alone is not going to fix this, as mere human efforts to renew the Church are doomed to fail.

God purifies his Church. Renewal of the Church is not effected by our efforts, but by opening our hearts to the work of the Holy Spirit. In the course of history when the Church has needed purification, God raised up great saints and cleansed his Church. This is not the time to despair, but for us to be strong in hope that God will do the same in our time.

You may ask, "Is it okay that I'm angry about abuse in the Church?" Yes, I am as well. But that anger is tempered by faith in Jesus' promise to Peter that "gates of hell shall not prevail against" His Church. That anger is tempered by hope in Jesus' challenge to "make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" followed by the promise, "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

Evidence of God's work and a sign of hope is found in the life of our first bishop, the Venerable Frederic Baraga. In him, we see what a good bishop should be. In Bishop Baraga we see a bishop who was willing to sacrifice everything for the good of the people entrusted to his care.

Bishop Baraga laid down his life for his sheep. He constantly embraced the hardships of missionary life, the cold winters, the endless miles on snowshoes and the loneliness of leaving behind his family, friends and homeland. His life embraced personal sacrifice for the salvation of the people of God. Let us ask God to form bishops like him, for whom no sacrifice was too great for the proclamation of the Gospel and the salvation of the people.

Bishop Baraga did not seek power, prestige or personal gain. He died having given away his last dollars, and his life exemplified his motto: "Only One Thing is Necessary." That one thing is God. Let us ask God to form bishops like him, who do not seek power or personal gain but rather only Jesus and his glory.

Bishop Baraga was not an executive manager but a pastor of the people. He knew them. He spent time with them. He spoke their language. He accompanied them on their journey of faith. Bishop Baraga listened to their troubles and cared for their physical and spiritual needs. He celebrated the sacraments for their salvation and was dedicated to preaching and teaching the truth of the Catholic faith. Bishop Baraga called people to conversion and exhorted them to live a moral life. Let us ask God to form bishops like him who are not managers but pastors and faithful shepherds.

Let us not lose hope that God will extend his healing love to the victims of clergy sexual abuse. Let us not lose hope that God will purify and renew his Church.

Please help by doing the following:

- Pray for the victims of clergy sexual abuse. Pray that God may heal them with his love.
- Pray that God may purify and renew the Church.
- Love and pray for your priests. The priests who have committed evil deeds have cast a dark shadow on the many good and faithful priests. Please love and care for them.
- Pray for me and all bishops, priests and deacons, that we may follow Jesus, live the Gospel and be faithful shepherds of Christ's flock like Bishop Baraga.
- Finally, report any knowledge that you have of clergy sexual abuse. To begin the process, call one of the Victim's Assistance Coordinators: **Stephen Lynott at (844) 495-4330 or Diane Tryan at (844) 694-4362** or write: **Victims Assistance Coordinator, c/o Catholic Social Services of the UP, 1100 Ludington St. Suite 401, Escanaba MI 49829**. Please mark the letter "**Personal and Confidential**" and indicate in your letter how you wish to be contacted (by phone or by letter). We always encourage you to report the incident to local civil authorities. The Diocese of Marquette reports all allegations to the appropriate civil authorities.

Let us pray. Come, Holy Spirit. Come renew and sanctify Your Church.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend John F. Doerfler, STD, JCL
Bishop of Marquette