



Diocese of Rockford

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Office of the Bishop

August 28, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We have learned once again in the last few weeks that evil continues to be with us as reports from the past have revealed vile and moral crimes against the people of God, most especially our young. The allegations of abuse are all-too vivid reminders of what the Gospel tells us about the evil that confronts us and challenges our faith. As recently as this past weekend, numerous new reports and allegations against the leadership of the hierarchy have continued to surface.

Our faith is shaken by these reports of moral failures by deacons, priests and bishops. We are angry, sad, hurt and ashamed of those in whom we placed our trust to care for our souls. As people of common faith, we know that when one of us suffers, all are suffering.

In these past weeks, since we learned of the horrific allegations against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, and then of the Grand Jury Report from the six dioceses in Pennsylvania, I have heard your anguish. I have received your letters of disgust. I very much understand what has compelled the outcry for justice from the Church, and personally, I share the anger that is being expressed.

Having already written to you on August 17, 2018, I now write to you once again for three very important reasons.

First, I want to assure you of the specific safeguards in place here in the Diocese of Rockford. Are we doing all we can? The Rockford Diocese maintains strict administrative policies in regard to training its priests, staff and volunteers. These policies in regard to all abuses were in place dating back long before “A Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” was created by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2002 at its meeting in Dallas, Texas.

Specifically, to assure the protection and safety of our young people, the Diocese of Rockford has the following practices in place:

- Our diocese has had a diocesan Intervention Team since 1987 with a lay professional victim’s assistance coordinator who provides outreach to victims.
- We mandate that all adult staff and volunteers in all diocesan offices, parishes, schools and organizations complete training in safe environments so as to recognize, identify and report predatory and harassing behaviors.
- We mandate that all diocesan, parish, school and organizational employees and volunteers undergo police background checks.

- All Catholic school students and all students of religious education programs in preschool through 12th grade are taught to know and understand the dignity and safety of their bodies and how to recognize, say “no” to, and report any violation or disrespect of their person.
- The Diocese’s written policies and guidelines for proper social media use, moral and pastoral conduct and rules for proper behavior in working with youth, must be signed and adhered to by all employees and volunteers.
- The Diocese of Rockford undergoes an annual outside, independent audit to measure compliance with all policies by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Diocese of Rockford has not only fully cooperated with this audit, but has been found in compliance each year since its inception in 2003.
- I personally complete annual seminary visits to monitor the training of our future priests and to encourage and support the holiness of their vocation.
- The Diocese has heightened scrutiny for accepting candidates for seminaries and for its permanent diaconate program.
- Credible allegations of abuse are reported to civil authorities for a full independent investigation, and the accused person is immediately removed from ministry.
- The public is provided regular reminders on the Diocese’s website, social media platforms and publications that if you or anyone you know may be the victim of sexual abuse by clergy **to first** report it to authorities in the county in which the abuse occurred and to call the **diocesan hotline at 815-293-7540**.

These policies and procedures have helped our diocese and many others to send a very clear message that abuse of young people by any lay, consecrated or ordained person will not be tolerated.

The second reason I write to you is to keep you informed of what will come next for our Church. As I said in my August 17 statement in regard to these latest scandals, I will work with the leadership of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to move forward in updating the policies and procedures to resolve complaints against bishops which, as Cardinal Daniel DiNardo wrote, will be conducted with “proper independence, sufficient authority, and substantial leadership by laity.” I will take your voices with me as we bishops take up the work of assuring transparency and insuring moral judgement in all parts of church leadership. This will be difficult work but it is vital to heal the wounds of our past and to create a healthier and holier future for the Catholic community.

In addition, the Diocese of Rockford has learned that Attorney General Lisa Madigan plans to conduct an inquiry of the Catholic dioceses in Illinois. We look forward to discussing with the Attorney General’s office the Diocese’s sexual abuse policies and procedures along with the other Catholic dioceses in the State of Illinois.

And third, I write to apologize again for the cross this terrible news has laid upon all of you. For all those that walk on in their faith journey despite carrying the heavy wounds of others, I thank you. A life of faith is never easy but together we can support one another in remembering that our Catholic faith is not about any one of us, but of Christ and for Christ. I also want to thank the good and faithful priests, deacons and consecrated men and women of this Diocese who persevere in living and serving a devoted and chaste life in this Diocese. I pray our brothers and sisters may be judged on their own dedication and moral character rather than by the sins of others.

And finally, and most importantly, I hope you will join me in prayer for any and all victims. Our penance can never replace their innocence but perhaps it can pave the way toward healing.

Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse

*God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.*

*Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.*

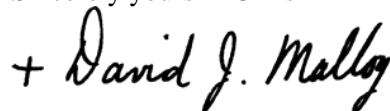
*Hear our cries as we agonize
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,
soothe restless hearts with hope,
steady shaken spirits with faith:
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.*

*Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform our brokenness.
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice
and find peace in you.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

To further illustrate our commitment to prayer and penance, I will say a special Mass for Healing at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Rockford at 7:00 on Friday evening, September 14th, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the vigil of the Memorial of Our Lady of Sorrows. To the extent possible, I ask all priests to say a special Mass for Healing on that same day, at that same time. In this way we can dedicate our entire diocese to prayer for those victimized by ministers of the Church and for an increase in holiness in the Body of Christ.

Our Lady of Sorrows, Pray for Us. Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Pray for Us.

Sincerely yours in Christ's name,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ David J. Malloy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford