



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

August 10, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with a heavy heart that I write to address the recent reports that Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, retired archbishop of Washington, engaged in inappropriate and abusive sexual conduct. The reports have filled me with feelings of betrayal and sadness, as well as profound empathy and sympathy for all those who have suffered harm when bishops failed to uphold and protect the safety and human dignity of people entrusted to their care.

The outrage that many people have expressed over the circumstances of this case is justifiable. This situation demands swift and decisive action to ensure that what led to these events can never be repeated. Formulating that response is something that will require us who are bishops to draw in a renewed way on the faith and expertise of all the baptized, lay and ordained alike.

As this work proceeds at a national level, it is important that we also focus on the processes in place here at home. In the Diocese of Manchester, we have policies, reporting procedures, and training programs that are designed to prevent, prohibit, and promptly address reports of sexual abuse and sexual harassment by all Church personnel, including deacons, priests, and bishops. I want to emphasize that there is no one connected with the Diocese of Manchester, *including* the Bishop of Manchester, who is above the abuse reporting policies in place in this Diocese. We also have an Office for Healing and Pastoral Care which has been and remains available to offer support for anyone, whether an adult or minor, who is a victim or survivor of abuse, harassment, or exploitation, no matter how long ago the harm was suffered. Information about our reporting procedures, policies, programs, and Office for Healing and Pastoral Care can be found on our website: www.catholicnh.org/child-safety. I encourage you to learn to identify signs of abuse or harassment; complete the training programs; read the resources available on our website; share this information with your children and others; and address and make reports whenever you have concerns about the behavior of those who work or volunteer for the Church.

The fact that we have these policies and procedures in place should not be a cause for complaisance, however. The reports involving Archbishop McCarrick prompt us to revisit the procedures and the programs we have in place now so that we can be certain that they are indeed sufficient to protect both minors and adults and that we have adequately communicated how to report concerns about Church personnel, including bishops, priests, and deacons.

I have asked the Diocesan Review Board for help in evaluating our current policies, procedures, resources, and training programs to ensure that we are doing all we can to prevent abuse and harassment. The Diocesan Review Board consists of seven people, including lay parish representatives, a Catholic pastor, an Episcopalian priest, a lawyer, a person with experience treating those who were sexually abused, and a member of law enforcement. The Board will examine the situation involving Archbishop McCarrick, will consult with experts and others with knowledge and experience regarding these matters, and will make recommendations for improvements to our procedures and policies. Once complete, information about the recommendations of the Board and our policies will be posted to the diocesan website.

There is one final thing I would like to say, and it weighs heavily on my mind. As Pope Francis has put it, "God's dream always clashes with the hypocrisy of some of his servants." I know that, because of the failures of some Church leaders, some may be tempted to pull away from the Church. But it is important to remember that the Catholic Church is not the individual bishops and cardinals, or even the pope. The Church is all the people of God, working together in service to the world for the sake of the Gospel. The Church is the parishioners who offer mercy meals after funerals, the people who serve in Catholic food pantries and food banks serving the poor, the hungry, and the most vulnerable among us, those who serve in ministries that support and accompany the ill, the dying, and the immigrants and refugees, and the many good and faithful clergy and religious who have offered up their entire lives in humble service.

So I urge you not to be discouraged and not to be deterred. The world desperately needs the Church, and the Church desperately needs you. In the words of St. Teresa of Avila: "Christ has no body now but yours; no hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."

While the temptation to separate and to create division may be strong, I hope that we can work together in unity to bring about the changes that will create a Church that is ever more holy and strong, true to its mission to lift up the dignity of every human person.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter A. Libasci". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci, D.D.
Bishop of Manchester