



## Diocese of Pittsburgh

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*Office of the Bishop*

August 14, 2018

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The Church is the Body of Christ. We are called to be His face, His hands, His heart. Today, we are all wounded in some way by the heartbreaking accounts in the Grand Jury report. I understand your shock upon learning about what victims have suffered at the hands of men who were ordained to be the image of Christ. We cannot minimize the harm done.

As I mentioned in my last letter to you, throughout my ministry as a bishop I have often met with victims of child sexual abuse by clergy to offer my sincere apology in the name of the Church. And so today, to those who have suffered abuse, to the families who have shared their pain, I again sincerely apologize for the harm that you have suffered.

We cannot bury our heads in the sand. There were instances in the past, as outlined in the Grand Jury report, when the Church acted in ways that did not respond effectively to victims. Swift and firm responses to allegations should have started long before they did. For that I also express profound regret. At the same time, I express gratitude to survivors who have taught us to respond with compassion to those who are wounded and with determination to remove offenders from ministry.

But sorrow and apology are not enough without action. The Diocese of Pittsburgh has a long history of reaching out to victims with compassion, to help them recover.

Over the course of the last 30 years, we have made significant improvements to how we respond to and prevent abuse and report allegations. And those changes have made a great difference. The Diocese of Pittsburgh today is not the Church described in the Grand Jury Report.

Of all of the acts of child sexual abuse that have been alleged against clergy of this diocese since 1940, 90 percent occurred prior to 1990. We still receive allegations, but nearly all of them concern abuse that took place in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

There is no priest or deacon in ministry today against whom there has been a substantiated allegation of child sexual abuse. Every allegation, no matter how old it is or whether it appears credible, is quickly turned over to the appropriate district attorney. In addition, we strive to let you, our faithful and the public, know what is happening. When I have had to remove a cleric due to an allegation of child sexual abuse, I have written letters to be read from the pulpit of their parishes and have also issued news releases.

If, however, a complaint has been deemed to be unsubstantiated, that priest may remain in ministry.

Furthermore, the vetting and formation of future priests has continually improved over the past 40 years. Those who appear unable to commit to a healthy celibate lifestyle are not ordained for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Also, since 1989 the diocese has engaged an Independent Review Board, consisting of prosecutors, psychotherapists, attorneys and parents of abuse victims, to advise me on whether an allegation is substantiated and whether an accused priest or deacon is suitable for ministry.

When you walk into your church, you see posters telling you how to report child sexual abuse and booklets explaining how we respond to clergy sexual misconduct. If you have ever sought to volunteer in your parish or school, you know about the background checks that we require and the class you have to take on the prevention of child sexual abuse. These are also required of all clergy and employees of the diocese and our parishes. In addition, our *Code of Pastoral Conduct* mandates practical measures to prevent child sexual abuse by clergy, employees and volunteers.

The report of the Grand Jury covers a span of nearly seventy years. Today, however, we must focus on our need to remain vigilant in our efforts to protect children.

Here are some of our next steps:

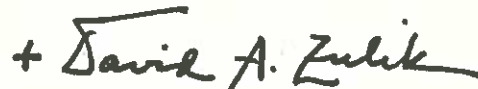
- We have engaged an expert with extensive experience as a state prosecutor and federal official specializing in crimes against children. He will review our policies and practices related to child protection and make recommendations for improvement.
- We have created a position and are hiring an experienced professional to actively monitor clergy who have been removed from ministry following allegations of child sexual abuse.
- As I announced previously, we have posted on our website a list of diocesan clergy against whom an allegation was made that has been substantiated by the diocese or included in the Grand Jury report.

We are all in this together. Sadly, child sexual abuse occurs in every institution, even in the family. On a practical level, every institution – religious or otherwise – must confront this offense. In sharing all of this information with you, I do so to reassure you that we work hard to create environments where your children can be safe. Any effort to protect children is most effective when we work together.

Finally, I ask all of you to pray. Pray for the victims who have suffered this harm. Pray for your priests and deacons, who serve so faithfully, and who feel that this report undermines their ministry. Pray for the Church, that we will be purified by this trial and that I, and all of our leaders, will be ever more faithful servants of Jesus.

Grateful for our belief that, “Nothing Is Impossible With God,” I am,

Your Brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ David A. Zubik". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend David A. Zubik  
Bishop of Pittsburgh

DAZ:dmk