



Saint Julie Billiart

CATHOLIC CHURCH

7399 West 159th Street • Tinley Park IL 60477 • 708-429-6767 • www.stjulie.org

August 27, 2018

Dear Parishioners,

Once again we are faced with news that is disturbing to say the least. The recent reports of clergy sexual abuse are disgusting. The news of a former-Cardinal who used his position of authority to perpetrate abuse on seminarians and minors is exacerbated by the damning Grand Jury report from Pennsylvania. To read any of these accounts leads me to a profound sadness over the suffering of victims of these crimes and an equally profound anger at these grave sins from leaders in the Church. While the Church has made significant strides in promoting protection for children over the last 16 years, there is still obviously much more work to do and certainly more work to root out the sins of the past. Allow me the opportunity to offer a few personal reflections upon this crisis.

- Victims first! I have had the first-hand experience in the past to listen to the stories of victims of abuse. It turns my stomach as you hear their pain. In my mind, I can't understand how anyone would want to rob an innocent youth; and yet, they do. Sexual abuse is always wrong - it is sinful! Our first concern must always be to promote healing and compassion to those who have been abused. Lives have literally been lost because of such sins. A Church that is honest with, loving towards and caring for abuse victims is the Church I want to be a part of.
- Transparency and Truth are key! The recent stories that we hear speak - for the most part - of abuse that happened a long time ago. Rest assured though, this sin is still present in our society and therefore in our Church. To truly cleanse the Church of our past sins we must be honest and open about what occurred. We must be transparent in the actions that were taken as well as the failures of our actions. While not an excuse, the reality is that the way in which we dealt with many "issues" in the past are not the 'ways' of the present. As times have changed, so must we, as an institution, change to better address our sins. In 2002, the Dallas Charter was implemented to address the clergy sex abuse crisis. While implementing policies to root out abuse among clergy, its gaping failure was not to outline procedures for holding bishops accountable. A new charter must be created to hold our leadership accountable. I don't understand how a bishop cannot be held accountable in the same manner as any other priest, religious brother or sister or lay employee in matters of conduct with sexual abuse. Silence is deadly for victims; silence is deadly for the credibility of the Church. I hope and pray that our leadership will address these matters with transparency and truth.
- Justice is required. Amidst all the "noise" surrounding this serious matter, we must attend to justice in dealing with clergy sexual abuse and accountability for Church leadership. It is a fact that it is a very small number of perpetrators of abuse in the priesthood, yet their sins have caused so great a pain to us all. Perpetrators of abuse must be brought to justice - civil and ecclesial. Furthermore, the Church's hierarchy must be equally brought to justice for failures in doing all that they can to protect children and for shortsighted efforts to cover up. We as "the Church" must demand this justice, but we also must do so in a way that is not vengeful and does

seek the truth. It is easy to “call for heads to roll,” it is not so easy to have patience and understanding in finding the ultimate truth and what is the right remedy of justice. My anger wants to blow things up, but how will we put all pieces back together in a healthy and just way for the future if our call for justice comes solely out of our anger?

- Who we are matters. We are the Church, the Body of Christ. We are all sinners striving to be saints. The issues surrounding sexual abuse and covering up past sins affects us all. None of us is immune from feelings in this matter: anger, frustration, sadness, embarrassment. We have and will continue to suffer greatly from the sins of a few. Nevertheless, because we are who we are - the Church - I believe we will come through this momentary affliction with greater faith and a greater commitment to be the disciples who God wants us to be. At the core of our faith is the Cross of Jesus Christ. Jesus died for our sins and brought about new life. Our current sins are but more nails taken for us by Jesus, and trusting in Jesus, we cannot lose sight of the hope in new life that Jesus will bring to us.

My friends, this is a difficult moment for all of us. I write these words to you as your pastor, a priest of Jesus Christ and fellow disciple of the Lord. I know they are inadequate. Yet they are an attempt on my part to offer my personal perspective of the challenges we face together. Please know that I join in sharing all of your feelings wrapped up in this scandal. We will see this through together. We will continue to strive to create a Church that is known not for our past sins and present failings, but a Church that is rooted in faith and committed to demonstrating God’s justice, mercy and love.

Peace and Prayers,



Rev. Louis Tylka
Pastor

*Open our eyes
to the needs of our brothers and sisters;
inspire in us words and actions
to comfort those who labor and are burdened.
Make us serve them truly,
after the example of Christ and at his command.
And may your Church stand as a living witness
to truth and freedom,
to peace and justice,
that all people may be raised up to a new hope.*

~Roman Missal; Eucharistic Prayer for Use in Various Needs IV