



THE ARCHBISHOP OF REGINA

May 6, 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Once again, in recent weeks, we have seen the subject of the sexual abuse of children by Catholic Priests rise to the headlines in Canadian newspapers and in our national news media. Concerted attempts have been made to draw the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, into direct responsibility for failing to properly deal with cases of sexual abuse of children by priests. The reality of sexual abuse of children deeply troubles Catholic people as it does the priests and bishops who have been faithful to their vows and promises of celibacy and chastity and who continue to make every effort to live their lives according to the moral teachings of Jesus Christ and his Church.

The fact of sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests and religious came to full public awareness in our country approximately thirty years ago. Since that time both our Church and our society have grown in ever-greater awareness of how devastating this abuse has been on the victims who were innocent children. It has led to ruined lives and persistent anguish. Both the faithful and the leaders of our Church feel deep shame and anger over the hurt that some members of its clergy have inflicted upon the most innocent and vulnerable of our church family: our children.

The leaders of our Church have apologized and continue to apologize to the innocent victims for the great harm that was done to them by people whom they should have been able to totally trust and in whose presence they should have been secure and safe. As members of the Church we also continue to pray that God will give these victims strength, comfort and healing through His power and grace and through the love and support of their church community today.

I urge the faithful of the Archdiocese not to be discouraged by media reports which imply that a great number of priests have been involved in this criminal and sinful activity. This is simply not the reality. Catholics are well aware that these crimes have been committed by a very small percentage of priests and religious.

And likewise I urge our people not to be misled by reports, which give the impression that this is a problem concerning only the Catholic Church. The Church fully admits that some of its clergy have committed these crimes. None the less, the abuse of children is a tragic reality that is found throughout the whole of our Canadian society and needs to be addressed as such. The great majority of sexual crimes against children are perpetrated by people who are neither Catholic priests, nor by those committed to living a celibate life. Regardless of this, we readily admit that the crime of even one priest is too many. It harms an innocent victim and sullies the whole community of the faithful. The priest is called to be a teacher, a witness and a living example of Christian moral life.

Catholic people however can take heart in the extensive efforts that their Bishops have made over the last twenty years to deal with these crimes and to make sure that children and vulnerable adults can take part today in the activities of the Church in safety and security. Canadian Bishops have set in place protocols and codes of conduct for all those who work in any way with children and vulnerable adults in the activities of the Church.

In 1992 the Conference of Canadian Catholic Bishops published "From Pain to Hope," a document giving

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direction to all the dioceses in Canada on ways of effectively dealing with the harmful results of the sexual abuse and recommending ways to prevent recurrences of sexual abuse of children. This document was renewed in 2007 and a new document of Orientations was published to assist Catholic Dioceses in Canada in updating their diocesan protocols for the prevention of sexual abuse.

In our Archdiocese of Regina, the long standing Protocol to deal with cases of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults was revised during this past year and made available to every parish in the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese continues to encourage any person who has a complaint of abuse to make this complaint known.

This Protocol outlines the procedures that are to be followed when a complaint of sexual abuse is received by anyone who works for the Church either on the parish or diocesan level. It is to be clearly understood that, as of the end of May this year, no person may work with children or vulnerable adults in any Church or Parish programs or ministry in the Archdiocese who has not met the requirements set out in the Archdiocesan Protocol. It is important that all parish staff and those involved in ministry or church activities with children and vulnerable adults as well as all Parish Pastoral Council members be familiar with the Archdiocesan Protocol. All Catholics are encouraged to read this Protocol.

Most of the incidents of abuse that are reported in the news media occurred decades ago. Since that time a great deal has been achieved to address the harm done and to assure that the Catholic Church is truly a safe place for all people, and particularly for children.

We recognize with gratitude the work that our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI has done to deal with sexual abuse by members of the clergy. He has met with victims and listened to their stories. He has condemned this abuse clearly and has put in place a number of measures to help the Bishops of the world effectively and justly deal with this crime and to do all in their power to protect against it in the future.

As a Church, we deal daily with the awareness that we are all sinful people in need of God's forgiveness and mercy in our lives. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist we begin by seeking forgiveness from God, all of us confessing: "*I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do.*" At Communion we receive the Bread of Life so that we may be strengthened to turn away from sin and live as faithful followers of Jesus and members of His Body.

The darkness of sin and abuse touches all our lives. But in this time of Easter, we draw hope from Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. Jesus, risen from the dead, drives out the darkness of sin and fills our world with the bright light of God's love and saving power. This Easter Faith gives all of us reason to hope and to have confidence for a future of true justice and love for all, especially those most vulnerable and in need of our protection.

Yours sincerely in Christ,



✠ Daniel J Bohan
Archbishop of Regina

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