



Office of
The Archbishop
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February 26, 2019

Dear Friends in Christ,

An extraordinary meeting in Rome between Pope Francis and representatives of the world's bishops concluded this past Sunday. The purpose of this gathering was to address the great evil of clerical sexual abuse of minors, with particular focus on bishops who failed to appropriately deal with this abuse in their dioceses.

The meeting identified many laudable principles and sentiments; however, some have expressed disappointment that it fell short of expectations. I encourage each of you to read for yourself the closing statement of Pope Francis found at <https://www.pbc2019.org/home>.

There is no doubt that the scourge of sexual abuse demands that bishops step up and lead with courage and moral clarity. As your Archbishop, I promise you that:

- Allegations of sexual abuse of a minor or vulnerable adult will always be promptly reported to the appropriate civil law enforcement authorities.
- I will remove from ministry permanently, and without the ability to be transferred to any other Catholic institution, any member of the clergy who is found to have sexually abused a minor or a vulnerable adult.
- We will continue to offer counseling and resources to the victims of sexual abuse to help them recover and heal from the damage they have experienced.
- All priests, deacons, employees and volunteers of the Archdiocese or its various ministries will continue to be subject to criminal background checks and trained on how to spot the signs of abuse, their obligation to report all suspected abuse, and exactly how to do so.
- I require, and will continue to enforce, a strict and diligent screening process for all seminary applicants and the highest standards of formation of men suitable to the Catholic priesthood at our seminary.

From the depths of my heart, I am sorry for the terrible pain and suffering experienced by the victims of abuse throughout their lives. I understand the anger and frustration that Catholic lay people rightfully feel at the inexcusable behavior of certain cardinals, bishops, and priests, the emotional exhaustion of having to defend their faith to friends and co-workers, and the discouragement of having to relive this deep tragedy. I am deeply saddened by the stigma that good and holy priests who are committed to their vocation and vows have to endure. I am sorry for the trust that has collectively been violated.

We live in a culture that cries out for the Gospel more than ever. Everywhere, I see people desperate for meaning in their lives, wanting to love and be loved, yearning for Jesus, even if they don't realize it. The mission of the Catholic Church, commissioned by Jesus Himself, is to bring the Good News of God's mercy and love to every corner of the earth. Tragically, the actions of some of our own members have diminished our ability to do this sacred work. I remain determined to take every step necessary in this archdiocese to help heal the injured, confront and remove evildoers, and to boldly and joyfully proclaim the salvation promised us by Jesus Christ.

Many of you may be feeling that Jesus has forsaken the Church. This is not true. Rather, some members of the Church have forsaken Jesus and the call to be disciples. Jesus established His Church on earth and promised to never leave us. As we know from the Gospel of John, "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (Jn 1:5).

Please join me in praying for the healing of all victims of the grave sin of sexual abuse. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, patroness of the Catholic Church in the United States, continue to intercede for us. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide and protect us.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dennis M. Schnurr". The signature is written in a cursive style and includes a small cross symbol at the beginning of the first name.

Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr
Archbishop of Cincinnati