

August 17, 2018

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

My heart and my soul are hurting. I was troubled a few weeks ago as the news broke about Cardinal McCarrick, but as I read more of the Pennsylvania grand jury report this past week I have experienced many emotions including shock, grief, sadness, betrayal and anger. The details of the abuse of more than 1,000 children by over 300 priests and the cover up by laity and Bishops is sickening. There is no defense. I've needed time to reflect and pray and still am struggling.

We do a lot of ministry with youth at our parish, and this week I attended three different back to school events with many of our parents. I thanked them for entrusting their children to us in these days when we are all fearful for our children, and I assured them we will do all that we can to keep them secure and safe and surrounded by God's love. Today, more than ever, I feel that you and I and our entire Church have a moral obligation to minister to our youth.

I promise you that I have and will act quickly if I have any knowledge that a child entrusted to our care is being hurt in any way. Our entire staff and key volunteers have been trained to report any suspected abuse to the police and state authorities first and then to the Archdiocese. As parishioners I ask you to stand up against any possible abuse yourselves. In the four years I have been pastor at Prince of Peace, I have insisted that every staff member and any person 16 years of age or older who will be interacting with minors in any way at our parish follows Archdiocesan and Church policy. They must attend a Virtus training session, submit to a background check, and read and sign a Code of Ethical Standards, Child Protection Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy. This is a good start, but we must be vigilant.

I also promise that I will be very vocal in asking our Archbishop for an independent investigation by professionals not employed by the Church, on how such abuse could have been covered up by Bishops for so long to ensure such deception does not occur again. I invite you to express your feelings and concerns to our Archbishop as well.

In closing, I want to apologize to you for how the institutional church and clergy have failed you over and over again. I am sure you feel the shame and disgust I feel, and as a priest I owe you an apology for these actions of my brother priests against our children. I ask for your prayers for victims and their families as well as for our Church.

I love our Catholic Church and I love all of you.

God bless,



Fr. Jerry Volz, Pastor