

Message from Bishop Cunningham:

In light of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report on Clergy Sexual Abuse released today, Bishop Cunningham offers the following statement:

These are difficult days to be a Roman Catholic. The allegations regarding Archbishop Theodore McCarrick and now the release of the grand jury report involving six dioceses in Pennsylvania have deepened a wound for Catholics who have been besieged by news of clergy sexual abuse since 2002. It is understandable for many to ask, "What is next?" "What and who can I trust?"

"How did this ever happen?" The People of God are rightfully asking these questions. In these recent days, we have become painfully aware that those meant to shepherd and guide others are sinners not only in the sense that all are fallible but also specifically in the area of sexual abuse of children and young people. They must be held accountable for their actions. Bishops are no exception.

Our focus together should always be the safety and well-being of the human person - especially the vulnerable and the innocent among us. Over the past 15 years, since the crisis broke in 2002, the Diocese of Syracuse has addressed this problem aggressively by reporting all allegations to the appropriate district attorney, ensuring that no priest with a credible allegation of abuse remains in ministry, and preventing acts of abuse through our highly successful Safe Environment Program. There are now nearly 40,000 individuals trained in child sexual abuse prevention as well as criminally background checked. I am grateful to the trained men and women who have worked tirelessly either as members of our Diocesan Review Board or Safe Environment program to ensure that the Diocese of Syracuse has an established and well-monitored set of policies and procedures that will not allow any abuse to ever take place.

Like you, I am deeply troubled by these grievous acts and I must again apologize for the pain and suffering endured by our people. To the victims of clergy sexual abuse decades ago, I know I can never change what has taken place, nor remove the pain or the anger. I will continue to pray fervently for all victims of clergy sexual abuse, to ask those who have been harmed to come forward to report the abuse in order to begin the healing process and remain steadfast in my personal commitment that this horrific chapter in our local church will not happen again.

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