



## OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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The Queenship of Mary, August 22, 2018

My Dear Faithful of the Diocese of Crookston,

The recent revelations regarding allegations of sexual misconduct by Archbishop McCarrick and the publication of the Grand Jury report detailing sexual abuse perpetrated by 300 priests, on 1000 victims, over a 70-year period in six dioceses of Pennsylvania, are deeply disturbing. The horrific acts described and their alleged dismissal and/or cover-up by Church authorities fill us with a sense of disgust, anger, outrage, shame and sadness. It is painful to have to admit, once again, that this evil has been part of the life of the People of God in the United States. This evil is acknowledged; it is condemned.

All victims are owed sincere apologies for what those entrusted with leadership in the Church have done and have failed to do. It is important that we promise to continue, with renewed effort, our commitment to build in the Church, as Pope Francis puts it, “a culture of care that says ‘never again’ to any form of abuse.”

To this end, Cardinal DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has announced that, with an approval vote of the Conference, we will ask the Holy See to conduct an Apostolic Visitation in which a thorough investigation of these matters, utilizing qualified laypersons, can be undertaken. Changes are necessary so that sins and failures of the past are not repeated.

My friends, as we look to the need for juridical and organizational change, we recognize that fighting evil calls for engagement by all. In his recent Letter to the Church, Pope Francis addresses this moment in our life by saying, “The only way we can respond to the evil that has darkened so many lives is to experience it as a task regarding all of us, the People of God.” And so, our Holy Father calls each of us, “the entire holy, faithful People of God, to the penitential exercises of prayer and fasting.”

I invite you to join me in prayer and fasting as we fight the evil of sexual abuse and all its ramifications at this moment in our Church’s life. I ask you to: 1) Offer a prayer daily for all victims of sexual abuse and their families; ask God to be with them and watch over them. 2) Sacrifice by fasting and abstaining from eating meat on Fridays as a prayer to Almighty God for forgiveness of sins and as a prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit that all might do better. 3) I ask all of our priests to pray a Votive Mass for the Church at a weekday Mass at least once a month and invite all parishioners to attend.

The Church, as the Bride of Christ, is holy. Our holiness is both a gift and a challenge. In this moment, as we work and pray to fight evil and grow in holiness, these words of St. Paul encourage us: “This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God, not from us. We are afflicted in every way possible, but we are not crushed; full of doubts, we never despair...” (2 Cor. 4:7-8) May Mary our Queen intercede for us.

Sincerely, in the name of the Lord Jesus,

Most Rev. Michael J. Hoepfner  
Bishop of Crookston