

# 'We share your pain and anguish'

The Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories have issued a pastoral response to concerns raised by the recent report of extensive clerical sex abuse in Pennsylvania. [Their letter, dated August 17,](#) assures the faithful that their bishops share "a profound sense of disappointment, grief and anger over the actions of people entrusted to act in the name of Christ and guide His Church." The bishops also express sorrow over damage done to victims and renew their commitment to accountability and abuse prevention in their dioceses.

Here is the text of the letter:

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Like you and faithful Catholics everywhere, we heard the most recent revelations of child sex abuse by clergy in the United States with deep dismay.

We share with you a profound sense of disappointment, grief and anger over the actions of people entrusted to act in the name of Christ and guide His Church. We echo the sentiments expressed in the statement released (August 16, 2018) from the Vatican regarding the Interim Report of the Investigating Grand Jury of Pennsylvania:

*"The abuses described in the report are criminal and morally reprehensible. Those acts were betrayals of trust that robbed survivors of their dignity and their faith. The Church must learn hard lessons from its past, and there should be accountability for both abusers and those who permitted abuse to occur..."*

*The Holy See encourages continued reform and vigilance at all levels of the Catholic Church, to help ensure the protection of minors and vulnerable adults from harm. The Holy See also wants to underscore the need to comply with the civil law, including mandatory child abuse reporting requirements.*

*The Holy Father understands well how much these crimes can shake the faith and the spirit of believers and reiterates the call to make every effort to create a safe environment for minors and vulnerable adults in the Church and in all of society.*

*Victims should know that the Pope is on their side. Those who have suffered are his priority, and the Church wants to listen to them to root out this tragic horror that destroys the lives of the innocent."*

Our hearts break when we hear that children have been harmed in such a lasting and destructive way, through absolutely no fault of their own. It is particularly abhorrent when perpetrated by a member of the clergy. We share in the shame and sorrow of those whose faith has been shaken by this news. When a member of the body suffers, the whole body of Christ suffers. We encourage

everyone to pray for the victims, and to remember that the power of the Gospel message can never be destroyed by sin.

To our brothers and sisters who have suffered personally or through family members who have been abused in the Church community, we pledge to listen, and to share your pain and anguish. We invite you to contact us at the local diocesan office.

To those who continue to serve the Church in ministry, whether ordained or lay persons, we are grateful for your dedication and faith in this difficult time. We stand with you, and we pray that God give us all the courage and resilience we need to persevere and remain always morally accountable in our ministry.

We all have a sacred trust to protect those who are vulnerable, particularly children, and to stand up and speak when we witness that trust betrayed. We have made Safe Environments and Abuse Prevention programs a high priority in our dioceses. We cannot run or hide from instances of abuse and harm, and we have no desire to do so. We confront these situations with the Gospel principles of truth, justice, repentance and healing.

With this letter, we renew our commitment to ensure that any clergy, employee, or lay volunteer who commits an offence against children or other vulnerable persons is promptly removed from ministry, that any offences are immediately reported to civil authorities, and that victims receive an apology, compassion and assistance in recovering from any harm they have suffered, including compensation where appropriate.

With the help of God's grace, we must continue to exercise our responsibility for the care of all victims, especially children. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may we always fulfill our moral obligation to uphold and safeguard the dignity of each human person.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Catholic Bishops of Alberta and NWT*

Most Reverend Richard W. Smith  
Archbishop of Edmonton

Most Reverend William T. McGrattan  
Bishop of Calgary

Most Reverend David Motiuk  
Bishop of the Ukrainian Eparchy of Edmonton

Most Reverend Gerard Pettipas CSSR  
Archbishop Grouard-McLennan

Most Reverend Paul Terrio

Bishop of St. Paul

Most Reverend Jon Hansen CSsR  
Bishop of Mackenzie-Fort Smith

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