



**St. John Paul II Parish &  
Southtowns Catholic School**

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Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

For the longest time the Catholic Church has been under attack as a result of the sexual abuse scandal. The attack has not been from the outside, it has been from the inside. Like all of you I have been angry, upset, sad, confused, have had my faith rattled and at times have called many things into question when it comes to what I know, believe and love about my faith. This past weekend for the 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, our First Reading and Gospel reminded us that we are called to “...love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength,” and for this reason I am proud of my priesthood and it is why I am a priest of Jesus Christ.

The transparency and release of more names that occurred on Monday November 5 has been something that many of us have hoped for, for a very long time; not since February, but for many years. However, there is the realization that more names of priests, deacons and lay people may be forthcoming. Many of you may know some of those names that are on the list and you yourself might feel betrayed, and that is understandable. While I am not a professional counselor, I am always open to sitting down and discussing any type of emotions you might be feeling.

Please know that the good priests of the Diocese of Buffalo stand with you and hurt just like you do. The sins of the Church are inexcusable. Our society has become an overly sexualized society and we are starting to see necessary action both in the area of child abuse and harassment/abuse of adults thanks in large part to the “#MeToo” Movement. As we continue to try and move forward and find solutions by taking necessary actions please have the courage, or encourage those you know, who might be victims of any type of abuse to report it immediately to the authorities. If it involves anyone from the Church (priest, deacon, parish/school staff, volunteer) please report it to those in the proper position including **Jacqueline Joy, Victim Abuse Coordinator for the Diocese of Buffalo, 716-895-3010.**

No solution or action will solve any of the problems created overnight, but with each step we have to be hopeful that none of these events happen ever again. I am proud of who I am as a priest but I am human and at times during all of this, “shame,” has been a real emotion for me. I find it hard to watch the news today because it seems like as a society there is a report of abuse happening regularly, whether the diocese is putting someone on leave, or the report of an uncle abusing/jeopardizing a child. We must stand together and change not just the environment in the Church, but the environment in society as a whole. I admit, I am not sure how this is done.

We have lost many brothers and sisters in the faith who have left because of what has unfolded, and I pray that they have not left forever. While it frustrates me because I believe there to be false accusations out there, it frustrates me all the more that even one case is true. Our faith must always remain in Jesus Christ because he is our King, he is the one we are called to serve and worship, and that is what we need to try and remain focused on: Loving our LORD with all our heart, mind and strength.

Thank you for your witness to the faith, and please continue to pray for all effected by these sins.

In Good Faith,

Rev. Michael P. LaMarca  
Temporary Administrator