



STATEMENT REGARDING CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE

August 24, 2018

To the Clergy, Religious and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Peterborough,

The recent revelations about clergy sexual abuse, especially the publication of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, are a cause for sorrow and shame in the Church. People are reeling from this latest wave of news and the disclosure of grave evil and institutional cover-up in the Church. It is understandable that people are angry, disillusioned and are calling for greater accountability from Church leaders. I believe that people deserve nothing less.

As Bishop of Peterborough, I want you to know that I am united with the faithful of our Diocese and beyond who are feeling shame because of these crimes against the most vulnerable. Moreover, I share the sense of outrage that bishops, entrusted with caring for the faithful, have often put the Church's reputation and fear of scandal above the demands of justice and compassion for victims. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) issued a statement this week, acknowledging that crimes like these can shake the faith and spirit of believers. These are devastating times for the Church, and I join with you in praying for the healing of victims and all of those impacted by both the abuse and the Church's inaction. I commit also to ongoing efforts to ensure the protection of our young people.

Since 1992, the Church in Canada has acted to ensure that protocols are developed in each Diocese so that allegations of sexual misconduct by clergy and other employees are dealt with appropriately. The protocols for the Diocese of Peterborough may be found on our Diocesan website. These policies emphasize proper reporting of allegations to civil authorities, compassion and practical help for victims, and the removal from ministry of those individuals found guilty or credibly accused. All allegations of sexual misconduct have been and will continue to be taken seriously and addressed immediately in accordance with our Diocesan Policy. This fall, the CCCB will issue updated and expanded guidelines to help individual Dioceses in the ongoing project of reviewing and enhancing their policies concerning sexual abuse.

The recent statements of Pope Francis and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops on this issue have been posted on our Diocesan website. In his letter to the People of God, Pope Francis reminds us that "if one member of the Body of Christ suffers, all suffer with it." The suffering of those who have been abused by clergy causes hurt, sorrow and shame for all members of the Church. Yet the Holy Father also states that an awareness of past wrongs and sins is what allows us to "be more open and committed along a journey of renewed conversion." May all of us in the Diocese of Peterborough take up the Holy Father's call to pray for an end to every form of abuse and renew our commitment to provide a safe and respectful environment for all, especially those who are the most vulnerable.

Yours in Christ,

†Most Reverend Daniel J. Miehms, D.D.
Bishop of Peterborough