



Nativity of Our Lord Parish Center

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August 2018

Dear Parishioners of Nativity of Our Lord,

Several weeks ago, I announced at all the Masses that there was a Grand Jury Report to be released imminently. This report centers on six dioceses of Pennsylvania but not the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. My purpose was to better prepare you for what was coming. Due to legal issues, the Report was delayed in its release. Until now!

In my remarks to you from the pulpit I said that the findings were going to be devastating. And they are! To be honest, I have not been able to bring myself to read the report. The news accounts have been descriptive enough.

Following the release of our own Grand Jury Reports in 2005 and 2011, I, for the first time, felt ashamed to be a priest. I was horrified by what my brother priests had done. It took a long time to heal from that hurt. Now that wound is open again. Not just for me but for all of you too.

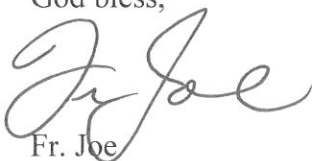
I am very conscious of the hurt and pain the victims feel. I had the opportunity through the years to speak with victims and saw, first hand, what it did to them. I feel it is important to continue to pray for the victims and to seek forgiveness for the hurt inflicted on so many.

As a priest, I apologize to any victim of child sexual misconduct by another priest. However, apologies can go only so far. There has to be accountability and action to bring about true reform. I think the Archdiocese has been working hard in this area.

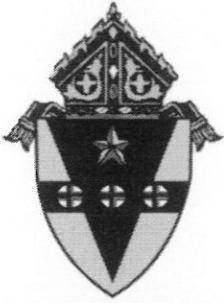
Along with this letter, there is a statement of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia outlining the steps they have taken to make reforms to protect young people. Please take the time to read through it.

The sin of sexual abuse against children is indeed horrific so let us continue to pray for victims and survivors everywhere and that the scourge of this sin may be eradicated through awareness and preventative measures.

God bless,



Fr. Joe



**ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
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For Immediate Release
August 14, 2018

Contact: Kenneth A. Gavin
Chief Communications Officer

**STATEMENT FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
REGARDING THE RELEASE OF THE REPORT OF THE
40TH STATEWIDE GRAND JURY**

The Attorney General's investigation and subsequent grand jury report involving six Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania has been broad and the content has been difficult to read. The material is painful for everyone, most especially survivors of sexual abuse and their loved ones. We deeply regret their pain and remain focused on a path toward healing.

It is important to note that the Archdiocese was not subject to the grand jury investigation and is not part of this report. However, that fact in no way eases our responsibility and longstanding efforts to ensure the safety of children and families in our Church environments.

For more than 15 years, the Archdiocese, along with the Church at large, has put in place a wide range of reforms to protect young people. We have a zero tolerance policy for clergy, lay employees, and volunteers who engage in abuse of children or misconduct with minors and take immediate action when an accusation is made.

Relevant information can be found at <https://childyouthprotection.org> and <http://archphila.org/archdiocesan-offices/office-of-investigations/>.

Some key points are listed below.

All people working with children, including volunteers, undergo criminal background checks and child abuse clearances.

All AOP clergy, staff and volunteers complete Safe Environment training programs and Mandatory Reporter training programs. Over 110,000 adults have received training to recognize, respond and report abuse since 2003.

All young people in grades K-12 receive age appropriate abuse prevention education. All employees and volunteers who have contact with children are required to report suspicions of child abuse.

A full-time, professional staff develops policies and trainings based on the law, best practices and the "Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries to clearly define acceptable and unacceptable conduct which apply to all Archdiocesan clergy, staff, volunteers, parents, and members of parish communities.

An active “safe environment program” is pursued within all of our parishes, schools, and youth programs for compliance audits and disseminating information and resources on child abuse prevention. There are 280 designated “Safe Environment Coordinators” diocesan-wide serving parishes, schools and youth ministries.

We encourage the general public to report all suspected child abuse by clergy or anyone participating in an Archdiocesan program to the Commonwealth, local police, and to identified Archdiocesan personnel.

We require our Office of Investigations to handle allegations of misconduct, and every allegation involving minors is reported to law enforcement, logged, and reviewed to determine whether interim restrictions on ministry or employment are required.

We refer allegations against clergy members involving minors, even those solely involving violations of the Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries, to the Archdiocesan Review Board, which functions as an independent consultative body to the Archbishop.

We submit to regular audits and the USCCB’s annual report process, which allows independent auditors to evaluate and scrutinize the Archdiocese’s youth protection efforts and response.

These layers of protection, including the engagement of secular professionals and direct work with law enforcement, have resulted in far fewer abuse incidents in the Archdiocese than found in society as a whole.

In addition to our efforts at abuse prevention, the Archdiocese also provides ongoing, significant support for survivors of abuse and their families. We encourage victims to come forward, and we will continue our extensive efforts to help victims of sexual abuse heal.

Studies have now shown that sexual abuse plagues every aspect of our current culture – from sports and public institutions, to the entertainment industry and politics. Prevention comes from training and constant vigilance. In that light, our path will remain focused on ensuring that children and young people are protected, and wrongdoers are reported to law enforcement.

To make a report: To report an allegation of sexual abuse, immediately contact your local law enforcement agency and/or the Archdiocesan Office of Investigations at 1-888-930-9010. Mandated reporters are required to call ChildLine, which is staffed by the Department of Public Welfare at 1-800-932-0313.

To report a violation of The Standards of Ministerial Behavior and Boundaries, contact the Archdiocesan Office for Investigations at 1-888-930-9010.

If you need support or assistance, victim services and referrals are available through the Victim Assistance Office of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia at 1-888-800-8780 or www.childyouthprotection.org.

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Editor’s Note: For further information regarding efforts on the part of the Archdiocese to protect the children and young people entrusted to her care as well as to assist survivors on their journey to healing, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/AOPpledgetoProtect>.