



## Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary November 21, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Although I am writing today to all the faithful of the Archdiocese of Vancouver, I wish to begin by addressing personally the victims/survivors of the clerical sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults that has taken place in the Church.

This past year, guided by divine Providence, we have studied and learned more than ever before about the pain suffered by you, victims/survivors of clerical sexual abuse in our Archdiocese.

I realize that no expression of regret can repair the horror of what happened. Although nothing can undo the wrong that was done to you, I nonetheless wish to offer each of you my heartfelt apology for the trauma, the violation in body and soul, and the sense of betrayal and abandonment by the Church that you feel. For those occasions when we failed to protect you or when we were more concerned with the Church's reputation than with your suffering, I am truly sorry and ask for your forgiveness as I strive to make amends and bind your wounds.

Even though the brutality of the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults is a widespread tragedy that affects every corner of society, it has taken the Catholic Church around the world far too long to address its particularly devastating consequences when that abuse is perpetrated by a priest, whom the faithful hold in a position of trust. Such abuse readily leads to shame, confusion, guilt, and loss of faith – all of which have painful, lifelong effects on victims.

I invite and encourage any victim/survivor of sexual abuse at the hands of anyone assigned to ministry in the Archdiocese of Vancouver to come forward and report the incident. It is our responsibility to walk with you and provide for your psychological and spiritual well-being and that of your families.

Now is the time for us to address more fully what we, as the local Church, can do to respond better to the needs of victims of abuse, as well as improve our policies and procedures that have been in place for many years. All these efforts going forward entail a profound and continuous conversion of our hearts. Such a conversion must be accompanied by a firm commitment to take concrete and effective action marked by greater transparency and accountability in all that we do.

An initial step in this commitment was the formation in October 2018 of an Archdiocesan Case Review Committee. It was charged with conducting “a prospective review of cases involving the abuse of children and adults by clergy and to assess the effectiveness, identify gaps, and make recommendations for the improvement of the RCAV's policies, practices and procedures in this context.”

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the Committee's 13 extraordinarily hard-working and dedicated members, which included a majority of laity representing various occupations and four self-identified victims/survivors of clerical sexual abuse. Over a period of nine months, they conscientiously carried out their mandate of reviewing cases from 1950 to the present. Bearing



this review in mind, the Committee made 31 recommendations that were presented to me in mid-July and have now been published as written, without any editing.

The members called on me “to take concrete steps to prevent abuse, address it when it happens, and prevent cover-ups from ever happening again.” Such steps, they affirmed, should focus on “the healing of the victim, the community and the offender.” Furthermore, increased attention must be paid to the underlying causes of sexual abuse in the Church, if we are to eradicate it and fulfill our evangelizing mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

To move forward with the Committee’s recommendations, I then set up an Implementation Working Group. It was mandated to draw up responses to the recommendations and to work out the practical details of how each one is to be carried out.

Some of the recommendations have already been implemented; others will be in the very near future; and some require more time and reflection before being acted upon. Certainly, a great deal of work remains to be done. I urge you to study carefully each recommendation and response, so that you will become familiar with the commitments the Archdiocese has made.

As we move along the path of healing and purifying the Church, let us remember that, insofar as one member of Christ’s Body suffers, “all suffer together” (1 Cor 12:26). Going forward, our task is to work together to eliminate the scourge of

abuse and to ensure that our Church, as a loving Mother, is a safe place especially for the young and the vulnerable, the protection of whose God-given dignity is entrusted to us.

With prayerful greetings, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver