



February 20, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Last summer the Church was rocked by new revelations of clergy sexual abuse in the United States. These revelations have called the Archdiocese of Vancouver to examine carefully our own history and find better ways to protect vulnerable people more effectively. I am writing to you now to provide an update regarding the steps we are taking.

Most importantly is the formation of a Case Review Committee to examine thoroughly any cases of clergy sexual abuse of minors that occurred in the Archdiocese and to recommend how we can improve our policies and procedures. The Committee consists of several survivors of abuse, experts in civil and canon law, clergy and religious, as well as other volunteers. While the work of the Committee is expected to continue into the Spring, it is already leading to a deeper understanding of the suffering experienced by those impacted by abuse.

The Review Committee's report and recommendations for changes will lead to new initiatives undertaken to improve care for victims and to make our training and preventative systems stronger.

The path forward will involve the continued strengthening of lay leadership in our parishes. Every baptized Catholic shares in the priesthood of all believers and is called to proclaim the Gospel, while caring for the most vulnerable among us.

Isolating clergy and religious from the rest of the faithful in an unhealthy way easily leads to clericalism. Instead, we should strive to live out together the Gospel. As God's children, we are all equal before him and called to holiness in our state of life.

The Archdiocese is committed to supporting victims of clergy sexual abuse meaningfully through the provision of counselling and effective advocacy support as they journey on the path to healing. Too often in the past, victims have been allowed to fade away from our Church family without receiving the justice and support that they deserve. Even worse, at times they have been ostracized from the community when they initiated a report of abuse. It is imperative to find ways to reach out to victims and their families with our most sincere apologies and an invitation to receive whatever comfort and healing we can facilitate.

We will also be taking bold steps to ensure that abusive clergy members are held accountable for the terrible crimes they have committed. Greater transparency will invite more input for change and will foster greater trust in the faithful members of our clergy and religious communities.

In the interim, our reporting processes are being improved to ensure that anyone who wishes to come forward can do so easily. The Archdiocese's website is being updated to make reporting options more prominent, and additional resources are being dedicated to advocate for victims and more thoroughly investigate allegations.

In these days the Holy Father is convening the presidents of bishops' conferences from around the world to take up the topic of the protection of minors and other vulnerable people. In calling



this meeting, Pope Francis said that “the Church will restate her resolve to pursue unstintingly the path of purification.” This gathering will seek to turn past mistakes into “opportunities for eliminating this scourge” of sexual abuse. I look forward to the Holy See’s report.

I am grateful for the dedicated team that has been given authority to probe into our files and to report their findings. We remain committed to continued transparency and to correcting any systemic flaws that contributed to abuse or cover-up. Fear and concealment are not in keeping with the Lord’s call for the Church to be a light to the nations. Past mistakes must be turned into opportunities for cleansing and healing.

Thank you for your continued prayers and for your shared desire that the Church continue on the path of transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

With cordial greetings and the assurance of my prayers for you and your families, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ J. Michael Miller, CSB  
Archbishop of Vancouver