



## SAINT JOHN FISHER PARISH

August 15, 2019

Dear Parishioners:

In my letter to you last September, I shared my anger about the sexual exploitation by former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. I couldn't understand how such a man could rise to the rank of Archbishop and then Cardinal. In that letter I added:

While the bishops did a good job in 2003 in issuing a "zero tolerance" policy for any *priests* guilty of misconduct with minors, they didn't address how to discipline *bishops* who were guilty of the same or who allowed such conduct to continue without consequences. Clearly, a credible investigation and any resulting reforms can't be accomplished by the bishops alone. A lay board needs to be given total access and a mandate to provide total transparency.

Since that time, Pope Francis had the bishops of the United States come together in retreat to pray over this very issue. The retreat director was from the papal household, and the retreat took place in Chicago this past January. Moreover, he called for a special meeting in Rome of all leaders of Bishops' Conferences throughout the world to address this crisis. The crisis was certainly not unique to the United States. As Vice-President of the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Gomez was present. This past May the Holy Father issued a document to all dioceses of the world mandating guidelines that all must implement. The guidelines include a reporting system, timely investigations, survivor support, whistle blower protection, conflict of interest ban, lay involvement, and compliance with civil law. Although much of this has been in place in the United States and certainly in Los Angeles, it wasn't in many parts of the world.

This past June the bishops of the United States met in Baltimore to implement the Pope's mandate. Their directives outline the use of lay experts to investigate and publicize allegations, affirm national third party reporting, strengthen the conflict of interest ban, recommit to pastoral care of those harmed, and affirm the duties of the Archbishop to make the bishops of his area accountable. They also approved guidelines on bishops who were removed or who resigned for reasons related to sexual abuse or abuse of power. Such bishops have been banned from future meetings of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The bishops renewed their pledge to be subject to the charter, committed themselves to ongoing formation, and to include the expertise of lay professionals.

In my opinion this is a big step from last year. Not only the priests but the bishops as well are accountable. The task of Church and clergy renewal is a work in progress. "Be diligent in these matters, be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to everyone." (1 Tim 4:15)

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. David A. Sork  
Pastor