

Friday, August 17, 2018

The below statement was released to media outlets and posted to diocesan communication platforms from Most Reverend Nelson J. Perez in response to the release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report on abuse. The statement is provided with the intention that it is read at all Masses this weekend (August 18 – 19, 2018).

“This week as I read and watched the recent release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report on abuse by a number of clergy I am deeply mindful of the emotions our Catholic community is experiencing for they represent my feelings as well. I am deeply disturbed, saddened and angered. My heart goes out to those who have been so profoundly hurt. While I am well aware of all the good work that has been done locally and nationally to bring healing and justice for these horrific crimes of the past, it goes without saying that we have further work to be done and I know that my brother bishops and I, as the Bishop of Cleveland, are committed to seeing this through. This report breaks down the foundation of trust across the greater Catholic community and we all need to come together in prayer and action to build up this trust which has been shaken once again by these recent events.

I encourage everyone to read the statement issued on Thursday, August 16, from Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, who has announced an urgent initiative to develop an action plan to strengthen protections against predators in the Church and anyone who would conceal them. This initiative will include the laity, experts, and the Vatican. His statement can be found on the Diocese of Cleveland website homepage, dioceseofcleveland.org

I reiterate the words of my brother bishops shared earlier this week, “We are profoundly saddened each time we hear about the harm caused as a result of abuse, at the hands of a clergyman of any rank.”

I ask that the entire Diocese of Cleveland to pray for all the survivors of sexual and all types of abuse and for the guidance of Christ through the healing process.

Together with our staff and organizations within the Diocese of Cleveland we strive to ensure that all preventative measures are taken and that allegations of abuse are reported to the proper authorities. The Protecting God’s Children program, created in 2003, is a continuing effort to instruct and inform everyone about the protection of children from sexual abuse. The program structure includes an annual audit and monthly communications to our parishes. In addition the diocese has requirements in training for staff and volunteers, mandatory background checks as well as a Review Board that provides policy, procedure and transparent communication in matters such as these. To date over 153,794 of our diocesan staff and volunteers including; clergy, religious, ecclesial lay ministers, lay ministers, school administrators, staff, teachers, directors of religious education, catechists, coaches and volunteers have been VIRTUS trained to identify and report any potential acts of sexual abuse.

The Catholic Diocese of Cleveland is committed to protecting children and helping to heal those who have been hurt by abuse. Any person with information or those just seeking help can reach the diocesan confidential response line by phone; this number is available in the parish office, or online at dioceseofcleveland.org and click on the Protecting God’s Children logo.

We must continue to pray for resilience and healing for those who have been hurt so deeply and continue to create safe environments for our young people and those most vulnerable. I also ask you to pray for the great majority of priests that walk with you on a daily basis who serve the Church and all of us with great fidelity, dignity and virtue. Please be assured of my prayers for you and for your families as I rely on your prayers for me.