



ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT
06105-3784

OFFICE OF
THE ARCHBISHOP

August 22, 2018
Feast of the Queenship of Mary

Hopefully, many of you will have read the letter I recently wrote for parish bulletins or heard some of the media interviews I have granted on sexual abuse in the Church. Besides the release of the Pennsylvania grand jury report, there is also the resignation from the College of Cardinals of the former Archbishop of Washington, Theodore McCarrick, as a result of the allegations made against him. Concerns are also being addressed about the formation programs in two seminaries on the East Coast after postings on social media.

The anger and disillusionment of so many of our Catholic people is only matched by my own, and no doubt that of the clergy as well. After all the massive effort that has been made since 2002 to rid the Church of this evil and to try to bring healing to victim survivors, how is it possible that we find ourselves confronting the same perception of the Church, and of priests and bishops, as if nothing has changed?

The Pennsylvania grand jury report, as devastating as it is, ostensibly covers a seventy year period, and is largely about a past that we have striven mightily to remedy. Apparently only 2 of the 300-plus priests identified by the grand jury were involved in abuse in the last 10 years, and these had been reported by their dioceses. However, the allegations against the former Cardinal have to do with seeming indifference to repulsive conduct not only before, but also after, the great reforms and commitments that followed 2002. Whether before or after, it must be asked how he could possibly remain in ministry, and once the answer is known, steps must be taken to ensure that it will not happen again with any other bishop. I also take quite seriously the seminary formation of our young men on the road to priesthood, working to ensure that their human, pastoral and theological training be the best it can be.

Notwithstanding all that has been done to bring prevention and healing since 2002, all of us have to be scrupulously proactive in the practical order by following all the safeguards that have been set in place to ensure a safe environment for minors, vulnerable adults, and really for everyone. Accompanying this letter you will find one written by Kathleen Nowosadko, full-time Director of the Office of Safe Environment for the Archdiocese of Hartford. She, along with her four full-time staff, 90 volunteer trainers, and with the support of every parish, school and Archdiocesan office, works tirelessly to protect our children and vulnerable adults from this scourge.

Pope Francis has responded to these most recent events by a letter "to the People of God". It is available in its entirety on line, including archdioceseofhartford.org. Reflecting on the tragic events of past abuse by clergy, the Holy Father says, "*We showed no care for the little ones; we abandoned them.*"



The Holy Father challenges all of us *“to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh and in their spirit [...] everyone of the baptized should feel involved in the ecclesial and social change that we so greatly need.”*

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, President of our United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, in a statement also on our Archdiocesan website, says this: *“We are faced with a spiritual crisis that requires not only spiritual conversion, but practical changes to avoid repeating the sins and failures of the past that are so evident in the recent report.”* He outlines three essential goals: (1) an investigation into the questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick; (2) an opening of new and confidential channels for reporting complaints against bishops; and (3) advocacy for more effective resolution of future complaints. These goals will be pursued according to three criteria: proper independence, sufficient authority, and substantial leadership by laity.

As I did in my letter last week, I invoke Mary, Mother of the Church, on this her feast day as Queen of Heaven, to intercede for the Church in the Archdiocese of Hartford. Under her protective mantle may we find shelter in this destructive storm, and the courage and resolve to rid the Church of the abominable sins and crimes that betray and hinder our mission from Christ to be “salt and light” for the world.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Leonard P. Blair".

Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair
Archbishop of Hartford

Act of Entrustment

We come before you, Mary, Mother of the Church and our mother, asking you to place under your protective mantle this local Church of the Archdiocese of Hartford. Like you, the Church's first and most perfect member, we too stand at the foot of the cross as witnesses to what human sinfulness is capable of inflicting on the body of Christ. As your son crushed the head of the ancient serpent who is the father of lies, so now intercede for us with God, that our Archdiocese may be delivered from all evil and be preserved in holiness and truth. By your prayers hasten the coming of the justice and mercy of God. Watch over us all—clergy, religious and laity—with maternal care, so that as members of one family of faith our bonds of communion may grow stronger, our love for one another and for our neighbor deeper, the practice of our faith more devout, our witness to Christ more heroic for the sake of our mission to be salt and light for the world. We entrust our Archdiocese to you, our Lady of Hope and mother of the incarnate word. Amen.