



ARCHDIOCESE OF HARTFORD
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OFFICE OF
THE ARCHBISHOP

August 14, 2018

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

For some years now attention has been focused, and continues to be focused, on the sexual sins and crimes of some of our Catholic clergy and the failure of the hierarchy in many cases to respond in an immediate and decisive way to remove the offenders from ministry.

Since 2002 enormous strides have been made to remedy this situation and to protect minors and vulnerable adults from sexual abuse on the part of anyone working in the Church. An upright moral life, including sexuality, is an expectation that has been made abundantly clear to all our clergy and seminarians, whose screening and training programs have been critically evaluated and strengthened. Given the commitments that have been made by the bishops, and the norms that have been implemented, there has been great reason for encouragement.

Now the wounds are renewed by media reports about past abuse by clergy in other States, and in particular by recent revelations about the former Cardinal and retired Archbishop of Washington, Theodore McCarrick. Multiple allegations of the abuse of minors and of homosexual activity, including preying on seminarians and young priests, are abhorrent to me and to you, and a cause of renewed hurt and anger, of extreme scandal and shame for the Church.

What is deeply troubling is that although some of the former cardinal's alleged activities were known and reported by some, nothing was done to remove him from office or to charge him with the canonical and potential civil consequences of his actions. Clearly, more needs to be done to ensure fraternal correction and accountability among bishops. According to Church law accused cardinals and bishops are to be judged, at the mandate of the Pope, by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome. I would want, and fully expect that cardinals and bishops be held to exactly the same rigorous norms and subjected to the same rigorous procedures that are applied to priests and deacons when it comes to allegations of sexual misconduct and crimes.

In a sinful world, despite our vigilance, there can be no absolute guarantee that there will not be clerics who betray or violate their sacred office sexually or in other ways. Christ's betrayer, Judas, was one of his chosen Apostles. Against the stratagems of the devil St. Paul says we must "put on the armor of God" (Eph. 6:13).

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Our hearts continue to go out to all victims of abuse, especially by clergy. The facts that have come to light over the years have been a painful and a rightfully humbling cross for all bishops, and I have experienced it very deeply and personally since becoming a diocesan bishop in 2003. I pray daily for the victims of clerical sexual abuse, I offer Mass for them, and I ask you to pray for them as well.

Recently I published for our archdiocese a prayer I had written some years ago to Mary, Mother of the Church, during the height of the sexual abuse crisis. It reads, in part: "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." Please join me in saying this prayer, and the traditional prayer to St. Michael the Archangel, each and every day.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leonard P. Blair". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair
Archbishop of Hartford