



Feast of the Assumption  
15 August 2018

Dear Friends,

The news about the Church on the front pages of the papers and on television news these last several weeks has been extremely painful for us Catholics to hear. First, we had all the news about now-resigned Cardinal McCarrick; and then, this past week, the information about past abuse cases in six Pennsylvania dioceses from the state's Grand Jury. It's been a very difficult month for the Church. As faithful Catholics, you probably have found yourselves angry, confused, or asking questions about Church leadership. You are not alone. These stories have occupied my own prayer and my own mind over the last few weeks. I must admit to feeling betrayed by our leadership and deeply distressed and disheartened by these stories. I really thought after the scandals of the early 2000s, the sex abuse crisis was finally behind us. And now this . . . .

Context is always important. As difficult as the news from Pennsylvania is, most of the accounts are from decades ago. The report chronicles allegations of abuse from over seven decades in six dioceses. I suspect that each diocese in our country would have similar stories if everything from the last seventy years were brought to light. It's horrible to hear all of this, and very distressing, but it is not our story today.

After the abuse crisis in the 1990s and into the early 2000s, the bishops of the United States gathered in Dallas in 2002 and again 2005 and established protocols and procedures to deal with misconduct and abuse. The guiding document that they wrote is called the "Dallas Charter". The guidelines that were established by the Dallas Charter have put policies in place designed to create a safe environment for children and young people in every Catholic institution, diocese, parish, and school. Since Dallas, the Church has rigorous procedures in place to protect children and adults from abusers. These procedures include repeated comprehensive criminal background checks on all priests, deacons, and other church employees and volunteers, as well as VIRTUS training, which concentrates especially on clear procedures for church personnel to report possible abuse to church authorities, as well as to law-enforcement agencies.

Gesu Parish and School have fully implemented all of the procedures mandated to protect children. Additionally, the Jesuits have another layer of policies and procedures that guide every Jesuit ministering in the U. S. With the Dallas Charter and the policies in the Diocese of Cleveland and the Jesuit Policies and Guidelines, I have full confidence, and you should as well,

that our efforts to protect the young and guard all with whom we come in contact are strong, rigorous, and fully enforced by the Church and by the Society of Jesus.

That being said, as strong as the policies and procedures in the Dallas Charter are, the sins and misconduct of the past in various parts of our country are likely to be brought to light as men and women come to terms with past abuse. We can see this clearly in the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report put out this week. Despite the cases that will come out from years past, I have great confidence that any new cases of abuse or misconduct by any employee of the Catholic Church will be handled expeditiously and in coordination with law enforcement.

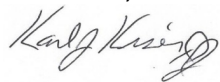
The flaw in the Dallas Charter was this: it only applied to misconduct by priests, deacons, employees, and volunteers. It did not apply to misconduct by the bishops. The Cardinal McCarrick scandal has been totally demoralizing because we see that some bishops knew about him, but did nothing. Some of our bishops have failed the Church by not applying their own standards to themselves. Of course, there are many wonderful and holy bishops who are living through this horrible moment in the Church along with us. They need and deserve our prayers and support.

How should we, as Gesu Parishioners, respond? First, we need to pray for all victims of sexual abuse in the Church. We should continue to pray that the Church will care for all who have been hurt by priests, deacons, bishops, volunteers, and employees of the Church, especially those among us who have been personally affected by the pain of this situation. It should be our prayer that all survivors of sexual abuse find healing, comfort, and strength in the loving presence of God.

Second, from a spiritual point of view, today's Feast of the Assumption might be helpful to us. Mary's "Yes" to God was a yes to bring light into the darkness caused by sin in our world. Today, we are called to continue to say yes to God who calls us to be the light in the midst of that darkness. We are the Church; we are the People of God, and, while we have had some shepherds who have failed us, that doesn't mean that we cannot be light and hope for the world. Today, more than ever, we are called to be disciples of Jesus as Mary was. We come to Church to be fed by Jesus, the Bread of Life, so that we can be the light and the hope that our Church and our world need during this most challenging moment in our Church's history.

Please know of my continued prayers and those of the entire Gesu Parish Staff for you, for your children and grandchildren, and for all whom we serve in our parish and school.

God Bless,



Karl J. Kiser, S. J.  
Pastor