



Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon
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Dear Clergy, Religious, and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Saskatoon:

It has now been several weeks since the release of the recent report from the Grand Jury of Pennsylvania. Like all of you, I have been horrified at the reports of historical abuse by members of the clergy, and how this was handled by bishops. The reviews and evaluations of this report are ongoing and will be deliberated for some time. Needless-to-say, I feel great regret and frustration that anyone has been hurt by sexual or any other kind of serious abuse. I pray that anyone who has been hurt in this way can find healing, justice and peace.

I have spoken with many members of our diocese – both clergy and lay. I find most are astonished and dumbfounded by these most recent revelations. Many are expressing anger and frustration at these abuses of power and crimes against the innocent, and are once again struggling to come to terms with such sinfulness – which is so far removed from the call to holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you struggle with these latest revelations, I ask each of you to cling to Christ and to prayer, and to join me in persevering to prevent such situations and any lack of proper transparency from happening.

Many of you know that the Catholic Church of Canada faced this kind of issue with the unfolding of the Mount Cashel crisis, beginning in the late 1970's. This crisis was a key factor in the release by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) of *From Pain to Hope*. This document informed the many 'safe environment' policies of dioceses and religious congregations in Canada, and also informed protocols for reporting allegations for serious misconduct by clergy and lay personnel working in the Church – including in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon.

As a new bishop in this diocese, I have been working on updating various statutes and protocols, and since the spring have been working with members from across our diocese on updating the following: a) Covenant of Care policy; b) Protocol for Allegations of Serious Misconduct by Clergy and Lay Personnel; c) Code of Conduct protocol. These policies have guided the Diocese of Saskatoon for many years, and were last updated in 2012.

 In all things we are *rooted in Christ*,
in His desire to bring God's love to all peoples.

The news coming out of Pennsylvania has not only shocked us, but is also the occasion for even more zealous renewal. Thus, we will be looking broadly at related policies and protocols that will assist us as we update our own policies and procedures. Even one case of abuse of an innocent is one case too many! Thus, I call on all of us to 'hold the bar high' as we seek to make all of our church and community settings truly safe and respectful environments.

I share with you one more recent experience that has very much affected me over these last few months. I represented the Canadian Bishops this past June at the Anglophone Safeguarding Conference in Rome, from June 17 to 21. I attended in my capacity as the co-chair of the Canadian Catholic Indigenous Commission – as did Deacon Rene Nahanee of the Squamish Nation from the Archdiocese of Vancouver. The purpose of the conference was two-fold: a) to assist dioceses and religious organizations in staying current about 'best practices' for their protocols around safe environment in their contexts; b) to raise awareness about the world-wide problem of all forms of abuse of minors and vulnerable persons.

Despite much awareness and many good efforts, the June conference in Rome made all participants realize that we still live in a world where abuse is more widespread than ever. For example, the trafficking of children and women expands, as does the proliferation of pornography, which especially exploits the young.

Let us together confront the terrible revelations regarding abuse in the church and how in several cases church leaders poorly managed it. At the same time, let us cast our vision wide if we are going to truly eliminate all forms of abuse and achieve truly safe and respectful environments – especially in regards to the innocent and vulnerable persons of any age.

In addition to our best efforts at expanding and implementing very good policies and protocols, what more can we do to address such a vast and complex issue?

I believe *community* is key. Community is the place for all ministry work and activity in the church. Since I arrived in Saskatoon, I have become very aware and impressed by our clergy and laity. The diocese is blessed with clergy who are faithful and gifted pastors, who come to us both from within our Canadian context, and from other countries. This diocese is also blessed with very many lay women and men who are ardently committed to the mission of Christ and the Church, as they bring to bear many talents, along with great dedication and energy, to living and proclaiming the Gospel in all areas of life. It is the fullness of the People of God who must advocate and work hard as we hold each other accountable to achieve truly safe and respectful church environments.

Please hold your clergy accountable; hold me accountable as your bishop; and let us all hold each other accountable as we hold the bar very high in seeking personal and communal *holiness*, and in achieving all that our *Covenant of Care* seeks to achieve and provide.

In a recent letter to the People of God, His Holiness Pope Francis wrote: “*If one member suffers, all suffer together with it’ ... By an attitude of prayer and penance, we will become attuned as individuals and as a community to this exhortation, so that we may grow in the gift of compassion, in justice, prevention and reparation... When we experience the desolation caused by these ecclesial wounds, we will do well, with Mary, ‘to insist more upon prayer.’*”

We join with Pope Francis as we pray for all victims of sexual and any other forms of abuse; as we are present and caring to all victims, and as we seek God’s grace and inspiration to always improve the safety and sanctity of our church environments.

Sincerely in Christ,



✙ Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen
Bishop of Saskatoon