



August 14, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One year ago today, I offered my first response to the release of the 40<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Grand Jury Report. The statement I made was offered directly to survivor/victims — those who had waited so long for the unthinkable experiences they had endured to be brought to light.

It was devastating for me, as the pastor of this diocese, to see the ugly details of what had happened within the church. I knew that survivor/victims, as well as all Catholics and the entire community, would need time to grapple with the report. Their deep pain, anger and grief was understandable.

My apology is only one step in the long and complex process of healing. I know words mean very little without action. The Diocese of Erie has taken many important steps in the last year, and will continue on this path.

I have released numerous statements about our efforts throughout the year. One of the most significant steps we took as a diocese was the creation of an Independent Survivors Reparation Fund for survivor/victims. To date, 52 survivor/victims have applied to the fund and 23 claims totaling \$3 million have been paid out. It is likely many survivor/victims have waited until this final week of the fund to file their claims. Once the last claims are brought to closure, I will make public a final report about the fund.

Some could be tempted to want to close this chapter of our history and move on, but that would be a disservice not only to survivor/victims, but also to the faithful who fill our pews every Sunday. As with any event that has had a broad impact on so many people, it must be remembered, in part, to ensure that the changes we make in the church and in our world are deep and lasting.

That is why I am once again calling for a day of prayer in the Diocese of Erie on the memorial of Our Mother of Sorrows, Sunday, Sept. 15. I am asking that pastors open the doors of all of their churches that day from 7 am to 7 pm. I invite people to visit a Catholic church and spend time in prayer in whatever way the Holy Spirit moves them. We need to pray for survivor/victims. We need to pray for the healing and purification of the church. We need to pray for the many good and holy priests who continue to serve faithfully. And we need to pray that our own faith be strengthened.



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This year, I also am asking that parishes, either individually or in groups, promote opportunities for Eucharistic adoration with the special intentions of victim/survivors, the healing of the church, and the sanctification of the clergy.

I have been inspired and grateful that many Catholics have demonstrated true discipleship, witnessing to their faith in the past year. They have shown what it means to be charitable, to forgive and to live in hope. And they have understood how important this moment has been for survivor/victims.

It is clear that bringing about healing and rebuilding trust is the work we are being called to do as church. It will take time, patience and fidelity, but the Lord will provide the grace we need. With every confidence in that grace, I look forward to the work that needs to be accomplished during the second half of my tenure as bishop of the Diocese of Erie.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*+Lawrence T. Persico*

The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL  
Bishop of Erie