



8.30.18

**Erie Bishop Lawrence Persico calls for
creation of compensation fund for victim/survivors**

Upon release of the 40th Statewide Grand Jury Report regarding sexual abuse in six dioceses across Pennsylvania Aug. 14, Attorney General Josh Shapiro challenged the bishops of Pennsylvania to act on the four recommendations proposed by members of the grand jury.

Bishop Lawrence Persico and the Diocese of Erie have studied the recommendations of the grand jury, listened to the pleas of the victim/survivors, heard the challenge of the attorney general and now have read the reasoned position of Senate President Pro Tempore Joe Scarnati.

On behalf of the Diocese of Erie, Bishop Persico is prepared to establish and fund an appropriate program that provides necessary relief to victims.

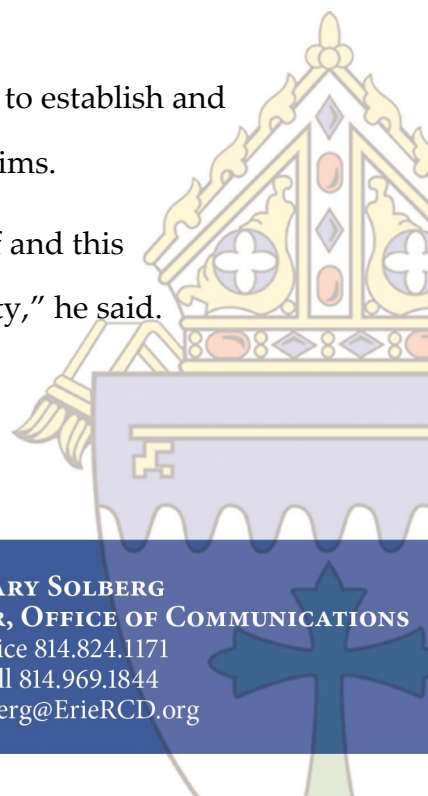
“In my statement to victims on Aug. 14, I committed myself and this diocese to assist in healing for victims and for the wider community,” he said.

“It is time to take action. We must do what is within our power to provide justice to victims.

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ANNE-MARIE WELSH
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
Office 814.824.1167
Cell 814.746.6889
amwelsh@ErieRCD.org

MARY SOLBERG
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
Office 814.824.1171
Cell 814.969.1844
msolberg@ErieRCD.org



“Therefore, I have directed our lawyers to collaborate with the Pennsylvania Legislature to develop an acceptable and appropriate program to make restitution to victims,” he said. “Senator Scarnati has proposed the establishment of a victim compensation fund administered by a neutral third party to ensure fairness and objectivity. I am prepared to help work out the details of this solution.”

Bishop Persico agrees with Senator Scarnati that there would be no guarantee of a successful resolution to protracted legal wrangling over the constitutionality of a retroactive change to the civil and criminal statute of limitations. Although both the senator and the bishop understand that no dollar amount can truly make amends for what occurred, they believe that the many victims who were unable to seek justice because of Pennsylvania’s statute of limitations deserve this alternative response.

Bishop Persico and the Diocese of Erie whole-heartedly endorse the other three recommendations of the grand jury as proposed. These include removing the criminal statute of limitations for child sexual abuse going forward, strengthening and expanding laws regarding mandated reporting of abuse, and abandoning the use of confidentiality agreements unless requested by a victim/survivor.

“We are days away from a short election-season session for the state legislature,” Bishop Persico said. “We need bold, decisive and collaborative action.”

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