



8.12.18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I trust you are aware that the grand jury report on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church is to be published at some point this week. I plan to make a statement once it's released, and I invite you to visit the diocesan website, www.ErieRCD.org, to read it in its entirety.

The most important thing I want to do at this moment is to express my sorrow to the victims of sexual abuse that occurred within the Diocese of Erie. As the grand jury report demonstrates, they have experienced cruel behavior by the very individuals who should have had the greatest interest in protecting them.

They have suffered in darkness for a very long time.

It is shocking to read the graphic details of exactly what occurred. In addition, it's clear from the report that church leaders did not adequately address the problem of sexual abuse in the church. Unfortunately, this crisis has not been limited to our commonwealth. The recent allegations against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, which led to his resignation as a cardinal, make it evident that there has been failure at every level.

We are responding to the report in many ways, including the significant revision of our *Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth* announced in April. But at this moment, I also want us to respond with prayer. For victims. For the church. For yourselves. I will share more about this with you in the near future through your pastors.

It will take time to heal the Body of Christ. In the aftermath of the grand jury report, each of us is likely to experience a wide range of emotions, from anger and hurt to betrayal. That is understandable. You are always in my prayers. Know that I will be accompanying you in a particular way as you struggle to come to terms with the details in the report.

Pray for each other, and pray for your priests. They serve and care for you. Pray, especially, that they may be strengthened in their commitment and fidelity to Christ.

This is a very difficult moment for everyone. But be reminded that what we read in the grand jury report is about our past. It is not our present and it is not our future. With the help of God, we will create a hope-filled future of which we can all be proud.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lawrence T. Persico". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the closing "Sincerely in Christ,".

The Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico
Bishop of Erie