
Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church

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November 13, 2020

Dear Bishop Knestout,

Greetings from the Appomattox parish of Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church. We hope this letter finds you well, especially during these challenging pandemic times.

The purpose of this letter is two-fold. First, we would like to express our appreciation for addressing the issue of sex abuse in our diocese, by publishing the list of clergy that have a credible and substantiated claim of sexual abuse against a minor.

Second, we would like to reach out to you for further action. We are hopeful that you will widen the aperture of the audit you directed in 2018, to include persons of the diocese who may have been involved in the *cover-up* of sexual abuse committed by priests.

We continue to have grave concerns over the incomplete and long overdue resolution of this issue of sex abuse of children in our Church/Diocese. The innocence of victims can never be restored, and their healing is made far more difficult if ALL guilty persons are not identified and appropriate actions taken.

With all due respect, we believe that in order to show our sincere and unwavering support of victims, and in order to restore trusting faith in our Church, full disclosure needs to be made. Naming perpetrators is a beginning, but since those who enabled and covered up the crimes are every bit as culpable, they must be identified as well. Their names need to be published, and appropriate moral and legal actions need to be taken. The Church, which is ultimately *each* one of us, owes it to the victims. Their wounds can heal only when the complete truth comes out, and we in our parish feel a personal responsibility and calling to do whatever it takes to bring that about.

The transparency that you have rendered so far in this matter goes a long way toward addressing the problem and helping to heal victims, as well as to heal our Church. For that we are most grateful. However it seems undeniable that until the full truth is acknowledged, accountability accepted, and sincere advocacy offered, healing for victims *and* perpetrators cannot be complete, legal and moral justice cannot be served, and our Holy Catholic Church cannot be forgiven and redeemed.

Again, thank you for what you have done to date. Moreover, thank you for listening to our concerns about the critical need to widen the parameter of the audit of clergy files to include cover ups. We offer our full support as our diocese progresses on this crisis. We look forward to hearing from you on how we can help in this process.

May the Holy Spirit be upon us all, may that infilling inspire us all with courage and wisdom, and may we, the faithful, be able to not just give our Church love and loyalty, but may we also be able to once again trust and respect our Holy Catholic Church.

Thank you for your prayers. Be assured that you are in ours.

Faithfully Submitted on behalf of the Parish Council,

Renee May, Chairperson



Father James Gallagher, Pastor

