



Archdiocese of Los Angeles

Office of
The Archbishop

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August 17, 2018

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is a sad and confusing time for all of us, with the recent revelations about sin and abuse in the Church in this country.

I am praying for you and your families and for our young people; and for our bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians and religious. I am praying most intensely for the victim-survivors of these crimes, and am trying to offer what small penance I can for everyone who has suffered abuse by pastors of the Church.

In one sense, the Church's pastors are no different than any Christian. We are all called to holiness and to grow in our relationship with Jesus and to glorify God by our lives. But the priest above all is consecrated to serve "in the person of Christ."

That is why the evil at the heart of these scandals is so terrible. A sacred trust has been broken by men whom Jesus entrusted to be his representatives on earth. These priests have betrayed Christ and done violence to his children. The cruelty they have done casts a shadow on the priesthood and the vast majority of priests who are good and faithful servants of the Gospel.

I understand the anger and frustration that people have against the Church and her leaders right now. For me, I am feeling a deep sadness. I am horrified that such crimes could be committed against innocent children of God. We need to hold people accountable and we need to atone for these sins as a Church.

I am a member of the executive committee of the U.S. Bishops and we have issued two statements that I think are a good start for responding to the present crisis. These proposals should go a long way towards increasing transparency and addressing the culture of clericalism that contributed to these abuses and failures in leadership.

Here in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, we have an effective system for reporting and investigating suspected abuse by priests and for removing offenders from ministry. Our oversight board includes both clergy and lay experts from several disciplines and also includes persons who have experienced abuse. We have also established an extensive program of education and background checks to make sure our children are safe and cared for in our parishes, schools and ministries.

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We remain committed to keeping our children safe and providing a compassionate environment in which victim-survivors can come forward to seek justice and find healing. If you or any one you know is a victim of clerical abuse here in Los Angeles, I urge you to call our hotline (800) 355-2545 or visit our website: <http://www.la-archdiocese.org/org/protecting/>.

Programs, protocols, and best practices are essential. But they are not enough.

The deeper crisis today in the Church is spiritual and moral. I believe we need to respond to this crisis with a new call to penance and purification and a new dedication to leading holy lives.

Renewal of the Church is first of all a duty for bishops and priests. We need humble penance for what has been done by our brothers. We need to live with simplicity and integrity and be models of conversion and holiness. Now more than ever, I pray that every bishop and every priest will rediscover his love for Jesus Christ and burn with new desire to bring holiness and salvation to our people.

I am confident that the Holy Spirit will raise up saints from every walk of life to renew and rebuild his Church in this time of need. What has happened is the responsibility of bishops and priests. That is clear. But the way forward will mean lay people and clergy working together.

To renew and rebuild the Church takes time. Conversion, which means changing our lives in the image of Jesus Christ, is an ongoing process and it lasts our whole lives.

We need to begin again right now, starting with those of us who are bishops and priests. All of us in the Church need to commit ourselves again to the basic practices of our Christian life: personal prayer, the Eucharist and Confession, the works of mercy, growing in the virtues.

My brothers and sisters, do not lose hope in the Church. Jesus told us that God permits evil to grow up alongside the good, both in the world and in the Church. This truth does not make us excuse or accept what has happened. Just the opposite. In this moment, our Lord is counting on us. So please do not give in to discouragement. Put your hope in God's promise: where sin increases, his grace will increase even more.

Please keep praying for me and know that I am praying for you. Let us pray in a special way in these days for every person who has been hurt by members of the Church and let us keep working to help them heal.

Let us ask our Blessed Mother Mary to intercede for us and give us the courage and wisdom to purify the Church and renew our love for Jesus Christ and his Gospel.

May God grant you peace,

+ José H. Gomez

Most Reverend José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles