



## **The New Moment**

August 29, 2018

### **Letter to the People of the Diocese of Des Moines**

#### **Prayer & Fasting in the Face of Sexual Abuse**

In the spirit of Pope Francis' letter of August 20<sup>th</sup>, I am asking each parish in the Diocese of Des Moines to undertake a regimen of Prayer and Fasting encouraging penitence for the sin of sexual abuse that has affected our Church as well as the Sin of the "cover-up" of these sins by Church leadership as evidenced in the case of Archbishop Theodore McCarrick.

In this regard, I am enclosing resources that will be of help as parishes undertake this month-long journey. A special gratitude is owed to Kim Mandelkow and John Gaffney in the preparation of the enclosed materials.

Thank you to all the priests, deacons, religious and lay faithful who enter into this month with sincere commitment trusting in the power of transformation that will come through Jesus Christ as we intercede in prayer and fasting.

Bishop Richard E. Pates  
Bishop of Des Moines

**Resource Guide**  
**September 2018, Month of Prayer & Fasting**  
**Diocese of Des Moines**

September 2018 is designated as a month of Fasting & Prayer in the Diocese of Des Moines seeking healing and reform from the perpetration of sexual abuse and its cover-up, the following resources are enclosed to be of help in parish, school and institutional planning.

- 1) Letter of Bishop Pates to priests and deacons of the Diocese of Des Moines.
- 2) Month of prayer and fasting – in reparation for the sexual abuse of children.
- 3) Suggested prayers in response to the child sexual abuse, prayer of the faithful.
- 4) Holy Hour with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.
- 5) Penitential service.
- 6) Complete text of Pope Francis, August 20, 2018 letter on sexual abuse and the response of prayer and fasting.



## The New Moment

August 29, 2018

### The Grand Jury Report Regarding Sexual Abuse in Six Dioceses of Western Pennsylvania (Resource 1)

My brother priests and deacons of the Diocese of Des Moines,

- 1) Thank you ever so much for the presentations, conversations and dialogues you have been conducting with your people about this report. I have received much positive feedback as to how it is presented with candor, compassion and objective reference to the reform since 2002 with the adoption of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People by the USCCB.
- 2) On August 20<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis issued a letter regarding this crisis.

In reference to the Grand Jury Report, the Holy Father stated:

- “In recent days a report was made public which detailed the experience of at least a thousand survivors, the victims of sexual abuse, the abuse of power and of conscience at the hands of priests over a period of approximately 70 years.”
- “No effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of **their being covered up** and perpetuated.”
- The heart-wrenching pain of these victims which cries out to heaven, was long ignored, kept quiet or silenced. . . . The Lord heard that cry and once again showed us on which side he stands.”

- “Today we are challenged as the People of God to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh and in their spirit.”
- “. . . everyone of the baptized should feel involved in the ecclesial and social change that we so greatly need. This change calls for a personal and communal conversion that makes us see things as the Lord does.”
- To do so, prayer and penance will help. I invite the entire holy faithful people of God to a penitential exercise of prayer and fasting following the Lord’s command. This can awaken our conscience and arouse our solidarity and commitment to a culture of care that says “never again to every form of abuse.”

With the foregoing in mind, I ask that all parishes, schools and institutions in the Diocese of Des Moines set aside the four Fridays of September – the 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, as special days for the faithful to enter into prayer and fasting to address this sin which has been embedded in our Church community and broader culture.

This prayer and fasting might be bolstered by times of Eucharistic adoration on those four days. I suggest consideration of a Holy Hour and a penitential prayer service. I intend to do so at 5:00 pm on September 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> at St. Ambrose Cathedral.

I am attaching resources which can be of valuable assistance in this prayer initiative. Thank you for your leadership in this **New Moment** to truly rid the Church of this scourge.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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The Most Reverend Richard E. Pates  
Bishop of Des Moines

Attachments



**The New Moment  
Diocese of Des Moines**

**Month of Prayer and Fasting  
in Reparation for the Sexual Abuse of Children  
(Resource 2)**

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Pope Francis in his August 20 letter addressing the results of the Pennsylvania’s Grand Jury Report and other violations against God’s children around the world wrote, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it. (1 Cor 12:26)” He has asked the entire Church to take a “position of penance and prayer that will help us to open our eyes and hearts to other people’s sufferings...open our ears to the hushed pain felt by children, young people and the disabled...and a fasting that shakes us up and leads us to be committed in truth and charity with all men and women of good will. (Pope Francis’ Letter to the People of God, August 20, 2018)”

In response Bishop Pates has asked parishes around the Diocese to create opportunities for the faithful for fasting and prayer each Friday in September. One opportunity is a holy hour that can be scheduled once or twice within the month. For those who may not be able to attend the holy hour but would like to participate, you will find opportunities for individual and family acts of reparation.

Everything from a Church and Christian perspective starts in prayer. There is no better thing we can do in the Church then to come together as a community and reflect individually, and collectively, about this issue that has deeply wounded the victims and their families, as well as parish communities, our faithful priests and bishops and the entire universal Church.

That is why it’s important to make acts of reparation, which are prayers in repentance for sin...not just ours but the sins of others.

**Ideas for Reparation:**

- Pray the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary each Friday: for healing for the wounded victims of those who perpetuated the crime of sexual abuse.
- Make a “quiet hour” each Friday, turning off all electronic devices and retreating to a quiet room in your home. Spend the time in prayer or prayerful reading.
- Pray an Our Father prayer, three Hail Mary prayers, and a Glory be to the Father prayer for all who have been affected by the scourge of sexual abuse.
- Make an Act of Faith, Hope or Love as a family each Friday before dinner. (Find the prayer at <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/acts-of-faith-hope-and-love.cfm>)
- Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet each Friday: for healing for the wounded victims of those who perpetuated the crime of sexual abuse.



**Diocese of Des Moines  
Prayers in Response to Child Sexual Abuse  
(Resource 3)**

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**Prayers of the Faithful**

Suggested Intercessions for Parish Use

*Note: At regular parish Sunday Masses it may be appropriate to add only one prayer each week to the other intercessions at the Prayer of the Faithful. Note the different stylistic compositions of each intercession lend themselves to your own parish's composition style.*

*At Holy Hours it would be appropriate to utilize several of these petitions.*

- A. *For those whose lives are affected by the enduring and painful memory of sexual abuse and physical violence: May their families, friends and supporters renew their trust and security in loving relationships and may all members of the Church be instruments of healing, we pray...*
- B. *For the Church in the United States, especially for our bishops and leaders of religious institutions: May their words and gestures acknowledge repentance for past failures in responding to child sexual abuse and bring comfort and healing to victims, we pray...*
- C. *For justice and healing for the victims of child sexual abuse by clergy, religious and lay workers: May we work together to make our churches, schools and families havens of safety and respect for the young and the vulnerable, we pray...*
- D. *For courage and compassion in our leaders and those who have care for the young: May they will do all in their power to protect children from any form of abuse, we pray...*
- E. *For repentance by those who have perpetrated the sins and crimes of the sexual abuse of children, and for justice and truth to shed light where there is darkness, we pray...*
- F. *For the grace of renewal for all those people whose faith and hope have been wounded by the scandal of clergy sex abuse, we pray...*
- G. *For safety of all young people entrusted to the care of parents, teachers and pastoral workers, and for healing and consolation of all affected by the sexual abuse of children, we pray...*

**Diocese of Des Moines  
Prayers in Response to Child Sexual Abuse  
(Resource 4)**



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**Holy Hour with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament**

*The Blessed Sacrament is exposed in the monstrance, therefore at least four candles are lit at the altar and incense used.*

**EXPOSITION**

*A suitable hymn may be sung as the priest or deacon prepares the Holy Eucharist for adoration.*

*Hymn suggestions:*

O Saving Victim

See Us, Lord, About Your Altar

O Sacrament Most Holy

Adoro Te Devote/Godhead Here in Hiding

*A brief greeting and introduction to the Holy Hour can be given. Consider the following:*

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Cor 12:26).

Tonight we are challenged as the People of God to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh and in their spirit.

In a recent letter from Pope Francis to the People of God, he writes, “If, in the past, the response was one of omission, today we want solidarity, in the deepest and most challenging sense, to become our way of forging present and future history.”

As Saint Paul says, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it.” Let us become attuned as individuals and as a community to this charge, so that we may grow in the gift of compassion, in justice, prevention and reparation.”

*-Introduction taken from excerpts of Pope Francis’ August 20 Letter to the People of God.*

**ADORATION**

*Silent prayer for 10-15 minutes*

**Suggestions for Reading from Scripture:**

*The following are some possible choices for Scripture Readings. Others may be used.*

**Old Testament**

**Joel 2:12-18** – see Lectionary for Ash Wednesday, First Reading

**Isaiah 49:8-15** – see Lectionary for Fourth Week of Lent, Wednesday, First Reading

**New Testament**

**1 Corinthians 12:12-22, 24b-27** – see *Lectionary Anointing of the Sick*

**1 John 1:5-2:2** – see *Lectionary for the Feast of the Holy Innocents*

*and/or*

**Gospel**

**Mark 10:13-16** – see *Lectionary Christian Initiation, Gospel option 4.*

**Luke 15:1-3, 11-32** – see *Lectionary for Second Week of Lent, Saturday*

**Homily**

**Silent Prayer** (*for 10-15 minutes*)

**Prayers of Intercession** See sample prayers above (*see Resource 3 above*)

*Then one of the following prayers may then be recited:*

**Prayer for the Healing of Victims of Abuse**

God of endless love, ever caring, ever strong,  
always present, always just:

You gave your only Son  
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace, join to your own suffering  
the pain of all who have been hurt in body, mind, and spirit  
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize  
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.  
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,  
soothe restless hearts with hope,  
steady shaken spirits with faith:  
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,  
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,  
heal your people's wounds  
and transform our brokenness.  
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,  
so that we may act with justice  
and find peace in you.  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

*(From the USCCB)*

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## **A Prayer for Our Church**

Heavenly Father,  
In every age, you have been our refuge.  
Yet again and still, we stand before you  
asking for your protection on your holy Church.

For the victims of abuse and their families,  
pour out your healing and your peace.

For the Bishops of this country,  
continue to inspire their decisions,  
and guide them with your Spirit.

For the thousands of good and faithful priests,  
who have followed your call to serve you and your people in holiness,  
sustain them by your grace.

For the faithful who are angry, confused, and searching for answers,  
embrace them with your love,  
restore their trust,  
console them with your clear Gospel message,  
and renew them with your sacraments.

We place our Church in your hands,  
for without you we can do nothing.  
May Jesus, our High Priest and true compass,  
continue to lead her in every thought and action –  
to be an instrument of justice,  
a source of consolation,  
a sacrament of unity,  
and a manifestation of your faithful covenant.  
Grant this through that same Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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## **ORACION POR NUESTRA IGLESIA**

Padre Celestial,  
Tú has sido nuestro refugio en cada etapa de la vida  
Una vez más y como siempre, nos ponemos frente a ti  
pidiendo tu protección para tu santa Iglesia.

Te pedimos por las víctimas de abuso y por sus familias,  
derrama tu sanación y tu paz sobre ellos.

Por los Obispos de este país,  
para que continúes inspirando sus decisiones,

y guiándolos con tu Santo Espíritu

Por los miles de sacerdotes fieles y Buenos  
que han seguido tu llamado a servirte a ti y a tus fieles en santidad,  
sostenlos con tu gracia.

Por los fieles que están furiosos, confundidos, y en busca de respuestas,  
abrázalos con tu amor,  
restaura su confianza,  
consuélalos con tu mensaje claro del Evangelio,  
y renuévalos con tus sacramentos.

Ponemos nuestra Iglesia en tus manos,  
porque sin ti no hay nada que podamos hacer.  
Que Jesús, nuestro Sumo Sacerdote y verdadero compás,  
continúe guiándola en cada pensamiento y acción –  
a ser una fuente de consuelo,  
un sacramento de unidad,  
y una manifestación de tu fiel alianza.

Te pedimos nos concedas todo esto a través del mismo Jesucristo, nuestro Señor,  
que vive y reina contigo en la unidad del Espíritu Santo,  
un solo Dios, por los siglos de los siglos. Amen.

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Translation courtesy of Rosalbo Quiroz, Diocese of Shreveport

Silent Prayer (for 10-15 minutes)

## **BENEDICTION**

*A suitable Eucharistic hymn is sung. (See suggestions above.) Afterwards the minister rises and sings or says one of the usual prayers before Benediction given in the Rite of Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass, e.g.:*

**Let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, you gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of your suffering and death. May our worship of this sacrament of your body and blood help us to experience the salvation you won for us and the peace of the kingdom where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen**

*After the prayer the priest or deacon puts on the humeral veil, genuflects, and takes the monstrance. He makes the sign of the cross over the people with the monstrance in silence.*

*The Divine Praises may be said or sung.*

*The minister replaces the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle. Meanwhile a suitable song may be sung. The minister then leaves.*



## Diocese of Des Moines (Resource 5)

### Penitential Service

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(Based on the prayers found in Appendix II to the Rite of Penance)

#### Entrance Song and Greeting

*After an appropriate song and the greeting by the minister, the theme of the celebration is explained to the community. Then he invites all to pray. After a period of silence, he says:*

Almighty God, you are the Father of us all. You created the human family to dwell for ever with you and to praise your glory.

You have called us into your Church, the mystical Body of your Son, and yet we have sinned against you and wounded the Body of Christ by our sins.

We lament the failings of those who minister in your name, which have caused such hurt to the innocent.

Open our ears to hear your voice and our eyes to see your image in those who are bruised and wounded by sexual abuse.

Restore your Body and all its members by your healing love, so that those who have been broken may find wholeness again and your children may be a light to the world.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### READINGS

*The following are some possible choices for Scripture Readings:*

#### First Reading

**Joel 2:12-18** – see *Lectionary for Ash Wednesday, First Reading*

**Isaiah 49:8-15** – see *Lectionary for Fourth Week of Lent, Wednesday, First Reading*

#### Responsorial Psalm

**Ps. 50:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19** – see *Lectionary for the First Week of Lent.*

#### Second Reading

**1 John 1:5-2:2** – see *Lectionary for the Feast of the Holy Innocents*.

### **Gospel Reading**

**Luke 15:1-3, 11-32** - see *Lectionary for Second week of Lent, Saturday*.

*Other suitable readings from Scripture may be chosen.*

### **Homily**

### **Examination of Conscience**

*A period of silence is included so that each person may examine his or her conscience.*

### **Act of Repentance**

*After the examination of conscience, the presiding minister invites all to pray:*

**Our God is a God of mercy, slow to anger and full of compassion. He is the Father who welcomes his son when he returns from a distant country. Let us pray to him with trust in his goodness:**

*Response: We are not worthy to be called your children.*

- By our misuse of your gifts we have sinned against you. *Response.*
- By straying from your mind and heart we have sinned against you. *Response.*
- By forgetting your love we have sinned against you. *Response.*
- By protecting ourselves while neglecting to protect the vulnerable and the hurting we have sinned against you. *Response.*
- By failing to help our neighbour in his or her need we have sinned against you. *Response.*

*All then pray:*

### **Prayer for the Healing of Victims of Abuse**

God of endless love, ever caring, ever strong,  
always present, always just:  
You gave your only Son  
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,  
join to your own suffering  
the pain of all who have been hurt in body, mind, and spirit  
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize

over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.  
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,  
soothe restless hearts with hope,  
steady shaken spirits with faith:  
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,  
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,  
heal your people's wounds  
and transform our brokenness.  
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,  
so that we may act with justice  
and find peace in you.  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.  
(Prayer: USCCB)

*Then the "Hail, Holy Queen" may be recited or sung. The minister continues:*

Let us now call upon our Father in the words that Jesus gave us: Our Father...

*A suitable song may be sung.*

#### Final Prayer and Blessing

May the God of peace fill your hearts with every blessing. May he sustain you with his gifts of hope and consolation, help you to offer your lives in his service, and bring you safely to eternal glory.

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*A suitable song may be sung.*



# The Holy See

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## *LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD*

### **(Resource 6)**

“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Cor 12:26). These words of Saint Paul forcefully echo in my heart as I acknowledge once more the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons. Crimes that inflict deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also in their family members and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike. Looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated. The pain of the victims and their families is also our pain, and so it is urgent that we once more reaffirm our commitment to ensure the protection of minors and of vulnerable adults.

#### 1. If one member suffers...

In recent days, a report was made public which detailed the experiences of at least a thousand survivors, victims of sexual abuse, the abuse of power and of conscience at the hands of priests over a period of approximately seventy years. Even though it can be said that most of these cases belong to the past, nonetheless as time goes on we have come to know the pain of many of the victims. We have realized that these wounds never disappear and that they require us forcefully to condemn these atrocities and join forces in uprooting this culture of death; these wounds never go away. The heart-wrenching pain of these victims, which cries out to heaven, was long ignored, kept quiet or silenced. But their outcry was more powerful than all the measures meant to silence it, or sought even to resolve it by decisions that increased its gravity by falling into complicity. The Lord heard that cry and once again showed us on which side he stands. Mary’s song is not mistaken and continues quietly to echo throughout history. For the Lord remembers the promise he made to our fathers: “he has scattered the proud in their conceit; he has cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he

has sent away empty” (Lk 1:51-53). We feel shame when we realize that our style of life has denied, and continues to deny, the words we recite.

With shame and repentance, we acknowledge as an ecclesial community that we were not where we should have been, that we did not act in a timely manner, realizing the magnitude and the gravity of the damage done to so many lives. We showed no care for the little ones; we abandoned them. I make my own the [words of the then Cardinal Ratzinger when, during the Way of the Cross composed for Good Friday 2005](#), he identified with the cry of pain of so many victims and exclaimed: “How much filth there is in the Church, and even among those who, in the priesthood, ought to belong entirely to [Christ]! How much pride, how much self-complacency! Christ’s betrayal by his disciples, their unworthy reception of his body and blood, is certainly the greatest suffering endured by the Redeemer; it pierces his heart. We can only call to him from the depths of our hearts: *Kyrie eleison* – Lord, save us! (cf. Mt 8:25)” (Ninth Station).

2. ... all suffer together with it

The extent and the gravity of all that has happened requires coming to grips with this reality in a comprehensive and communal way. While it is important and necessary on every journey of conversion to acknowledge the truth of what has happened, in itself this is not enough. Today we are challenged as the People of God to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh and in their spirit. If, in the past, the response was one of omission, today we want solidarity, in the deepest and most challenging sense, to become our way of forging present and future history. And this in an environment where conflicts, tensions and above all the victims of every type of abuse can encounter an outstretched hand to protect them and rescue them from their pain (cf. [Evangelii Gaudium, 228](#)). Such solidarity demands that we in turn condemn whatever endangers the integrity of any person. A solidarity that summons us to fight all forms of corruption, especially spiritual corruption. The latter is “a comfortable and self-satisfied form of blindness. Everything then appears acceptable: deception, slander, egotism and other subtle forms of self-centeredness, for ‘even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light’ (2 Cor 11:14)” ([Gaudete et Exsultate, 165](#)). Saint Paul’s exhortation to suffer with those who suffer is the best antidote against all our attempts to repeat the words of Cain: “Am I my brother's keeper?” (Gen 4:9).

I am conscious of the effort and work being carried out in various parts of the world to come up with the necessary means to ensure the safety and protection of the integrity of children and of vulnerable adults, as well as implementing zero tolerance and ways of making all those who perpetrate or cover up these crimes accountable. We have delayed in applying these actions and sanctions that are so necessary, yet I am confident that they will help to guarantee a greater culture of care in the present and future.

Together with those efforts, every one of the baptized should feel involved in the ecclesial and

social change that we so greatly need. This change calls for a personal and communal conversion that makes us see things as the Lord does. For as Saint [John Paul II](#) liked to say: “If we have truly started out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he wished to be identified” ([Novo Millennio Ineunte](#), 49). To see things as the Lord does, to be where the Lord wants us to be, to experience a conversion of heart in his presence. To do so, prayer and penance will help. I invite the entire holy faithful People of God to a *penitential exercise of prayer and fasting*, following the Lord’s command.<sup>[1]</sup> This can awaken our conscience and arouse our solidarity and commitment to a culture of care that says “never again” to every form of abuse.

It is impossible to think of a conversion of our activity as a Church that does not include the active participation of all the members of God’s People. Indeed, whenever we have tried to replace, or silence, or ignore, or reduce the People of God to small elites, we end up creating communities, projects, theological approaches, spiritualities and structures without roots, without memory, without faces, without bodies and ultimately, without lives.<sup>[2]</sup> This is clearly seen in a peculiar way of understanding the Church’s authority, one common in many communities where sexual abuse and the abuse of power and conscience have occurred. Such is the case with clericalism, an approach that “not only nullifies the character of Christians, but also tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of our people”.<sup>[3]</sup> Clericalism, whether fostered by priests themselves or by lay persons, leads to an excision in the ecclesial body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today. To say “no” to abuse is to say an emphatic “no” to all forms of clericalism.

It is always helpful to remember that “in salvation history, the Lord saved one people. We are never completely ourselves unless we belong to a people. That is why no one is saved alone, as an isolated individual. Rather, God draws us to himself, taking into account the complex fabric of interpersonal relationships present in the human community. God wanted to enter into the life and history of a people” ([Gaudete et Exsultate](#), 6). Consequently, the only way that we have to respond to this evil that has darkened so many lives is to experience it as a task regarding all of us as the People of God. This awareness of being part of a people and a shared history will enable us to acknowledge our past sins and mistakes with a penitential openness that can allow us to be renewed from within. Without the active participation of all the Church’s members, everything being done to uproot the culture of abuse in our communities will not be successful in generating the necessary dynamics for sound and realistic change. The penitential dimension of fasting and prayer will help us as God’s People to come before the Lord and our wounded brothers and sisters as sinners imploring forgiveness and the grace of shame and conversion. In this way, we will come up with actions that can generate resources attuned to the Gospel. For “whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today’s world” ([Evangelii Gaudium](#), 11).

It is essential that we, as a Church, be able to acknowledge and condemn, with sorrow and shame, the atrocities perpetrated by consecrated persons, clerics, and all those entrusted with the mission of watching over and caring for those most vulnerable. Let us beg forgiveness for our own sins and the sins of others. An awareness of sin helps us to acknowledge the errors, the crimes and the wounds caused in the past and allows us, in the present, to be more open and committed along a journey of renewed conversion.

Likewise, penance and prayer will help us to open our eyes and our hearts to other people's sufferings and to overcome the thirst for power and possessions that are so often the root of those evils. May fasting and prayer open our ears to the hushed pain felt by children, young people and the disabled. A fasting that can make us hunger and thirst for justice and impel us to walk in the truth, supporting all the judicial measures that may be necessary. A fasting that shakes us up and leads us to be committed in truth and charity with all men and women of good will, and with society in general, to combatting all forms of the abuse of power, sexual abuse and the abuse of conscience.

In this way, we can show clearly our calling to be "a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race" (*Lumen Gentium*, 1).

"If one member suffers, all suffer together with it", said Saint Paul. By an attitude of prayer and penance, we will become attuned as individuals and as a community to this exhortation, so that we may grow in the gift of compassion, in justice, prevention and reparation. Mary chose to stand at the foot of her Son's cross. She did so unhesitatingly, standing firmly by Jesus' side. In this way, she reveals the way she lived her entire life. When we experience the desolation caused by these ecclesial wounds, we will do well, with Mary, "to insist more upon prayer", seeking to grow all the more in love and fidelity to the Church (SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA, *Spiritual Exercises*, 319). She, the first of the disciples, teaches all of us as disciples how we are to halt before the sufferings of the innocent, without excuses or cowardice. To look to Mary is to discover the model of a true follower of Christ.

May the Holy Spirit grant us the grace of conversion and the interior anointing needed to express before these crimes of abuse our compunction and our resolve courageously to combat them.

*Vatican City, 20 August 2018*

**FRANCIS**

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[1] "But this kind [of demon] does not come out except by prayer and fasting" (*Mt* 17:21).

[2] Cf. *Letter to the Pilgrim People of God in Chile* (31 May 2018).

[3] *Letter to Cardinal Marc Ouellet, President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America* (19 March 2016).