

## **Knights of Columbus – Chevaliers de Colomb**



SASKATCHEWAN STATE COUNCIL – CONSEIL d'ETAT

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**Dear Saskatchewan Brother Knights and Families,**

### **If we do not look for Christ, what are we looking for and whom do we expect to see?**

It seems all our lives we look for Jesus. Often we believe we see Him or His hand in creation, such as in a sunset or a riveting picture of grand lakes and mountains. But we know that also in great pain and suffering we look for Him. Often we are confounded and blinded by our acute pain and are spiritually challenged asking, “Where is Jesus?”

So likewise, with the recent confirmation of decades of disaster of sexual abuse, we find ourselves with so many other faithful, knights, clergy and hierarchy in the same place. We are all struggling to express the numerous emotions of disgust, anger, fear, resolve, loss, shame, confusion, despair that make up a host of reactions that come to our minds and our hearts. Many are desperately wading in an emotional bog. We are looking for meaning in what seems to be a situation that is bereft of any easy answers. So we ask, “Where is Jesus?” and we look for Him. What are we looking for if we are not looking for Christ Jesus? The evil one wants us to feel as though we are in the depths of despair and think we are alone. In our pain the last thing he wants is for us to look for Jesus. And so we look for Him.

It gives insight into the overwhelming disillusionment that must have been experienced by those who learned of other major tragedies in history. How could this be? This is inconceivable! How can people do this to other people? As if our pain could not be intensified, it finds new depths when we consider that people intentionally perpetuated a narcissism that forever changed the lives of innocent children, their families and friends, clergy, hierarchy, the church and indeed all of society.

### **A Host of Victims**

Where is Jesus? Well, without a doubt we see Christ in the victims. The people who were abused emotionally, physically and sexually are Jesus on the cross. As Christ felt forsaken by the Father so must these people have experienced being forsaken by God and possibly others such as parents, friends and family, who led them, in part, to trust people that now stripped them of their dignity. This has devastated their sense of identity, sense of humanity and eclipsed their sense of being a child of God. If we want an insight into the suffering of Jesus, we look into the eyes and the heart of a helpless person, as they grow emotionally and spiritually numb. This is where we see Christ, in those who are helpless, abandoned and emotionally devastated.

We also see Jesus in everyone around the primary victims, those who may feel indirectly victimized in some related fashion. What must go through the mind of a person who was caring for vulnerable people and thought the current level of security was sufficient but now gaze upon a home, a family, a parish or a diocese that was invaded? It is in the faces of people feeling betrayed that we see Christ. The sense of being victims in light of their responsibility to protect others is haunting.

In Christ we find comfort, wisdom and healing. No matter what a person is experiencing upon learning of this abuse disaster, people need to affirm their understanding, their feelings and their perspective of the tragedy. They look to others for this. They ask themselves, “Is what I am experiencing real?” “Did people in positions of trust and power actually do this?” “Are others as angry as I am? Are others as devastated as I am?” Again, here is where I look for the face of Jesus.

### **The person who drops the ball belongs to a team.**

Parents, friends, knights, family, clergy and hierarchy trusted certain other “team members” who lied. The degree of responsibility varies when we consider the coach or the captain or other teammates. Each parent, friend, family member, priest, religious brother or sister and bishop had made an act of trust that resulted in tragedy for so many. In life, lawyers trust the integrity of other lawyers. Doctors trust the integrity of other doctors. Professionals trust other professionals and spiritual leaders trust the integrity of other spiritual leaders. Astronauts trust the rocket someone else built. Commuters trust engineers and construction workers who designed and built the bridges they use everyday. Yet things fail because people fail. Failure is intensified when people know of a danger to others and intentionally do not act upon it. Every one tries to trust others in a crowd or school, but woe to the person who brings a weapon to harm others. In the end, children placed their trust in everyone older than them. The “ball was dropped” and they feel the team let them down.

### **Trust is like a forest fire.**

For decades a forest will grow and spread, enhancing a landscape and offering a place of beauty and sustenance for wildlife and people alike. Yet with one small match, in the span of a few hours, large portions of a forest can be destroyed that took decades to grow. It seems the forest of trust is still smoldering. Is there any limit to where it will spread?

Again, we see Jesus here! After a string of fires, lives are counted and reconsidered, the damage is evaluated, some rebuild, some move elsewhere, but everyone has learned more about the cost of trust. There is a price. Jesus is in the faces and the hearts of those who pick up the pieces. Jesus dwells in the people, who, similar to the blue berries after a forest fire, start new growth. They adopt better practices and start rebuilding the trust.

It is important to know that the Pontifical Commission For The Protection Of Minors has recently met (September 7-9, 2018) in Rome and the person in charge; Cardinal O’Malley, is a strong Knight of Columbus. It will be interesting to see what further measures experts say should be taken by entire dioceses/eparchies as well as other organizations so that the dignity of children and families are protected in the best manner possible. The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is meeting at the end of September and the energy they have directed toward this issue for some time now will soon be shared.

If we do not look for Christ, what are we looking for and whom do we expect to see? We look for Jesus in scripture to confirm and comfort others and me in the chaos.

“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!  
Matthew 18:6-7

“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Matthew 7:1-2

### **How does a person respond?**

Like most tragedies, there are immediate responses as well as responses that have to be well thought out so that steps can be taken to thoroughly prevent further tragedy. Some might be offended by the length of time responses come but the larger the issue the longer it usually takes to address it in a comprehensive way. An immediate response can offend by seeming to treat the issue superficially while a more comprehensive response can offend because it is not swift. Both are needed, but immediate cannot be interpreted as thorough.

Victims need to be recognized. Some have carried this pain for some time. Like a broken bone that heals poorly, setting the broken bone properly later calls for a new wave of pain. The victims need the space to deal with this and follow a way of healing that makes sense for them. Other indirect victims in the church are called to walk with them. Wounded people have an insight about how to help others who are wounded.

Many dioceses and eparchies have abuse prevention protocols and policies in place. None of them are perfect and they usually include rules and behaviors that are expected, legislated and aimed at prevention. It can be argued that over the past several years, efforts by dioceses and eparchies to uncover abuse are evidently working or these tragedies would still remain hidden. Policies in place since 1992, however, are continually improved upon and ongoing training to deal with these issues of abuse is one more comprehensive way to educate all adults about prevention, be they bishops, priests, religious, professionals of any stripe, volunteers, parents and friends.

### **In a letter by Holy Father Pope Francis that was addressed to the People of God in August he says:**

*“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.”*

**For the complete text go to** Pope Francis: Letter to the People of God, 20 August 2018  
[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco\\_20180820\\_lettera-popolo-didio.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20180820_lettera-popolo-didio.html)

*Catholics across our country are rightly ashamed and saddened regarding the findings of the Pennsylvania Investigating Grand Jury. With Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, we reiterate the profound sadness that we as Bishops feel each time we learn about the harm caused as a result of abuse by Church leaders of any rank.*

*The Bishops of Canada treat with great seriousness instances of sexual abuse of minors and inappropriate conduct on the part of all pastoral workers – be they fellow Bishops, other clergy, consecrated persons or laity.*

*National guidelines for the protection of minors have been in place in Canada since 1992, which dioceses and eparchies across the country have applied in their local policies and protocols. This fall, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops will launch updated and expanded guidelines promoting the safeguarding of minors and increasing accountability and transparency within Church leadership.*

*In communion with Pope Francis, the Bishops of Canada want victims to know that the Church is on their side. Those who suffer are the Church's priority, and the Church wants to listen to them and to learn from them.*

*The Catholic Bishops of Canada understand well how much these crimes can shake the faith and the spirit of believers. We hope and pray that the Catholic faithful will assist all of us in every way to create safe and respectful environments for everyone, especially minors and vulnerable adults in the Church and in all of society.*

[http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/CCCB\\_statement\\_-\\_Findings\\_of\\_Pennsylvania\\_Investigating\\_Grand\\_Jury\\_-\\_EN.pdf](http://www.cccb.ca/site/images/stories/pdf/CCCB_statement_-_Findings_of_Pennsylvania_Investigating_Grand_Jury_-_EN.pdf)

**Declaration of the Director of the Holy See Press Office, Greg Burke, 2018-08-16 says:**

The Holy Father understands well how much these crimes can shake the faith and the spirit of believers and reiterates the call to make every effort to create a safe environment for minors and vulnerable adults in the Church and in all of society.

Victims should know that the Pope is on their side. Those who have suffered are his priority, and the Church wants to listen to them to root out this tragic horror that destroys the lives of the innocent.

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/08/16/180816b.html>

**The joint statement by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Bishop Timothy L. Doherty, Chairman, USCCB Committee for the Protection of Children and Youth People, 14 August 2018 reads:**

We are profoundly saddened each time we hear about the harm caused as a result of abuse, at the hands of a clergyman of any rank. The USCCB [Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People](#) and the office of the [Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection](#) will continue to offer avenues to healing for those who have been abused. We are committed to work in determined ways so that such abuse cannot happen.

The Pennsylvania grand jury report covers a span of more than 70 years. In 2002 the U.S. Catholic bishops adopted the [Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People](#), which commits us to respond promptly and compassionately to victims, report the abuse of

minors, remove offenders and take ongoing action to prevent abuse. This Charter was revised and updated in 2011 and again in 2018. We pledge to maintain transparency and to provide for the permanent removal of offenders from ministry and to maintain safe environments for everyone. All policies and procedures regarding training and background check requirements are made publicly available by dioceses and eparchies.

<http://usccb.org/news/2018/18-138.cfm>

### **No surprise our Supreme Knight Carl Anderson has expressed his response to this news:**

Worthy Chaplains and Dear Brother Knights,

The issues that have come to light concerning sexual abuse by Archbishop Theodore McCarrick and in the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report are cause for grave concern among Catholics and Brother Knights. Many feel deeply betrayed by those whom they long held in high regard. Such concerns are shared not just in the United States, but in Europe, Latin America and elsewhere.

These sins of commission and omission have sent the Church we love, the Church we serve and the Church that Jesus Christ established into convulsions. Sadly, the disgrace not only is borne by the perpetrators, it hurts us all, as does the silence of shepherds who have ignored the cries of their flocks.

There are many wonderful and faithful laborers in the vineyard of the Lord among our priests and bishops. However, it is clear that in addition to devastating criminal acts, we have seen many other moral failings by clergy that represent a crisis of commitment to the Gospel.

Too often the needs of victims have been subordinated to a distorted sense of mercy toward the perpetrators or an instinct for clerical self-preservation. The sexual acts — both criminal and non-criminal — highlight the need to recover a respect for and a renewed commitment to the priestly promises of celibacy.

The Knights of Columbus has supported the pastoral and charitable work of our bishops and priests since our founding by the Venerable Father Michael McGivney. We understand that the priest should lead the parish and the bishop should be the center of unity in a diocese. But we — like all Catholics — are painfully aware of the wreckage that ensues when elements of this leadership are abdicated by evil actions whether directly perpetrated or covered up.

Now, the Knights of Columbus — laymen, priests and chaplains together — will have an important role to play in rebuilding the Church. We must commit the Knights of Columbus to work for repentance, reform and rebuilding of the Church.

Repentance should include a full accounting of the misdeeds by those who have committed them. Archbishop McCarrick and others at fault owe us a full account of their actions, motivations and cover-ups. After years of having us confess to them, it is now time for them to come clean about what they have done and what they have failed to do.

This will also help increase the recognition that clerical sexual abuse is a global problem that must be addressed at the highest levels of the Catholic Church. Moreover, priests and bishops who refuse to live according to their promises of celibacy should be removed from public ministry, not out of retribution, but for the protection of the faithful and to prevent future variations of the scandal we now suffer.

Reform must include many good ideas that have been proposed, such as a full and complete investigation of sexual abuse led by an independent commission that includes laity; complete transparency by the Catholic hierarchy into all matters of criminal sexual misconduct past or future; an expansion of the zero tolerance policy to include sexual activity or misconduct by clerics including bishops, and by seminarians; and a call for faithfulness by all members of the clergy, including bishops. There must also be an independent ethics hotline for reporting of criminal and other conduct at odds with Catholic teaching on the clerical state of life; and there must be protections against retaliation.

Such reforms will be difficult for a Church largely unused to them, and we must support our bishops and our priests in embracing these reforms in order to rebuild.

We can help to rebuild our Church in several ways. Above all else, Knights — and our chaplains — must embrace love of God and love of neighbor. This is Christ's great commandment and the founding mission of our Order. It is also exactly the opposite of the rejection of God and exploitation of neighbor that our Church has witnessed in these scandals.

Shortly before becoming Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger decried the “filth” in the Church “even among those, who in the priesthood, ought to belong totally” to Christ. He also provided the antidote, stating at other times that what the Church needs now more than anything else is “saints.” Pope Francis reiterated Pope Benedict's sentiments in his letter on Aug. 20.

In the days ahead, the Knights of Columbus will help renew our Church on a national level through a Novena of Masses in reparation for these sins that have so grievously wounded the Body of Christ. I take this opportunity to ask that you offer this Novena of Masses for our Church at your earliest opportunity.

Beginning in November, the Knights of Columbus will sponsor, in cooperation with the Shrine of St. Jean Vianney in Ars, France, a national tour of the relic of the heart of this great patron saint of priests. In the coming weeks, I will share more details with you about this initiative.

We will also continue to strengthen and rebuild our Church at the level of our families and parishes through our Building the Domestic Church program. Its twin elements of imbuing families with faith and strengthening parish life are critical to providing a Catholic Church that rebuilds based on the Gospel principles of love of God and love of neighbor. Together with our recently announced “Faith In Action” initiative, we will strive to make our parishes truly become, in the words of Pope Francis, “a family of families.”

**Now is the time for all brother Knights to stand steadfast in faith, as Catholics and as gentlemen. We will assist priests, bishops and our fellow Catholics in helping the Church chart a course for the future that puts Christ at the center, so that truly we may say, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”**

This is the moment in which Knights — including in a special way our priest members — can be part of a great renewal for good in our Church. And as we strive to follow the Lord more closely in the days ahead, may he deliver us from every evil and in his mercy graciously grant his Church peace and unity.

In closing, know that your faithful witness and sacrifice can bring inspiration and hope to millions of your fellow Catholics. It will be needed in the days ahead more than ever before. And to every priest and bishop whose commitment and dedication to our Order and to our Church has been faithful and exemplary, please accept my gratitude in both a personal way and on behalf of the Knights of Columbus.

Let each one of us prayerfully invoke the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so that in the words of St. Maximilian Kolbe, our hearts "would be cleansed and themselves become immaculate, similar and like unto her own heart."

Fraternally,  
Carl A. Anderson Supreme Knight

<https://www.kofc.org/en/resources/communications/supreme-knight-letter-to-chaplains.pdf>

Yours In Christ,

Most Reverend Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR/Knights of Columbus State Chaplain  
Father Edward Gibney, Associate State Chaplain  
Chris Bencharski, State Deputy-Saskatchewan State Council  
Joseph Riffel, State Secretary-Saskatchewan State Council  
Brian Schatz, Immediate Past State Deputy-Saskatchewan State Council  
Larry Packet, State Treasurer-Saskatchewan State Council  
Rene Gaudet, State Advocate-Saskatchewan State Council  
Marte Clemente Nogot, State Warden-Saskatchewan State Council