

Saint Maria Goretti Catholic Church



August 22, 2018

Dear Members of Saint Maria Goretti Parish,

We have once again been hearing troubling news in the media regarding the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. It deeply grieves me, as it does you, as we hear about the many children and adults who have been abused by priests, bishops, cardinals and other people in positions of authority in the Church.

Our pope has many times expressed his deep sorrow and concern, and is working diligently to address this issue, cf. <https://bit.ly/2o33zbk>. Our own bishop wrote a letter last week to all the faithful expressing his grave concern regarding the same subject, cf. <https://bit.ly/2By886Z>. I encourage everyone to carefully read both of these letters.

As I reflect on this situation, I believe that it is important for me as your pastor to assure you of my understanding of this important issue and address what our parish is doing in response to this serious violation of trust.

First, I deeply grieve the fact that many people have been sexually abused by leaders of our Church. The damage done to so many lives is beyond comprehension. Though it is nothing compared to the pain and suffering experienced by the victims and their families, these actions have also caused damage to the reputations of many Church communities, to ordained and lay ministers in all branches of Christianity, and to the very mission of the Gospel. The pain this causes parish communities is heartbreaking.

Second, there is no excuse for this to have happened. I am frustrated that after addressing this serious issue for the past 25 years, our Church continues to wrestle with this concern. I am reminded of what Jesus said: "To whom much has been given, much will be required," Luke 12:48. The Church has been given a tremendous amount of authority. It has failed in an appalling way. Our Church has failed to protect the most vulnerable. It has failed all those who have been victimized, along with their families, friends, and communities.

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Third, in collaboration with your parish staff and leadership, I will continue to do everything in my power to make sure that this abuse does not happen anywhere at Saint Maria Goretti Church. Specifically, our parish will continue to employ the use of the VIRTUS program to complete background checks on all employees and volunteers. In conjunction, we will broaden the education process of learning how to identify inappropriate behavior and clearly define what our Church's expectations are to ensure a safe environment for our young people and all our parishioners. I welcome your suggestions as to how we can improve our education, awareness, and protection of the people entrusted to our care.

Fourth, if you, or someone you know, is or has been a victim of sexual abuse or any other type of abuse by an authority figure in the Church, please contact the local law enforcement. If you need help in contacting law enforcement, contact the Victim's Assistance Coordinator of our Diocese. If you observe any grooming behavior, desensitization behavior or any other inappropriate behavior by an authority figure in the Church, please report it to the Victim Assistance Coordinator of the Diocese. Our Diocese wants to do everything possible to help anyone who is or has been the victim of any of type of abuse.

It deeply saddens me that many children and adults have suffered this terrible abuse and betrayal of trust. On behalf the Church, I offer my apology. I pledge my prayers for healing and my service to those who have been victimized, their families and the countless others who have suffered because of this abuse. If any of you would like to share your concerns, I am available to listen and offer support.

Trusting in God's healing power,



Rev. Fr. Robert L. Evenson
Pastor