



BISHOP OF STEUBENVILLE

P.O. Box 969

Steubenville, OH 43952

Phone: 740-282-3631 Fax: 740-282-3327

Website: www.diosteub.org

August 17, 2018

Dear Father:

I write you in regard to the continued unfolding developments of the Archbishop McCarrick story, as well as the recent release of the Grand Jury Report in Pennsylvania. While both reports come from a state other than Ohio, both scenarios directly affect your pastoral ministry, as well as mine. It also adversely affects the faithful in the pew. Not one of us is immune of the dire consequences which are and will continue to unfold.

At our presbyteral ordination, you and I promised to make a pastoral priority our brothers and sisters, especially those in the gravest of suffering. The recent news reports, accompanied by detailed stories unequivocally communicate the tragic horrors that have occurred, as well as innocent lives destroyed. Most certainly, the Catholic Church in the United States has embarked into a spiritual crisis and nothing short of spiritual conversion and repentance is necessary, all resultant of morally reprehensible actions. The allegations of predatory actions by clergy, as well as cover-ups by their ecclesial superiors namely, bishops, demand our deepest pastoral concern for bringing the guilty to justice and providing spiritual care to the numerous victims. Silence is an ineffective salve. The moral failures of both perpetrators as well as those who failed to respond demand our self-reflection, prayer, and penance.

Also evident in the reporting is how so many clergy and bishops lived "double lives." Let me be perfectly clear, a "double life" is incompatible with a shepherd of souls. In fact, a priest or bishop who lives a "double life" namely, one foot in virtue and the other in vice, is nothing more than a "hired worker." For anyone who finds himself in this state of life, immediate repentance is required of him as well as the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. Otherwise, one should remove himself from the pastoral office. There is no third option.

As I hold myself accountable in the growth in virtue as well as healthy prayer habits, ascetical life, as well as regular celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and spiritual direction, I strongly encourage you to do the same. Nothing good can come from the practice of infrequent confession or a shallow prayer life.

Notwithstanding, as your Bishop, I need to address the omission of the bishop's accountability in light of the Dallas Charter. That being said, while policy will be discussed and discussed and discussed, no institutional initiative is a substitute for clear, unambiguous, bold teaching about chastity and the growth in virtue and holiness that God calls all individuals to: married, single, consecrated, and ordained.

While I am confident there will be further reports, I encourage you to stand true to our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. These days are a sobering reminder that our very moral life as pastors of souls needs to be considered from a vertical relationship with God looking up to Jesus, and not simply a horizontal one.

May we never forget that while we envision our ministry for the Church's benefit as well as for ourselves, in the end we serve Christ Himself. Please be assured of my brotherly support and affirmation to each and every one of you at this regrettable time in the Church, but we can ill afford to despair while gazing upon the immense hope Jesus Christ has given us in His Paschal Mystery.

I thank you for your continued prayers. May you and I entrust the souls of all with whom we've been entrusted to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I remain,

Fraternally yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, preceded by a small cross symbol. The signature is cursive and appears to read "Jeffrey M. Monforton".

Most Reverend Jeffrey M. Monforton
Bishop of Steubenville

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