

CLARION HERALD

Official Newspaper of the

Archdiocese of New Orleans



Vol. 57 No. 27 | August 25, 2018

www.clarionherald.org

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Archbishop Aymond: 'We must learn and repent from our sins and failures'



August 17, 2018

To: Clergy, Religious and Laity in the Archdiocese of New Orleans

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

We are still hurting from the recent accusations against a local deacon, a cardinal and the information in the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report. Our feelings of anger and disappointment are appropriate. The very first step in moving forward is to seek forgiveness. On behalf of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, I sincerely and humbly apologize for any wrongdoing by the church or its leadership.

As we move forward, we must always pray for the victims that they know God's healing. For those of us in leadership we must pray and fast that God will forgive the priests and bishops involved in the abuse or those who participated in the cover up. Furthermore, we must make sure we provide a

path for the future, which will give even greater protection for our young church, vulnerable adults and seminarians.

As I have mentioned before, we have made great strides in safe environment. Most of the cases we have heard about recently are from 35-40 years ago. However, that does not take away the pain of the victims, which they may have suffered for decades. To those who suffered, I sincerely apologize and pray that you experience God's healing. I am sorry for your pain. I want to meet with you.

How do we move forward in repentance and hope?

1. I invite everyone to join me for Mass on August 28, 2018, at 6 p.m. at St. Joseph Church, 1802 Tulane Avenue, New Orleans. The intention of the Mass is "The Church asking for forgiveness and for the healing of victims."

2. Encourage victims and all those who have been disillusioned by the church to come forward, to call me or our Victims' Assistance hotline (504) 522-5019. I want to apologize personally and

accompany them in their healing journey.

3. Accept the specific plan of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) outlined by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of the USCCB, who states that we MUST:

► Undertake a full and complete investigation of questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick so that this can never happen again.

► Pledge to find a way in which abuse and misconduct of bishops can be reported swiftly, effectively and confidentially.

► Assemble a lay commission to oversee our commitment to greater accountability as bishops. There are laity with expertise in the areas of investigation, law enforcement and psychology who will be an essential part of this plan for independent review.

► Request our Holy Father to authorize an Apostolic Visitation to look closely at all that has taken place and be critical in helping us become more responsible in the future, thus preventing irresponsibility on the part of the bishops.

We know that as bishops we have a lot of work to do. We also understand and acknowledge that we have let you down. We accept this and ask for your forgiveness and for your

openness to accept our sincere desire to rebuild trust. We know this will take time and an open heart on the part of many.

Sexual abuse is evil. Jesus said, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners" (Luke 5:31-32). As church leaders, we have sinned and ask for God's mercy. Please join me in this painful journey that leads us to Calvary and eventually to resurrection.

I cannot end this letter without a word of thanks to the many faithful clergy in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. I am so sorry that they are tainted by the acts of abuse performed by others. I acknowledge and appreciate their good and faithful ministry.

We must learn and repent from our sins and failures. Please pray that all church leaders will be faithful to the promises we made at our ordination. Most of all, please join me in praying for the victims of abuse so that they may experience God's healing.

Wishing you God's blessings, I am

Sincerely in Christ,

Gregory M. Aymond

MOST REVEREND
GREGORY M. AYMOND
ARCHBISHOP OF NEW ORLEANS

Archbishop Aymond's Aug. 19 homily at St. Louis Cathedral:

<https://www.facebook.com/206300626101112/videos/318351855398454/>