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# DIOCESE *of* GAYLORD

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January 8, 2024

My Dear People,

I am writing this letter to you from my heart. The recent release of the Michigan Department of Attorney General's report on clergy sexual abuse clearly marks a painful moment in the life of the Diocese of Gaylord. It is a moment when the reality of 70-plus years of clergy records, having been examined by the Attorney General's Office, reveal the scope of past sinful behavior of priests and deacons. This moment is heavy and calls for an honest reckoning.

I believe what the Church teaches; the Church is a family of believers. As such, we must face this moment with the same familial bonds that see us through the trials and tribulations of our biological families. No family is perfect, but God gives us family life so we do not fall into isolation or despair.

The first thing our family of faith needs to do is to express deep sorrow to the victims/survivors of sexual abuse and pray for their healing. Their lives, and the lives of those around them, have been tragically altered due to the selfish manipulations of a once trusted clergyman. Next, we need to act justly and offer penance. Looking forward, most importantly, we need our family of faith to remain diligent in safeguarding our children and our vulnerable adults.

As painful as it is, I encourage adult members of our family to read the entire Attorney General's report. In the report, there are victims/survivors who are both male and female, minors and adults. I do not know or understand why these clergy abused others. There is a saying "hurt people hurt people," suggesting perhaps those who abused were abused themselves. Perhaps they just took advantage of their sacred office and didn't think they would get caught. Perhaps they lost their way and became accustomed to their power and position which gave them protection from scrutiny.

In this brief letter, I want to express my sorrow and shame for the sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults by clergy of our diocese, as revealed in the Attorney General's report. It will take time to absorb the full impact of this report and our response.

I speak as much to myself as I do to you when I say, please remain faithful and steadfast. Please do not despair. The vast majority of priests and deacons are faithful and have not been involved in the sordid behaviors described in the Attorney General's report. We will carry on as a family of faith and entrust ourselves to our merciful Father and blessed Mother.

In Christ our Life!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey J. Walsh".

Most Reverend Jeffrey J. Walsh  
Bishop

## Prayer for Healing 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 the cries of our brothers and sisters  
Who have been gravely harmed,  
And the cries of those who love them.  
Soothe their restless hearts with hope,  
Steady their shaken spirits with faith.  
Grant them justice for their cause,  
Enlightened by their truth.

Holy spirit, comforter of hearts,  
Heal your people's wounds  
And transform brokenness into wholeness.  
Grant us the courage and wisdom,  
Humility and grace, to act with justice.  
Breathe wisdom into our prayers and labors.  
Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice.  
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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### Mass of Reparation Wednesday, January 24, 2024

To acknowledge the sorrow and shame of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, Bishop Walsh calls all faithful in the Diocese of Gaylord to attend a Mass of Reparation. This act serves to repair Christ's heart, which has been wounded by sin.

Parishes throughout the diocese will celebrate a Mass of Reparation, on the Memorial of St. Francis de Sales. Check with your parish on the time, or join Bishop Walsh at St. Mary Cathedral in Gaylord for the 5 p.m. Mass.