



ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF REGINA OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

445 Broad Street N., Regina, SK, CANADA S4R 2X8
Tel: (306) 352-1651 Fax: (306) 352-6313 E-mail: chancery@archregina.sk.ca



Ash Wednesday 2020

Open letter to victims of clergy sexual abuse within the Archdiocese of Regina:

A year ago on Ash Wednesday I wrote an open letter to all victims of clergy sexual abuse within the archdiocese (attached). I begin this letter by repeating that apology for all that you have suffered, and continue to suffer, as a result of being abused, and as a result of the ways in which the church has failed you in its response. Last year's letter noted something that I heard from several victims: that an apology is a starting point, not an end point. Now, a year later, I write to you again, asking for any wisdom and guidance you would wish to share regarding how the church can most compassionately and helpfully walk with you and other victims on a journey towards healing.

Over the past year, with the help and at the suggestion of several victims, we have taken some small steps:

establishing a policy on clergy sexual abuse that is victim-centered and, in key sections, speaks directly to victims;
providing a child sexual abuse trauma counsellor who is available, confidential and free of charge to you;
continuing to host prayer services for victims; and
organizing educational events which allow people to hear the voice of victims, addressing the prevention of abuse and accompaniment of victims.

We have a long journey ahead in learning to walk with victims and many more steps to take so that your encounters with the church today are experiences of healing and compassion.

What I have consistently heard from you is a desire to be listened to, that we take tangible steps so that such abuse never happens again, and that the church be transparent and accountable as it responds to victims and deals with the terrible legacy of clergy sexual abuse. I commit the church to continue to work diligently towards those ends, and to turn to victims for guidance in taking practical steps towards those goals. This letter is, indeed, an invitation to you as a victim to let us know what we could do that would be helpful on your journey towards healing. In addition to anything that you would want to offer as advice or recommendations, I would like to invite your reflections on two specific questions.

The first pertains to transparency and accountability. Some victims and some stories from the media have requested that dioceses post on their websites a list of names of members of the clergy who have been found guilty of abusing a minor or vulnerable person. Some have asked that those lists extend to those credibly accused, whether living or deceased, and many American dioceses have proceeded in this way.

Locally, we have heard diverse opinions from victims: that if we do post a list of clergy who have abused minors, we need to make sure that no other victim would be further hurt or re-victimized by our actions; that posting names could open the door to retaliation against or put pressure on other victims; that it

would be best if action was taken on a national level in this regard rather than every diocese making their own decisions. Some cautiously encouraged the posting of names of those found guilty of abuse, and others felt strongly that there are better ways of inviting victims to come forward, other ways of acknowledging the legacy of abuse within the archdiocese and moving towards healing.

We are learning and coming to understand that victims heal in different ways and the path moving forward is unique to each person. The input of victims with different perspectives is vital in discerning how we would best move forward. With this letter I would invite any reflections you as a victim would have on the posting of a list, and on any other steps you would encourage us to take towards transparency and accountability.

Secondly, I am seeking your guidance on what steps would be most helpful in accompanying victims who have come forward, and in creating a space where victims who have not come forward might feel comfortable to do so. The steps that we have taken as a diocese over the past 3 years have all been suggested by victims, and we have come to recognize that healing and transformation can only come about by listening to and walking with those who have been wounded.

The invitation for you to offer suggestions or guidance is extended to those who were abused in Archdiocese, including those who are in the church and those who have been alienated by or from it. Along with our delegate and deputy delegate for clergy sexual abuse, I am ready to receive what you would wish to share in a way that would be most comfortable for you: a meeting with myself as bishop, or with our delegate or deputy delegate, accompanied by whatever support persons you would wish to bring; meeting with another victim or group of victims who would then share with us what you have asked them to share; meeting with a counsellor who would be able to accompany you through any trauma you might experience; or communicating with us in other way of your choosing. Whether today you find yourself within or outside the church, we want all victims to know that we recognize your suffering, and are profoundly sorry, and want to do what we can to offer you support.

In the Ash Wednesday liturgy, we as individuals and as church acknowledge our failings and turn to God and to each other in repentance. An essential part of a new journey is walking with those who have been seriously wounded by the church and by people within the church. As Lent is before us, the new journey has begun.

Profound thanks to the many victims who have shared their experiences, their insights, and who have been instrumental in the healing of other victims and the healing and transformation of the church.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Bolen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "B".

✠ Donald J. Bolen
Archbishop of Regina

DJB:bg