



ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF REGINA  
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Good Friday, 2022

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

Last year when I wrote to you I shared: “I am mindful of the agony resulting from the scourge of clergy sexual abuse that was perpetrated on each and every victim. The parallels between the crucifixion of Jesus that we remember today are mirrored by the desecration of body, mind and soul of victims. We can never stop saying we are sorry, but that is not enough; we must take action to bring about change, transparency and accountability.”

Today those words are just as true as they were last year and will remain true each and every Good Friday and in many ways every day. As you have taught us, your pain does not go away, but you live with it daily. Jesus said with his last breath “it is done,” and we say with our breath that we are just beginning to hear you and to respond to your suffering, and to learn from you about steps needed to move forward.. We cannot undo what has happened to you, but we can and will commit to action that brings transparency and accountability. A recent article by Pamela Walsh, who serves in the Victims Services and Advocacy role within the Archdiocese, mapped out what accountability looks like:

It is about clear policies, structures, and recourse. It is about requiring policies soundly based on best practices that will be used in a positive and life-giving way for victims, their families, and the larger church community. It is about ensuring that the structures of the church are based on the foundational principles of the gospel of Jesus, principles of welcoming and seeking out those deeply wounded people and walking with them, instead of trying to silence them. It is about entering into dialogue, no matter how painful, to find appropriate recourse and justice for everyone who has been affected by clergy sexual abuse. Most importantly, it also means none of these steps are taken without the direct input from victims/survivors in order to guide, shape, form and direct the church in all matters related to clergy sexual abuse.

I strongly support that understanding of accountability and transparency, which puts us on a long journey to bring transformation and healing.

It has been an honour and privilege to hear victims/survivors, to be with you and to walk with you. The pain and suffering that you have courageously shared with me has at times brought great sadness and heaviness, because of what you have to carry, but I have also been inspired by your courage. You are asking us to witness and be held accountable for years of indifference or denial, whenever we have held the church in higher esteem than those who have been deeply wounded by it. The church can no longer be indifferent to or deny your pain, your torment. It is our responsibility to be open to helping you to be unburdened, in whatever way we can.

Last year I shared with you that we took the bold step of creating a Victims Services and Advocacy position. I would like to share that it has been very successful in its first full year. It has allowed us, through a series of events, to begin to educate and bring about not only a change through practical steps, but also a change in culture. Our policies have and will continue to be updated; there has been outreach and connection with victims where and when it is best for them; and there has been an ongoing education on several fronts. A series of accompaniment workshops have also helped shape and share the way to accompany others, with expanded topics being addressed in new workshops. These are all on zoom and are free of charge, allowing us to reach as many people as we can.

Walking together one step and one breath at a time means no victim has to walk alone. Many voices have shared that there is a need for adequate affordable counselling for victims. Lorie Harrison, a professional counsellor, has been retained by the diocese to provide free confidential counselling to victims/survivors. There is no need to disclose to the diocese and you can self-refer to by contacting [lorie@heart-song.ca](mailto:lorie@heart-song.ca)

We continue to encourage parishes and deaneries to host prayer services for victims of clergy sexual abuse. Three weeks ago, on March 25th, the Way of the Cross Through the Voice of Victims was livestreamed. This is to be an annual livestream event to allow those who are unable to walk into a church to still be part of the service. Articles have been written sharing insights from victims, so that the church can learn from those insights and so other victims/survivors know that they are not alone.

Today, Good Friday, we remember and enter into the experience of Jesus's suffering and being put to death, 2,000 years ago. From a faith perspective, there is a profound link between the crucifixion of Jesus and human suffering, including the terrible suffering of victims/survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Mindful of that connection, it has been proposed that a day be set aside each year to specifically remember, lament, and pray for victims of clergy sexual abuse, and the Core Working Group would like to work towards the establishment of such an annual day for victims/survivors. We know that you are our best teachers, so we are asking you to share with us what day would be most appropriate in that regard, what you would like to see done on that day, and how we can walk with you.

Lastly, a word not only to victims/survivors inside and outside the church, but to all parishioners. Each day, each moment, we face choices – forks in the road. During our presentations in deaneries over the past year, a victim left those in attendance and each deanery with a challenge: “Each one of you here today can make a difference; the question is, will you?” I extend that challenge and invitation to all the people of the Archdiocese. Let us have the courage to listen to victims, accompany them as able, to acknowledge this legacy of abuse, and do our part in bring greater transparency and accountability as we strive to respond with compassion to victims and to protect all children and vulnerable people in our day.

Sincerely yours,



Donald Bolen  
Archbishop of Regina