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Dear Brothers and Sisters:

As your bishop and as a fellow Catholic Christian, I would like to take some time to speak with you about the current and ongoing crisis of abuse in the Church. At this moment, there is a special place in my heart for the survivors of sexual abuse, and their families and loved ones. For you, these ongoing revelations must bring great pain and heartache. I can only reiterate, as I have in the past, that I am here for you, and apologize for the harm that has been done to you at the hands of those who were supposed to have cared for you, loved you and helped you to grow.

There is a way that all of us have been battered and buffeted by this new wave of revelations of abuse. Again and again, I have heard so many of you express your dismay, disgust, anger and disillusionment at this ongoing crisis. I share these emotions. I say now, in the strongest possible terms that abuse of any kind-- whether physical or sexual, or emotional—is never acceptable. Abuse perpetrated by a member of the clergy is abuse of persons, of position, a breach of faith and a betrayal of a sacred trust. I repeat that it is never acceptable. Covering up abuse, for any reason, is equally unacceptable, and is also a betrayal of persons and position, a breach of faith and a betrayal of a sacred trust.

As the shepherd of this Archdiocese, I am charged with caring for you, accompanying you, comforting and challenging you. I have not done this perfectly, but I have fulfilled my role to the best of my ability. I have to admit that I have felt confused and betrayed by others whose actions are a counter-witness to the sacred trust that we have all placed in them.

On August 20, 2018, Pope Francis wrote an extraordinary letter addressed to all the People of God, in which he offered an inspiring and heartfelt response to the ongoing revelations of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable people by members of the clergy, and the all-too-common cover-up of this abuse by bishops and others in leadership in our Church. I asked all pastors to make this letter available to you two weeks ago, and it is available on the Archdiocesan website, www.rcsj.org

I pledge myself anew to the protection of minors, of vulnerable persons and of all people. Since 1991, with the acceptance of the 55 recommendations of the Winter Commission, this Archdiocese has been committed to putting in place protocols that create and support as safe an environment as possible for all who come to our churches, communities of faith, and programs. This Archdiocese has in place robust safe environment protocols and procedures. I renew this commitment today.

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It has become abundantly clear to me that, as vital as procedures and protocols are, these do not strike at the heart of the problem. Abuse is the symptom, not the disease. What is the disease? Beneath the seemingly unending revelations of abuse and cover-up is a culture of clericalism, inherently abusive and subversive in itself that has been allowed to grow and flourish in our Church. Clericalism creates a structure in which some are singled out as elite, as above reproach or questioning. This works against the call of Jesus for us to be one body, in which leaders are servants, and in which the works of mercy are the language we speak. Pope Francis says, "Clericalism, whether fostered by priests themselves or by lay persons, leads to an excision in the ecclesial body that supports and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we are condemning today. To say "no" to abuse is to say an emphatic "no" to all forms of clericalism."

Saying "no" to clericalism and "yes" to Jesus' call to concern for all, particularly the least among us, will require a profound conversion. Pope Francis says, "It is impossible to think of a conversion of our activity as a Church that does not include the active participation of all the members of God's People." Today, I call all of you to join with me in saying an emphatic "no" to this destructive and dangerous culture of clericalism.

I suggest that we begin by praying together for the guidance of the Holy Spirit on the path that lies ahead. In each parish, I ask all members of the People of God, priests and people, to gather for an hour of prayer on a suitable day or evening in the immediate future. Resources will be made available as soon as possible on www.rcsj.org. We will begin by praying together; it is my hope that we will find ways to talk about this together and build new ways of being one body in Christ.

I know that many of you have been tempted to walk away, to give up on the Church. Today, I urge you not to walk away, but to stay, that we might all walk together and work together for reconciliation and healing. Our Church must be a safe place for all, a home in which all, particularly vulnerable, marginalized and suffering people. Only together can we create a new culture, a culture that does not, cannot and will not condone arrogance, elitism, separation and clericalism.

I stand with you as your brother and walk with you in solidarity.

In Christ,



MOST REVEREND MARTIN W. CURRIE, D.D.

Archbishop of St. John's

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