

**FR. RYAN'S REMARKS CONCERNING
THE SEXUAL ABUSE SITUATION
April 18-19, 2018**

There is no doubt that the news out of Pennsylvania this past week regarding sexual abuse has shocked everyone, particularly every Catholic. Deep anger and righteous indignation are understandable. The fact that *our institution and our leaders have fallen so drastically short in representing the Gospel is alarming*. As a priest, I am embarrassed and ashamed that such abuse could happen to our most innocent children and over such a lengthy period. Not only are we dealing with a major moral issue of evil, but clearly it was and is serious criminal activity.

Our own Bishop Cunningham released this statement:

These are difficult days to be a Roman Catholic. The allegations regarding Archbishop Theodore McCarrick and now the release of the grand jury report involving six dioceses in Pennsylvania have deepened a wound for Catholics who have been besieged by news of clergy sexual abuse since 2002. It is understandable for many to ask, "What is next?" "What and who can I trust?" "How did this ever happen?" The People of God are rightfully asking these questions. In these recent days, we have become painfully aware that those meant to shepherd and guide others are sinners not only in the sense that all are fallible but also specifically in the area of sexual abuse of children and young people. They must be held accountable for their actions. Bishops are no exception.

Our focus together should always be the safety and well-being of the human person - especially the vulnerable and the innocent among us...

Like you, I am deeply troubled by these grievous acts and I must again apologize for the pain and suffering endured by our people. To the victims of clergy sexual abuse decades ago, I know I can never change what has taken place, nor remove the pain or the anger. I will continue to pray fervently for all victims of clergy sexual abuse, to ask those who have been harmed to come forward to report the abuse in order to begin the healing process and remain steadfast in my personal commitment that this horrific chapter in our local church will not happen again.

I have anguished over what I should say this weekend. Where do we go from here? I concur with Thomas Groome, a professor of theology at Boston College, who states that if there is any **hope** in this tragic situation, *"Perhaps such headlines and what they represent will bring us to address the two great questions that remain: why did this happen and why was it allowed to continue happening? The first question pertains to*

the culture of priesthood, the second to the lack of accountability on the part of our leaders and lack of lay participation in the governance of the Catholic Church."

We should be grateful for the courage of the people who aided the investigation by sharing their devastating, personal stories of abuse. As a priest and as your pastor, ***I am deeply shamed by and sorry for the sins and omissions by Catholic priests and bishops alike***. Having spoken to this dire situation back in 2002 at my prior parish, I again ask for *your* prayers for such innocent victims and their families.

As difficult as it is to even imagine what has occurred and as painful as it is to face it and begin to comprehend the reality, this is a critical time for the Catholic community.

- Victims must always be listened to so that we can confront this evil
- The Church must be transparent for the sake of accountability
- Though the vast majority of cases happened many years back, priests and Bishops who perpetrated such deplorable actions must be held accountable, and
- Policies, procedures and structures have to be continuously reviewed and improved so that this never happens again.

This is not a time to leave the Church. It is ***our*** Church -- and as broken and fragile as it is, it is *our* Church and only together, with God's help, can we move forward truly embracing *Gospel values*.

May we work together, laity and clergy, to bring some sense of comfort and healing for the victims and their families.