



Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Saskatoon Українська Католицька Єпархія Саскатуну

214 Avenue M South Saskatoon, SK S7M 2K4 Canada
Office: (306) 653-0138 email: admin.skeparchy@sasktel.net
Fax: (306) 665-2569 personal email: uwitness2bishop@gmail.com

Ref. # BB-181021-01
(Kindly reference the above number if you reply to this letter)

October 21 , 2018

Glory be to Jesus Christ!

Open letter to the Christian Faithful of the Eparchy of Saskatoon, October 10, 2018 Restoring Trust...Moving Forward to Prevent and Protect

When speaking about abuse within the Church it is important to keep a clear and balanced perspective remembering that our primary attention needs to be on the survivors of abuse and their families. What happened to them should never have occurred!

The 'crisis of sexual abuse' in the Catholic Church is not a new problem but it has been recently brought to the forefront of our focus with the Pennsylvania Grand Jury findings. It has become clear that, as a Church, we are facing a crisis of trust. Trust, especially trust in the clergy, has suffered greatly because of the abuse perpetrated by a proportionally small number of individuals. This abuse, however, was unfortunately combined with an inadequate response by those in authority—the failure to report the abusers and to protect the vulnerable.

The Eparchy of Saskatoon has responded to the need for a safer church environment with the implementation of our Covenant of Care (2016). As an Eparchy, clergy, religious and lay leaders have been canvassed about these ongoing issues. What follows is a compilation of responses regarding how we as an Eparchy, can facilitate the restoration of hope, rebuild trust and move forward to prevent future abuse:

The Church as a whole—hierarchy, clergy, religious and laity—desire to unite in prayer for the healing of those that have been injured by abuse within the Church. While we want to look forward to a brighter future where such things are prevented from ever happening, we begin the healing process by acknowledging the pain of the victims and assuring them of our solidarity. Now, more than ever, we cling to prayer and the sacraments, knowing that the truth of our faith lies with Christ and all he has done for our salvation, including the establishment of the Church. We affirm our faith in the truth of the Church's teaching even if sometimes we feel we cannot trust all those who are in positions of power within the Church.

Regarding Church teaching on matters of life and sexuality we desire to work harder to understand what the Church teaches about healthy and holy sexuality (St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body, TOB) and why these perennial truths about the human person are held to so tenaciously by the Church, despite being so countercultural. We believe that clergy and laity must be immersed and formed prayerfully in this teaching to help us avoid the abuses of the past. This is of particular importance so that we are able to maintain a truthful, loving response to all who struggle with clericalism and with the entire spectrum of sexual issues—disordered sexuality and sexual sins which "...deeply wound the human person." (Christ our Pascha 761, 863)

Through the action of God's grace, all the faithful are encouraged to live lives of chastity and purity, according to their vocation and state in life. We believe this level of openness would also empower us to confidently discuss these matters with our children and youth. This open discussion would, in turn, enhance

our ability to protect them from would-be abusers, as well as ensure the adequate formation of future generations of faithful parents and clergy.

To those who are in positions of power within the Church we issue a call for true reform, repentance, transparency and honesty. There are lingering allegations that an inadequate response to abuse continues to the present time, even at the highest levels of the Church. We urge the hierarchy to stop protecting abusers and to be honest if they themselves have been in any way complicit in this horrific failure, to end suspicions and allow the church to heal. There needs to be a thorough, unbiased, investigation with lay participation to ensure actual transparent accountability. Open communication and truth are vital among clergy and the faithful. Trust does not occur by chance. What we are faced with now did not occur overnight nor will it heal overnight.

As we look to the future, laity, faithful, clergy and hierarchy need to act decisively together to continue our emphasis on providing safe environments so that perpetrators are routed out and treated; the pain and scandal they have caused is addressed with appropriate sanctions; our vulnerable people, children and youth are protected and our faithful, clergy, volunteers, and staff are supported and able to provide ministry without fear.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in their recent document *Protecting Minors from Sexual Abuse: A Call to the Catholic Faithful in Canada for Healing, Reconciliation and Transformation*, include a statement of their continued resolve on behalf of the Church to deal with this crisis. It includes the ‘call to action’ with policy/legal mechanisms to be employed to respond to allegations, prevent abuse and protect the vulnerable. We will hear more of this in the weeks and months to come as the Eparchy of Saskatoon, along with the entire Church, take initiatives to fully implement the guidelines of the CCCB. We are building a culture of healing, safety and above all, a culture that promotes and sustains personal holiness.¹

In Christ,

Bishop Bryan Bayda, CSsR
Eparch of Saskatoon Eparchy

Fr. Janko Kolosnjaji (on behalf of the clergy)

Bohdan Popowych on behalf of the Eparchial Pastoral Council

Marcella Ogenchuk on behalf of the Covenant of Care Advisory Committee

Sr. Marijka Konderewicz of UCREC on behalf of the Eparchial Staff and Ministries

¹ Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate, On the Call to Holiness in Today's World*,
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html