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Prot.#: 310818

August 31, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing to you about events that have shocked our entire Church, and which have united us to the pain and sorrow of abuse victims and faithful Catholics everywhere. I wish to share with you my own personal pain and sadness over the recent clergy abuse scandals that have finally come to light in Pennsylvania and elsewhere.

Many of you may be wondering how such terrible actions could be committed, especially by those who have been chosen to care for God's people and to be a light for those who are in darkness. There are no words that can justify or explain such actions. We suffer along with our brothers and sisters who have been subject to such horrendous abuse perpetrated by priests and bishops. Looking at these events, we can certainly say that holiness does not depend on the hierarchical position someone may have within the Church, but on the Spirit given to us in our baptism which leads us to offer ourselves as Christ did for the whole world.

Clearly, the love of power can blind us and makes us live for ourselves. Instead, it should be the power of love which changes us and makes us live for others.

Today, more than ever, we need to refocus our thoughts and look for the roots of these sad episodes. May we turn to fasting, prayer and penance to lead us to truth and charity, to make us hunger for justice, and to combat all forms of abuse of power, sexual abuse and the abuse of conscience. (Pope Francis, August 20th, 2018)

Here in the Diocese of Whitehorse we have in place the 'Taking Care of God's People' safe environment policy. This policy is continuously reviewed to ensure that training, screening, and reporting protocols are being consistently followed for all clergy, lay ministers and volunteers, so that you may be confident that the diocese is doing everything in its power to keep the young and vulnerable safe.

As small as our Diocese is, and as far north as we are, we know that this does not exempt us from the possibility that such shameful actions take place even in our own community. I ask you to be attentive to signs of abuse or unsafe practice from Diocesan personnel or those involved in ministry, and to bring these situations to the Diocese of Whitehorse or directly to the local authorities.

In closing, I am inviting you to join me in prayer during the month of September by reciting the Holy Rosary every day for the victims of these abuses, praying at daily and Sunday Mass, fasting, and having adoration during the week in every parish.

Yours in Christ,

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Bishop Héctor Vila