

Saint Teresa of Calcutta Parish

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August 22, 2018

Dear Parishioners of Saint Teresa of Calcutta,

As your pastor and as a human being I share your hurt and anger over what has been reported these past several weeks concerning the history of misconduct of a recently removed Cardinal, Theodore McCarrick, the grand jury report from Pennsylvania detailing the crimes of priests in that state over the course of 70 years, and the culture of covering up abuse on the part of our Catholic leadership. I am outraged and depressed about these reports, as many of you are. These priests and bishops were ordained to feed Jesus' sheep, not abuse them. Instead of protecting the flock, too many bishops protected wolves in sheep's clothing. Jesus says in Matthew 18:6, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." Like I mentioned in last weekend's homily, my prayer is that anyone who abused children or covered up the abuse of children answer for their crimes in this world and the next. And no matter how many words we hear spoken from our Catholic leadership, I believe I speak for all of us that our actions must speak louder than our words.

I was pastor at Sacred Heart in Bellingham in 2002 when the Boston scandal came to light. Back then, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops gave us the Dallas Charter that called for zero tolerance for abuse. Following the charter, our Archdiocese created a review board consisting primarily of laity with professional backgrounds to make judgments regarding allegations of misconduct. The Archdiocese has also reached out to victims of abuse offering pastoral care and recompense. Over the years, I have seen a number of priests removed and placed on our public list of those who have credible allegations against them. As many of you know, along with safe environment training, the Archdiocese also requires periodic background checks for our priests and deacons to ensure that they are law abiding. At Saint Teresa of Calcutta, all of our parish volunteers and staff who work with children and vulnerable adults also undergo background checks and safe environment training.

Speaking of our parish staff and volunteers, I am very grateful for the ministries we have in our parish. Our ministries are doing well because we have a faithful staff, we have dedicated volunteers, we focus on discipleship, and because we follow our policies. As parishioners, I hope that if you ever have a concern regarding safe environment at our parish that you will bring it to me and my staff right away. We are committed to serving the Lord by providing you the best ministries available.

I invite you to please join me in praying for all victims of abuse. No one should experience such pain and suffering at the hands of someone they trusted. We pray that our Lord will grant them the healing they desire and the justice they deserve. Please also join me in praying for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that they will commit themselves to following the policies they have given to us and to hold priests, bishops and cardinals accountable when policies are not followed. Finally, because I believe the best remedy for sin is holiness, let's pray for each other that we all live out our vocations with integrity in the Body of Christ, in good times and in bad, and to keep our focus ever on Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I remain -

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. Frank Schuster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Frank Schuster
Pastor