



## DIocese OF WINONA - ROCHESTER

### OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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August 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In wake of the shocking findings of the Harrisburg Grand Jury regarding decades of abuse by clergy, along with recent acknowledgement of the credible abuse by former Cardinal McCarrick, the people and the priests of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester have been in my heart and in my prayers. I have been offering my prayers and Masses for the people and for the priests of the diocese. I pray for wisdom and courage as your bishop, as well as for the victims of such abuse and betrayal.

These are difficult times for the Church. As a bishop, I understand how difficult it must be to hear reports of such abuse done by priests and bishops, because I feel it, too. In a crisis like this, it is important to rely on the strength that comes from the truth of the Gospel. In these moments, when evil and sin are being revealed to us, we are provided an opportunity for clarity and redemption. I am keenly aware of those who have been abused by clergy in our own diocese, and I have met with survivors and continue to work for the resolution of legal claims to bring healing and justice to the victims.

Here in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, we have worked diligently to establish protocols and systems to prevent abuse and to report abuse immediately to law enforcement. There is also a full time Program Manager for the Office of Safe Environment, a Ministerial Standards Review Board composed mainly of lay people, and expanded training for staff and volunteers in the VIRTUS safe environment program. As a diocese, we have also strengthened the formation our seminarians receive in celibacy and human sexuality. However, we must not rest. Improvement must continue in order to evaluate and build on the progress achieved. I take the lead on this effort and recommit myself and my ministry as your bishop to a safe environment for our young people and vulnerable adults. I beg God for forgiveness for the harm suffered by victims, that the Church failed to protect.

### Day of Prayer and Reparation

Every parish and Catholic institution in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester is invited to hold, on a date of their choosing, a day of repentance and prayer for all those who were victimized by priests, deacons, religious, bishops or cardinals. The Church leadership failed to protect them and instead covered up their sinful deeds.

At the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Winona, I have asked that Friday, September 14, 2018, be set aside as a day of special prayer and reparation. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament will be held all day in the main body of the Church and will end in the late afternoon. All of us are

encouraged to voluntarily fast and also to perform acts of penance and charity on that, or another, day.

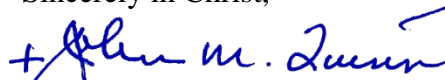
September 14 is the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and this day seems particularly fitting as a day to beg forgiveness for these sins and to pray for victims harmed and broken by those who were supposed to protect them.

As your bishop, I am deeply grateful for your faith. I am also grateful for our priests' faithful service and dedication to their vocation and the people in their care. I am grateful for the employees, volunteers, parents and teachers who work faithfully to create a nurturing, inspiring and safe environment for everyone within our diocese.

We must rely on the love of God who calls us, who inspires us, and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit who strengthens us. We are all called to be holy, to be saints. Please pray that when we fail, God will have mercy and guide us in humble repentance and continued conversion. My prayers go out to those who have experienced sexual abuse, who have been abused, and who have suffered. I stand committed to providing support and healing to those who have been tragically abused by clergy, and I encourage anyone who has been abused recently, or in the past, to come forward and report the abuse to civil authorities.

Let us continue to hold each other in prayer, trusting in our Triune God to guide and strengthen us during these difficult times.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John M. Quinn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Most Rev. John M. Quinn

Bishop of Winona-Rochester