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**BISHOP ZUBIK RELEASES PASTORAL LETTER
*THE CHURCH HEALING***

Bishop David A. Zubik has released a five-point action plan in his pastoral letter, *The Church Healing*, responding to what he heard from Catholics and non-Catholics in the Diocese of Pittsburgh during listening sessions in the wake of the August 2018 Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report on child sexual abuse by Catholic clergy.

The letter goes beyond issues directly related to sexual abuse, addressing accountability and transparency in church governance, spiritual and human formation for clergy and seminarians, and promising additional channels for parishioners to bring their concerns to the bishop. Some steps continue and strengthen long-standing practices, while others are new initiatives.



“Victims/survivors and their loved ones have been instrumental in helping me to define these steps. Victims/survivors will continue to shape our diocesan response to assist those who have been abused, to strengthen our efforts to prevent future abuse by any representative of the Church, and to restore whatever is broken in the Body of Christ,” Bishop Zubik wrote.

The *Church Healing* opens with Psalm 147:3, “The Lord heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds.” While acknowledging that healing ultimately comes from God, Bishop Zubik outlines his five-point action plan:

1. Healing and Enhanced Support for Victims/Survivors, Their Families and Loved Ones

- Longstanding diocesan programs will be streamlined and strengthened with new initiatives as Bishop Zubik establishes the Secretariat for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults. It will include four offices that 1) receive allegations and coordinate diocesan response; 2)

assist parishes in providing spiritual and emotional support to victims/survivors; 3) oversee background checks and child protection training for all clergy, staff and volunteers and 4) conduct any diocesan inquiry into allegations that would not be the purview of law enforcement and monitor clergy who were removed from ministry due to substantiated allegations of child sexual abuse.

- The Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program (IRCP), established in January 2019 to help victims/survivors financially.
- The Independent Review Board, created in 1989 and composed of individuals from disciplines pertinent to assessing allegations of child sexual abuse, will have an expanded role. In addition to making recommendations to the bishop regarding an accused cleric’s suitability for ministry, and reviewing pertinent diocesan policies, the board will meet quarterly to receive an update on all issues related to any allegation of sexual abuse or any inappropriate sexual behavior received within the previous three months.
- The diocese is establishing support groups and spiritual retreats for victims/survivors.

Number of Current Persons with Background Checks and Child Protection Training

The Diocese of Pittsburgh began to require and track background checks by the Pennsylvania State Police and Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, as well as “Protecting God’s Children” training, by 2007. Mandated reporter training and FBI background checks were added by state law in 2015. The diocese requires the background checks of all clergy, employees and virtually all volunteers. Pennsylvania law requires mandated reporter training only of clergy and employees who have direct contact with minors. The Diocese of Pittsburgh goes beyond state law in requiring mandated reporter training of many volunteers, and has had more people trained and certified as mandated reporters than any other organization in Pennsylvania. The statistics listed here are the number of current clergy, employees and volunteers who have undergone the training and background checks that are required in light of their roles and responsibilities in the Church.

37,920	39,007	8,998	38,328	17,958
PA Child Abuse History Certification	State Police Criminal Record Certification	FBI Fingerprint Certification	Protecting God's Children Training	Mandated Reporter Training

2. Greater Financial Transparency

- The diocesan website will add a broader scope of financial information over the next 10 months, including:
 - o The aggregate amount of past victims’ compensation through legal settlements and the total amount disbursed to victims/survivors from the IRCP.
 - o The amount of the legal fees incurred by the diocese related to clergy sexual abuse.
 - o The annual amount that the diocese is canonically obligated to pay as sustenance to clergy who have been removed from ministry due to substantiated allegations of child sexual abuse.
- Bishop Zubik will expand the membership of the Diocesan Finance Council to now consist of representatives from each of the six counties of the diocese. The Diocesan Finance Council includes lay business and finance professionals who review financials, provide advice, promote best practices and whose consent is canonically required for certain large expenditures.

3. Increased Accountability

- Bishop Zubik will create the Church Healing Commission, consisting of up to 12 laypeople who are Catholic and non-Catholic, including abuse survivors, with representation from all six counties in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. This advisory commission will assist him in monitoring progress on the five-point plan.
- Bishop Zubik will also establish an independent, third-party system for reporting concerns about suspected financial, professional, or personal misconduct in any parish, school, institution or office of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.
- The Diocese of Pittsburgh will continue to update its public list of diocesan clergy with allegations of child sexual abuse.

4. Ongoing Spiritual and Human Formation for Clergy and Seminarians

Bishop Zubik explains longstanding efforts to screen seminary applicants, evaluate candidates for ordination and provide spiritual and psychological support to priests and deacons. He promises that “every possible step is being taken to provide current and future clergy with the support they need to live a healthy, chaste life with a heart free to love as Jesus loves, by laying down their lives for others.”

5. Continued Listening to Seek Truth and Reconciliation

Bishop Zubik promises to continue to meet individually with victims/survivors and to hold eight annual public listening sessions on various matters of concern to Catholics.

“God is always ready to listen to us. Every leader who is ordained to serve Jesus Christ, and to follow in His footsteps, must listen, too,” he wrote.

The pastoral letter is not the final word about The Church Healing, the bishop wrote:

“Through continued listening and dialogue to seek the best path forward, through pastoral care and advocacy for victims/survivors of abuse and through the healing of hearts and lives, the Body of Christ that is suffering together can also be renewed together.”

The full text of *The Church Healing* is available at www.diopitt.org/churchhealing.

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