

August 23, 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

These are indeed very difficult and dark days for our Church. In recognizing the anger, pain and confusion that many Catholics are experiencing over recent allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests, and negligence of bishops in dealing with the crisis, I humbly ask you to join me in a special day of prayer and penance on Friday, September 14th.



The event will begin with the Noon Mass at the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul, to be followed by three hours of Eucharistic Adoration, and will conclude with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 3:00 p.m.

I will undertake a personal 24-hour fast from 8:00 am on Friday the 14th until 8:00 am on Saturday the 15th in penance for my own faults and failures as a Christian, priest and bishop, as well as for the sins and failures of all priests and bishops related to the sexual abuse of minors.

In announcing this special day of prayer and penance, I echo the words of Pope Francis in his “Letter to the People of God”: “It is essential that we, as a Church, be able to acknowledge and condemn, with sorrow and shame, the atrocities perpetrated by consecrated persons, clerics and all those entrusted with the mission of watching over and caring for those most vulnerable . . . Penance and prayer will help us to open our eyes and our hearts to other people’s sufferings.”

I invite all the members of our clergy, all the members of our Church, and all those who have expressed their deep concern over this grave issue, to join me in this spiritual endeavor, either in person at our Cathedral, or in their own personal prayer and penance in their local parishes and homes. Our commitment to end the scourge of sexual abuse doesn’t end with prayer, but it begins there, knowing that without God’s grace and power we can do nothing, that the best of our human efforts will be in vain.

Friday, September the 14th is an important Feast Day for Catholics, the “Exaltation of the Holy Cross of Christ.” I have chosen this date as a reminder that from the immense suffering of the Cross came redemption and new life for the world. Through the power of Christ’s Cross, and the intercession of our Blessed Mother, our Lady of Sorrows, may God bring healing and peace to all those who have suffered the horrible and long-lasting pain of sexual abuse, as well as true repentance, reform and reconciliation to the Church and our community.

My commitment to provide a safe environment for children and youth in the Diocese of Providence, to purge the Church of these horrible acts and to respond compassionately to all those who have been harmed remains firm. May God forgive us our sins and grant us the grace to follow a path of reform and renewal.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Providence