

BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH

Rt. Rev. Philip A. Egan BA, STL, PhD



MESSAGE FROM BISHOP PHILIP

To the Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese in light of the Report from the Pennsylvania Grand Jury

My dear People,

I am sure that, like me, you were horrified, ashamed and angry when you read the report from the Pennsylvania Grand Jury about the sexual abuse of children by members of the clergy there these last 70 years. It is, in the words of Cardinal DiNardo, a 'moral catastrophe.' So many clergy seem to have been involved, so many victims. Whilst these are historic allegations and today's situation is different, even so this scandal soils the entire Church. It tests our faith. It can make us distrust the Church, especially its bishops and priests. We know as human beings we are all sinners and that the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, is made up of sinful people like you and me. Yet we ask: How could this have happened? How could this have been allowed to happen? More, what should we do? What can we do?

The first thing we need to do, every Catholic, is to pray for the victims. We need to offer the Rosary for the healing of the victims and their memories. We need to pray too for the forgiveness of those who harmed them and for the Church leaders who mishandled cases or sought to cover up. Full of sorrow, we need to make reparation for all the damage done. Constructively, we also need to pray for vocations to all states of life and ministry in the Church today, but especially for good priests, for inspiring priests who will be happy, healthy and holy, who will witness to the Divine nature of their calling and create an environment that is safe and wholesome, a welcoming Church for all.

The causes of this crisis and the roots of child sexual abuse are complex. Here in England, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse will soon report its findings. Part of the tragedy of all this is that so many faithful priests and people, pursuing holiness and serving with integrity, can feel tainted by these revelations. This is why I wish hereby to acknowledge, encourage and support the thousands of people in our Diocese of Portsmouth who genuinely strive to do good, to speak the truth and to espouse holiness. Our clergy, religious and faithful, our parishes and schools, are surely a great force for good. Yet we must always be humble, reliant not on self but on God. So let's seek Him. Let us seek renewal. Let us seek holiness of life. Let us also ask the prayers of Mary, Mother of the Church. She must be full of sorrow at the damage these revelations do to the Body of Christ Her Son and to the evangelizing mission He gave us. May she pray earnestly for us now.

With my prayers and best wishes In Corde Iesu,

+ *Philip*

Bishop of Portsmouth