

ST. JOSEPH PARISH AND SCHOOL – NOVEMBER 4, 2018

Dear Families and Parishioners,

I write this on Halloween, All Hallows Eve, with All Saints Day to follow tomorrow and then on Friday the Remembrance of all the Faithful Departed. Halloween started with an ancient Celtic Festival when people would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off evil ghosts. Certainly those evil ghosts appeared with the publication of thirty-four names of clergy, twenty-two of them now deceased, who have had a “credible accusation” of abusing a minor in the Youngstown Diocese.

Clearly, sin has been committed. Sin is described in the Greek Biblical language as human behavior that misses the mark. This reminds me of shooting an arrow. In place of striking the target, it goes astray and wounds another person. However, accusations against eight priests made only after a death of the priest, stretches the concept of credible.

When the person who has the bow misses the moral mark, this is sin. Sin is more serious if the person has been chosen by the people as a leader. This is true in the political realm, in the religious realm, and in the business realm. Apologies, penance, and loss of position are all properly in place. But perhaps more important is understanding the cause of the misfire and correcting it.

The sexual abuse of children is generally broken into two categories. Abuse of children who are pre-pubescent (pedophilia) and children who are pubescent. Any failure with children of any age in these categories is sinful and disheartening.

I am placing in the bulletin a study published this year in America Magazine that indicates the Catholic Church is addressing the problem with positive results. The graph shows a major decline of reported incidents. The John Jay report of 2011 made an important distinction between pedophile offenses and post pubescent offences. They noted that 5% were offences of pedophilia, 14% against pubescent girls, and 81% of the offenses were against pubescent boys.

The 81% of the reported cases against pubescent boys was startling and yet, it was not. Reverend Donald Cozzens, former Rector and President of St. Mary Seminary in Cleveland recorded in his book, **The Changing Face of the Priesthood**, several surveys that when averaged show as many as 40% of the clergy at that time (2000) had some homosexual orientation. This is more than four times the average number found in the American male population. This high incidence in the priesthood and the 81% of cases involving pubescent boys is connected and suggests at least **one cause** of the sexual abuse cases.

This is not meant to denigrate the many people, male or female, who have a homosexual orientation. This orientation is not chosen but is a result of genetics, prenatal hormonal influences, and post-natal development. By the age of twelve the orientation of the brain is complete. Sexuality is hard wired in the brain before we ourselves become sexual.

Homosexuality is a variation from the ordinary wiring of the brain. The 5% pedophiles in the priesthood are not part of homosexuality. Pedophilia is clearly an aberrant human behavior. The 14% cases of abuse of pubescent girls are more natural but clearly wrong in human society and illegal in the United States. The 81% abuse cases against pubescent teenage boys would logically be attributed to those of a homosexual orientation. It appears, however, that the majority of priests with this orientation are faithful and good priests but a **small number lose control**.

For many years I taught a course called the Biology of Reproduction at the University level. When I reached the area of human reproduction, I had to dig deeply into the question of homosexuality since it was often brought to me by the class as a mystery to many of them and to me. The fundamental disharmony in homosexuality is that the sexual orientation is out of kilter with the anatomy. There is an inherent disparity between body and mind.

This real and inherent contradiction in a male homosexual has many positive as well as concerning features. The positive features often show a person with deep empathy for others, creative and artistic thinking, kindly and urbane, and well dressed and spoken. But the conflicts remain and are found in statistical outcomes such as higher drug rates, associated health problems, increased suicide rates, and high intimacy rates with members of their own chosen gender.

Pope Francis has stated very clearly that unless you walk in another person's shoes, you should not be their judge. Persons with a significant homosexual orientation should not experience discrimination but should be assisted in life as far as possible. This does not say that we need to agree to all of their behaviors but who of us is to judge behavior if we are not walking in their frames.

Three of the most basic instincts in all living creature involve **eating**, acquiring **wealth and shelter**, and **reproducing**. Practically all men and women in the human race are challenged to keep these instincts in order. In non-human organisms, instinct controls behavior almost entirely. In the human race we promote the ideal, **mind over matter**. Sometimes the mind is very positively over matter. At other times, our minds lead us astray and we miss the mark. We sin. It appears that we all have a dark side in us that keeps repeating itself.

The Church now recognizes that this area of reproduction for some cannot be easily controlled especially in dealing with younger children. I have no idea about the list published by the Bishop. Does the list represent one or two cases of fragility per person, or multiple numbers of offenses? Credible evidence presented after a person has died is hardly credible in most law courts where the person can no longer defend or describe circumstances. Recalled memories of twenty and thirty years ago are often eroded.

The most I can say at this point is I am sorry for the defects found in the profession that I have chosen to follow and in the priesthood. I am happy the Church has been successful in reducing the number of mistakes in this area with children. I go forward with great trust and hope in the Lord, that the Lord will be merciful, healing, and loving to victims and sinners alike.