



THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

May 23, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing this letter in response to the issuance today of the Illinois Attorney General's Final "Report on Catholic Clergy Sex Abuse in Illinois". The Diocese of Belleville has cooperated fully during the Attorney General's five-year long preparation of this report by providing information about our clergy, living and deceased, and allegations of misconduct with minors that our Diocese has received. While I will need some time to read and fully absorb the AG's lengthy report, especially the section on the Diocese of Belleville, please permit me to share several important points.

It is crucial you understand that nothing is more important to us than the welfare of the youth entrusted to our care. The Diocese of Belleville takes all allegations of inappropriate or sexual misconduct seriously and encourages anyone who feels they have been harmed by a priest, deacon, religious or lay employee, to come forward. You may contact the Child Protection Hotline at 1-800-640-3044.

I have today issued a companion document, attached here, entitled Diocese of Belleville's Response to Illinois Attorney General's Final Report (also at: www.diobelle.org). This document offers important information about our policies concerning child safety, including our commitment to appropriately respond to any allegations we receive about potentially abusive behavior by any of our clerics. I invite you to read this brief document and learn more about our commitment to safeguarding our youth.

In the name of our community, I offer my profound apology to all who have been harmed by the failure to prevent and properly respond to child sexual abuse by clerics. Furthermore, the Diocese is committed to providing services for the healing of victims/survivors of abuse by offering counseling and therapy that will assist them.

Let me take this opportunity to thank all who play a role in helping us keep young people safe in our parishes, schools, PSR programs and activities. By following the child safety protocols, the training, and the required screening, we can continue making great strides in safeguarding the children entrusted to our care. If all our procedures can spare even one child from the horror of abuse, our efforts will have been well worth it.

Permit me also to affirm that we have hundreds of priests, deacons, religious, teachers, staff and volunteers who are dedicated to being good shepherds in our diocese. I thank them for their commitment to serving all the people of our community with dedication, care and respect.

This Sunday the Church will celebrate the Solemnity of Pentecost, the great day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles and disciples gathered in Jerusalem. Please join me in praying for the Holy Spirit to again fill the hearts and souls of all our clergy, religious and faithful of the Diocese of Belleville. May we work together for the renewal of the Church in southern Illinois.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael McGovern
Bishop of Belleville

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