



BISHOP OF STEUBENVILLE

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To be read at all parishes this weekend (September 8th and 9th)

My Dear Friends in Christ:

As we share our common Christian Pilgrimage, we continue to be reminded of the reprehensible actions by Church leaders, most especially by priests and bishops here in the United States. While expression of sorrow for such actions is both appropriate and necessary, I say again to the victims and to all, for the actions of those with the care of souls who have acted in these horrible ways, as your Bishop and as your brother, I am very sorry.

Furthermore, as a people of faith, we have a role to promote healing in the lives of the victims as well as to provide a strong spiritual foundation in our local Church of Steubenville as we move forward. Again, let me reiterate that the Catholic Church must pursue truth and justice in our time, especially in matters of Church governance.

As many of you already know, I have designated the Masses for Saturday morning, September 15th, as Masses of Reparation for these sins committed by Church officials, as well as to promote healing for all victims of abuse. Furthermore, guided by the Solemn Penitential Season of Lent, I personally will embrace the Three Pillars of Lent, namely, fasting, almsgiving and prayer.

Concerning fasting, I will observe a day of fasting each week, until Holy Week of 2019, that will follow the same guidelines as on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Regarding almsgiving, I will offer time, treasure, and talent as a sacrificial offering for victims of abuse, the poor and the youth. Finally, for prayer, I will add an additional holy hour to my weekly prayer life devoted to the healing of abuse victims and for the promotion of holiness in the Catholic Church. If you are able, I invite you to embrace one or all of these Pillars individually or as a family.

I instruct all parishes to pray the prayer to the Immaculate Heart of Mary that was penned by St. John Paul II on March 25, 1984 from the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This prayer requests intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for our deliverance from evil. Please pray that prayer in its entirety, or in part, at the discretion of the priest presider at every Sunday Mass until Holy Week of 2019. Some of you are already praying the Prayer of St. Michael the Archangel. It is admirable and acceptable to pray the St. Michael Prayer as well as the Immaculate Heart Prayer.

As the week of October 9th for the Rosary Congress approaches in our Diocese, I ask that the Congress itself be dedicated to the victims of abuse from Church officials and for the building up of the Church in its call to holiness as Jesus instructed His apostles. As fellow members in the Mystical Body of Christ, we all have a critical role to heal and to promote holiness of life.

In closing, please pray for our priests, my brothers, that they may not be discouraged or demoralized in these challenging times as they live out the life of the Good Shepherd. Also, pray for our seminarians, that they keep their eyes fixed on Jesus and His Most Sacred Heart in their desire to serve you as good and holy priests.

We are missionary disciples and share a common call to holiness. History instructs that in the Church's most difficult times, God has provided us with some of the greatest saints with unparalleled resolve, from St. Francis of Assisi to St. Catherine of Siena. May the Immaculate Heart of Mary intercede for us and enable us to be beacons of hope in a world in great need of Jesus Christ's enduring healing presence. I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, starting with a cross symbol and followed by a cursive name that appears to be Jeffrey M. Monforton.

Most Reverend Jeffrey M. Monforton
Bishop of Steubenville