



## HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC PARISH

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11300 WEST 103<sup>RD</sup> STREET  
OVERLAND PARK, KS 66214

913.492.7318 (PHONE)  
913.492.7370 (FAX)

August 24, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This week, I had the opportunity to reflect on how to respond to the devastating and heart-wrenching reports of the egregious acts of sexual misconduct by Archbishop McCarrick and the horrific accounts of child sexual abuse by priests detailed in the Pennsylvania grand jury report. Initially, what came to mind were the first two phrases from the Charles Dickens classic: *A Tale of Two Cities*, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”

It is the best of times simply because I love being a priest and pray daily in thanksgiving for the vocation given to me by Jesus Christ. And further, *I am humbled to serve as your pastor.*

It is the worst of times, because like all of you I too am hurting. The anger, sadness, frustration and pain I experienced prompted me to cry out, “God, not again...we cannot do this again...Lord, how will your Church survive this mess?” After those emotions, I felt shame and betrayal because of my brother priests. Next there was a sense of guilt because I realized I was only focusing on my own emotions, when my focus and prayers should have been on the countless victims and their families who were abused by clergy. We must always remember that it is first and foremost about Jesus Christ and being present to Him and our neighbors in word, thought and deed.

This past week I have been attending a national conference led by Bishop Robert Barron and these recent revelations were unsurprisingly a topic of conversation. One evening while at dinner, a bishop attending the conference sat at our table. I had met this bishop before, so I felt comfortable in asking him, “Bishop, in light of the recent devastating revelations of Archbishop McCarrick and the grand jury report, what advice could you give to us priests who will be returning to our parishes and parish ministry?” And he responded:

1. Pray. Pray for the victims, for your parishioners, for the Church and for your priesthood. *Prayer is efficacious.*
2. Do not lose heart. This cannot drain the life from your priesthood and serving the people of God.
3. Stay close to the Lord. Stay grounded, firm in the faith, and in your vocation of the priesthood.
4. Confession. Go regularly.
5. Boundaries. Always be conscious of your boundaries and relationships with others, conscious that Christ is to be present.
- 6.

This is solid advice for us all as we begin the journey healing in prayer for the reparation of the sins of the clergy.

As the USCCB proceeds, let us resolve to participate in the process by being conscientious of what is occurring and the actions being taken, by finding our voice when we have questions, and by praying wholeheartedly that they be effective. And most importantly by praying for the healing of the victims and their families.

Last, I want to assure you that it is of the utmost importance to Fr. Alessandro, Mrs. Maureen Leach, Mrs. Michele Watson, Mrs. Laura Weber and myself that the children of Holy Spirit are a gift to our parish community. We are blessed that you entrust them to our care for their formation and be assured that their welfare and safety is a sacred priority and that they are loved as children of God.

Let us pray together that during this journey we be open to God’s grace, cooperate with that grace and be conduits of the grace to each other and in the world. Let us invoke the intercession of our Holy Mother Mary that we remain faithful in the worst of times so as to rejoice in the glory of her Son, Jesus Christ, in the best of times.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,  
Fr. Ric