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Letter from bishop on abuse

MDP of God

In our 1st reading today from the first book of Kings we hear a little of the story of the Prophets Elijah and Elisha

 **This time in the history of God’s people was a very troubling time**

A large percentage of God’s people had been unfaithful to the Lord *and had for all practical purposes abandoned the faith*

More troubling still—*those in leadership positions in the community*—**had literally betrayed God** and had facilitated and encouraged the people to false worship

 *It was a dark dark time in the history of God’s people*

And we see through the ministry—especially of the Prophet Elijah---*God confronting the failures of the people and their leaders to be faithful to God*

The preaching of Elijah confronts the evil of the day to bring about the purification of God’s people and expose the failures of those in leadership

 **It was a very painful time in the history of God’s people**

 Although despite the betrayal –*they remained God’s chosen people*

I bring that up because as Catholics we have faced a painful time over the past 30 years or so—with many in leadership of God’s people **betraying God** *and His people*

Just as in the days of the Prophet Elijah—there’s no way to sugar coat this—no way to explain it away---there has been a disgusting betrayal of God and His people

And just as in the days of Elijah—*the only way to overcome this betrayal is to expose it to the light*—**as painful as that is**

In that spirit of exposing things to the light—Bishop Perez has released a pulpit announcement and a letter –we were supposed to read the announcement last Sunday-- at all the Masses [—but in all honesty I didn’t see it last week—also with our farewell for deacon Will I would not have wanted to put a pall over that celebration –so I would have put it off till this week]—so here’s the announcement:—I’ll have some comment on it after reading it:

 Since April of 2002 the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland has published on its website the names of those clerics who were removed from ministry from 2002 through the present as a result of the sexual abuse of a child. At Bishop Perez’s direction, this information has now been compiled in a list format and updated to include the names of additional diocesan clerics who were removed from ministry as a result of sexual abuse of a child or who is already deceased or no longer in ministry for any reason and against whom have been made substantiated allegations of child sexual abuse.

The new names of diocesan clerics were added after the diocese concluded, based on the evidence available to it, that the allegations were more likely than not to be true. In compiling this updated information, the diocese reviewed all known allegations regardless of how long ago the alleged abuse occurred or whether the cleric was alive or deceased.

While the updating of this information is certainly an occasion of profound sadness, inasmuch as it reminds us of the great harm experienced as a result of sexual abuse, may it also be an occasion for healing and a step towards restoring trust in the Church.

You can access the bishop’s letter and the list at [www.dioceseofcleveland.org/healing](http://www.dioceseofcleveland.org/healing).

As I said—there’s no way to sugar coat the disgusting betrayal to God and His people

I’ve personally dealt with a number of people who were victims of this abuse-*and the pain and heartache that they have faced can’t be put into words*

I very much love the Church—because it’s Jesus Church—and He loves His Church---but words can’t describe how disappointed I am in the way some priests betrayed their calling and how some bishops failed to purge this evil from the Church

As in the days of Elijah—*for the evil to stop it had to be brought into the light*—**as painful as that has been**

I just ask you to pray for the Church—pray for the pope and bishops that they will effectively purge this evil from our midst

Pray for priests who are under a cloud because of the terrible mishandling of this evil over the years

Pray for an increase in vocations—because the Church desperately needs good and faithful priests who can undo this damage and carry on the work of Christ

Pray for the victims of this evil—that they can find healing from this terrible betrayal of trust

Pray for yourselves—because you are the Church—pray that you can be a light shining in the midst of this unspeakable darkness

 The fact is—as in the days of Elijah—the church needs purification

The ministry of the Prophet Elijah was to renew people in their call as God’s chosen people—He called them to be faithful to God—faithful members of God’s people—he called them to be a light shining in the darkness of the time

Elijah encouraged no one to abandon God’s people—he called them to renew the faith—to renew themselves—to renew the community of faith

I believe God is calling all of us to that today

I know there are times I’ve felt like running away and giving up—*if you read the story of the Prophet Elijah*—**you’ll see he also wanted to give up and run away**—but Elijah didn’t give up – as tempted as he was he didn’t run from God’s call to rebuild God’s people to be the community of faith God wanted them to be

As many of you know I just was just on retreat in Assisi

 Jesus called St Francis to rebuild His Church

This call occurred in a little dilapidated church –and St Francis mistakenly thought God was calling him to rebuild that little building---but in reality God was calling Francis back in the 1200’s to rebuild the Church as a whole

 My friends—he’s calling you and I to do the same today

With the Prophet Elijah 900 years before Christ we see corruption in God’s chosen people—at the time of St Francis—we see great corruption in God’s Church

 In both those times we see two things:

 1st—God holds His people accountable

And 2ndly—God doesn’t give up on His chosen people—and He doesn’t want us to give up either

As enraging as our recent history has been –we can know that Jesus keeps His promise—He is with His Church bringing purification today

1. God has been holding His Church accountable

And 2) He calls you and me to be part of the solution—He’s calling you and me like He called St Francis—to rebuild His Church—God bless you