



## ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF REGINA OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

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Good Friday, 2021

### ***Open letter to all those who have been wounded by the effects of clergy sexual abuse within the Archdiocese of Regina***

As I write to you today, I am mindful of the agony resulting from the scourge of clergy sexual abuse that was perpetrated on each and every victim. The parallels between the crucifixion of Jesus that we remember today are mirrored by the desecration of body, mind and soul of victims. We can never stop saying we are sorry, but that is not enough; we must take action to bring about change, transparency and accountability.

Over the last four years we have listened to, walked with, and began to really understand who our best teachers are: it is you, the victims. Thank you for showing us a way forward. Thank you for your courage in sharing the pain and torment that is your individual lived experience, your truth. Thank you for showing and reminding us that we must do better.

Early in my tenure as Archbishop, a core working group was established. The mandate of the Core Working Group [link: <https://archregina.sk.ca/report-clergy-abuse/core-working-group-mandate>], with direct input from victims, is to have an open transparent and accountable process to discern the overall direction of the archdiocese in responding to the legacy of clergy sexual abuse and in taking action to prevent further abuse from occurring. The Core Working Group works in the drafting, implementation and oversight of the Clergy Sexual Abuse Policy, and reviews this policy on a semi-annual basis with the possibility of updating it. They also review other policies which relate to clergy sexual abuse and its prevention. The Core Working Group oversees education and formation initiatives on the life-long consequences of clergy sexual abuse, on accompaniment of victims, and on the recognition and prevention of potentially abusive behaviour. None of these initiatives are undertaken without consultation from victims.

Thanks to significant input from victims, we have been able to look at where and how to move forward. Prior to Covid, prayer services were being held in every deanery and in many parishes. Every service had at least one victim as part of the writing process. The aim was to have at least one victim present at each prayer service. These services provided an opportunity for the larger church to hear your anguish.

In addition to the prayer services, education has become a key component in working toward transparency and accountability. Each educational event has presented the voice of a victim, allowing non-victims to hear in often painful ways the truth of how clergy sexual abuse affects people. Education will be an ongoing process and victims' voices will not be silenced, but rather celebrated for their courage in bringing clergy sexual abuse into the light.

Each time we ask a victim to help us, we recognize that their wounds are reopened. Your sharing has

helped us to ask the question, who is helping victims to heal their wounds, walking with them, accompanying them? The response was twofold: counselling and accompaniment.

Once again, we asked victims to help us. Even in your hurt and pain you have answered the call. Thanks to a recommendation from a victim, a trauma counsellor, trained in childhood sexual abuse, is available to work with all victims of clergy sexual abuse, with no charge to you and no need to report to the diocese. Again at the recommendation of a victim, we have begun a series of accompaniment workshops (the next is on April 11th) for people to learn how to walk with victims. The burden that each victim carries is heavy: it is time for others to help carry that burden that was so unfairly placed on you.

Finally, in January 2021, the Archdiocese took a bold step by creating a new position that is staffed by a victim, specifically to provide services and advocacy for victims as well as to work closely with my office and others to ensure we continue to move forward toward transparency and accountability. If you as a victim would have any questions, concerns or requests, or would like information about accompaniment workshops, prayer services or educational events, please feel free to contact Pamela Walsh at [victimserviceadvocacy@gmail.com](mailto:victimserviceadvocacy@gmail.com) or the Delegate, Fr. Brad Fahlman, at [enquiry@archregina.sk.ca](mailto:enquiry@archregina.sk.ca).

Two years ago, a way of the cross was prepared that gave voice to the experience of victims who have been nailed to the cross by abuse, presenting in the first person the voice of the victim. This Good Friday permit me to share with you this brief excerpt:

I too, want to be taken down from the cross of my pain. I do not want to be kept fastened to the cross as the church continues its lies, deceit, and cover-up. I want to be free from the clutches of despair and the torment to stop. How can I be freed from this cross? I can't do it alone. I need support. I need a church that cares, risks being honest with itself and is accountable. Although my trust has been shattered and all hope lost, I want to be able to grieve for the parts of me that died the day the abuse started. I also grieve for those victims who remain nailed to their cross.

We do not want you to be nailed to the cross, but rather, we want you among us so we can accompany you and walk together. As the darkness is upon us today, let the light of Easter bring transformation as Christ rises from the tomb and love and life prevail over hate and death. Through that light, let us recognize ever more deeply that victims are not to be blamed but to be listened to, and let all people of the Archdiocese open their hearts and minds to a new way of walking with you in hope.

Sincerely yours,



✠ Donald J. Bolen  
Archbishop of Regina

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