



To the Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of Lake Charles

Solemnity of All Saints

November 1, 2018

My dear People of God,

In the words of St. Paul, "I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the Gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:5).

Indeed your faith, support and steadfastness are a great encouragement to me personally and to all of those who pastor in the Diocese of Lake Charles. Recently, I had the occasion to meet with over 650 young men and women with whom I will celebrate Confirmation during 2019. How encouraging it was to meet them and their sponsors as they begin their immediate preparation for this important Sacrament. We should see this concerted effort as a sign of hope for the Church, for commitment to Jesus Christ is alive and well in the lives of our young people.

For this reason and so many others, the reports of sexual misconduct on the part of clerics have been so disconcerting and disturbing. We must insure that the young are not compromised. When victims of sexual abuse have made themselves known to us, we have done everything in our power to address their needs. Our commitment in this regard will continue, as well as our assurance that every criminal act will be immediately and uncompromisingly reported to the civil authorities. In the past the civil officials have publicly acknowledged our commitment.

I am writing to you, the good and faithful Catholics of the Diocese of Lake Charles, to offer my assurances in three specific areas about which many have inquired. My concern here is to make certain that you are informed of our efforts to reinforce the integrity of clerical ministry in this Diocese.

First, anyone who applies for admission to the seminary is vigorously vetted. During the initial stages of application, each candidate is interviewed intensely about his personal history and motive for seeking acceptance to seminary formation. Following this interview, a number of letters of recommendation are sought to verify the quality of the candidate. The prospective seminary student then undergoes a full battery of examinations before being accepted. These include psychological tests, medical examinations, interviews by an admissions committee, and the scrutiny of their autobiography and academic record. Only following this process does the admissions committee and vocation director make a recommendation to me for possible acceptance. To be clear, among the many qualities of his character, we look for evidence of a candidate's ability to live a holy and integrated life, especially in the area of celibate chastity. This application process has been in place for several years and has been modified over the last decade to make it more efficient and thorough.

Second, seminary formation has dramatically improved since the visitation of all seminaries in the United States by a board of examiners from September 2005 to July 2006. These improvements include a greater emphasis on the pillars of formation: spiritual, intellectual, human, and pastoral. Additionally, the Bishops of Louisiana meet with the administration of the two seminaries in the State at least twice a year to review their programs. I also serve on the Board of Governors for the Pontifical North American College in Rome, where we have four men now studying for the priesthood. The administrators of these seminaries give us reports, and we are free to make comments, raise questions and address issues. These are welcomed, and suitable changes are made. The vocation director and I also take time during the year to visit our seminarians at their respective seminaries to receive updates and to make further evaluations. The seminary also presents to us, the bishops, annual faculty assessments and evaluations on each seminarian. These are read and scrutinized. When the seminary makes the final recommendation for ordination, we are certain, to the extent that it is humanly possible, that the man being presented for Holy Orders is indeed spiritually, morally, intellectually, psychologically, and physically fit for Orders. Any man who does not evidence his ability to live a fully integrated priesthood will not be advanced to Holy Orders. We are confident that the three seminaries currently in use by the Diocese of Lake Charles provide excellent formation for our seminarians. As proof, there are many fine priests currently serving in our diocese.

Third, there are no clerics employed or serving in any assignment in this diocese against whom there is a criminal accusation. Additionally, all clerics serving in the Diocese of Lake Charles have undergone background checks and Safe Environment certification and updating. Anyone knowing of any misconduct by clergy or any employee or volunteer in this Diocese should make a report to the civil authorities and to the designated diocesan official, our Vicar General, Monsignor Daniel Torres (337-439-7400). The Diocese also has a Victims Assistance Coordinator to direct outreach to the abused.

In conclusion, I return to St. Paul. We are in partnership with the Gospel, that same Good News that I saw being proclaimed to our young men and women preparing for Confirmation. May we live up to the highest standards set by Our Lord Himself and share in the gratitude of St. Paul.

We have much for which to be thankful. God has thus far spared our area of the Gulf region from significant storms during this hurricane season. He has also blessed our Diocese with thirteen future priests and many more who are considering a vocation to the priesthood. God has also blessed many in our area with jobs and employment. All of this, and so much more in our parishes, is good news and comes from a gracious God who cares for his people.

With prayers for your intentions and asking Our Blessed Mother to pray for us in our resolve, I remain --

Devotedly yours in our Lord,

+Glen John Provost
Bishop of Lake Charles