



St. Vincent de Paul Church

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Auxiliary Bishops
Archdiocese of Baltimore
320 Cathedral St.
Baltimore, MD 21201

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 Fourth Street NE
Washington, DC 20017

October 19, 2018

Dear Brothers in Christ,

I am the Vice President of the Parish Council at St. Vincent's. I am also a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. This is not usually the first thing I mention to strangers, but addressing this situation demands honesty. Today I write to you on behalf of and with the support of the parish.

I need to acknowledge, however, that the subject-matter of my letter to you is very personal. It is personal to me, and it is personal to many of the people in our parish.

The story of St. Vincent's right now is that we are in pain.

The part of my abuse that pained me most was the realization that a person who I loved did not seek to preserve my personhood, but decided to regard me as an "it" rather than a "you".

The news breaking of Cardinal McCarrick's abuse of power, and the lack of accountability by those who knew of it, followed closely by the Grand Jury report from Pennsylvania, confronts us with the fact that children, youth, and vulnerable young adults were systematically transformed into "its" -- not only by perpetrators but by our religious hierarchy. Perhaps the hardest part is how unsurprised many

of us feel by this ugly truth. As one of our parish lay leaders noted, more than half of our congregants have explicitly stated that they were not surprised.

In our pain and frustration, we at St. Vincent's wish to be Christ for one another, and we want to continue to discover what it means to be Church. Attached please find:

- The process St. Vincent's has undertaken thus far to listen to our parishioners about this issue (Document A);
- Parishioners' personal, hand-written responses from our town hall meetings, plus their pertinent electronic communications (Documents C);
- Two summaries of these responses (Documents B); and
- Selected group correspondence shared among parishioners over the past weeks (Documents D).

It would be easy for you as our leaders to respond to the volume of pain that must be coming your way by distancing yourself from us in order to preserve your sanity and calm. Please don't. We need you to engage with us in the whole of our Godly-personhood. We do not need human shepherds seeking to tend us as a flock. We need honest and open engagement, and a Church courageous enough to make space for change.

Action is often an important step on the road to healing for victims. Many of the people at St. Vincent's have expressed a desire for action, but skepticism regarding the larger Church's capacity for change. Please prove us wrong.

In hope,

Amber Hendricks
Vice President, Parish Council
St. Vincent de Paul Church