



Office of the Bishop  
Diocese of Toledo

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22 August 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It was with profound shock that on the morning of Tuesday, August 18, 2020, our diocese learned of the arrest of Father Michael Zacharias, a priest of the Diocese of Toledo and pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Findlay. I immediately placed him on administrative leave due to charges of grave and reprehensible behavior, sexual in nature, with minors and adults. Father Zacharias was ordained a priest in 2002, and these are the first such allegations to be raised against him.

As ministers of Christ and His Church, priests promise to lead morally upright lives. An alleged betrayal such as this of those promises, deeply wounds the Body of Christ, especially anyone who was violated and all those affected by such immoral actions. Emotions of disbelief, anger, and numbness are understandable in the face of these revelations, sentiments which I personally share with you.

I know for many people trust in the Church has been eroded because of similar historical scandals, and that trust has now been further diminished. It is unfathomable that, given all that victims have suffered and the Church has endured; given all of the work that has been done and continues to be done to protect children, to demand accountability, to provide a safe environment, and to ensure the integrity of the priesthood, still sometimes evil has its way. Nevertheless, be assured that the Church cannot and will not tolerate any sexual abuse or misconduct on the part of any cleric.

This must be a time where we beg for the Lord's grace, once again entrusting ourselves to His mercy, choosing Christ who is our light amidst the darkness, so that together we may move forward with truth, justice, and renewed faith as committed disciples of Jesus.

For those of you with children, I know that addressing this matter can be a difficult conversation. However, it is important as families to discuss in an age-appropriate way how sin can lead us astray from our relationship with the Lord, reassuring them that Jesus remains in and with His Church.

In lifting up all affected by this situation, we also lift up one another in prayer, trusting in the healing and reconciliation that only the Lord can give. Be assured of my prayers for you and your families, even as I depend on your good prayers.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

Most Reverend Daniel E. Thomas  
Bishop of Toledo