



VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL™

IN THE DIOCESE OF BRIDGEPORT

P.O. Box 5044
Westport, CT 06881
April 21, 2008

Bishop William E. Lori
The Catholic Center
238 Jewett Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06606-2892

Dear Bishop Lori:

“No words of mine could describe the pain and harm inflicted by such abuse. It is important that those who have suffered be given loving pastoral attention. Nor can I adequately describe the damage that has occurred within the community of the Church . . . Today I encourage each of you to do what you can to foster healing and reconciliation, and to assist those who have been hurt. Also, I ask you to love your priests, and to affirm them in the excellent work that they do.”

Those words of Benedict XVI, spoken during his homily at mass in Nationals Park in Washington on April 17, are both an acknowledgment of the terrible impact of priestly sexual abuse on our children, the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters, and a summons to all of us to work for reconciliation.

Sadly some thirty of our priests have been accused of sexually assaulting at least sixty-seven of our children, causing them untold suffering. Many of the survivors, now grown to adulthood, often tell us that, feeling abandoned by the Church, they do not go to Mass or find it impossible to enter a church.

Pope Benedict’s words are a clarion call to all in the Catholic community to promote reconciliation. We believe that that can be done, in part, through our traditional gathering for worship, namely, the celebration of the Eucharist.

We believe that you, as the pastor of all Catholics in the Diocese of Bridgeport, could take the lead in furthering the work of reconciliation in three ways:

1. You can demonstrate the Church’s desire for reconciliation by celebrating a Mass of Reconciliation at least once a year in St. Augustine’s Cathedral, the mother church of our diocese.

2. You can exhort the pastors of our parishes similarly to celebrate a Mass of Reconciliation in each parish at least once a year.
3. You can open the arms of the Catholic community to the survivors by inviting them to meet in our parishes as a body, if they wish to do so.

Pope Benedict has challenged us to act to try to heal this sore on Christ's Body, the Church. We encourage you to accept his challenge and to call on Catholics throughout our Diocese to do so as well. By acknowledging the sin, atoning for the harm done, and working for reconciliation, we will take the first steps toward healing and renewing our beloved Catholic community.

Sincerely yours,

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