



Archevêque de Montréal

April 5, 2019

Dear Brother Priests,
Dear Pastoral Teams,
Dear faithful in Christ,

Every sexual abuse of a minor leaves many victims in its wake: the victim, his or her family and immediate community, priests in general, the Church and all those for whom such tragedies is a test of faith. For the past year, from Chile to the Vatican summit on sexual abuse, various events have brought this crime to the forefront, a crime which goes against Jesus Christ, who identifies himself with the littlest ones. In our own diocese, a priest has recently been convicted, which leaves us in a state of shock.

At the diocesan level, we have put in place and are continuing to develop a counselling team for victims; an interdisciplinary advisory committee, which receives complaints; and a Responsible Pastoral Ministry Policy. The recently announced audit of our archives, which will be managed externally by a retired judge, will help us to know the actual truth, which in itself is liberating and is not based on generalizations. It will also help us learn how to provide better care for the victims, to improve the pursuit of justice by means of rigorous protocols, and to ensure prevention through practices that strengthen safety measures and inspire confidence.

Prevention is key because the objective is to ensure that such tragedies never happen again. The zero-tolerance policy, in which a priest or any other person found guilty no longer retains a position in the diocese, is in force to dissuade all potential predators and to demonstrate the seriousness with which such crimes are treated.

In the case of caring for victims, we take all allegations seriously and pursue paths that support peacemaking, healing and reconciliation. The recent request to approve a class action suit against the diocese is viewed in this context. From this point of view, our mission remains the same: to pray, to gather together, to serve and to bear witness to Jesus Christ in the world today.

Dear Brother Priests, once again I offer you my greatest appreciation for your dedication, your faithfulness, your love for Jesus Christ and his Church. I have full confidence in you. The people of God trust in you and love you. Dear brothers and sisters, dear parishes, I pledge my unwavering support and assurance that the Archdiocese is at your service so that no person and no community feels isolated in this struggle.

Dear faithful in Christ, let us turn to Merciful Jesus. We journey through Lent together and we will soon enter into Holy Week. We will remember Jesus Christ Crucified and Resurrected. He carries our suffering and our sins on his cross, and He manifests his power of peace, healing and reconciliation. I invite all of us to pray the Divine Mercy chaplet until the first Sunday after Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday.

Let us pray for the victims, the families, the affected communities, the people whose faith has been tested, priests and the entire Church. Let us pray for the guilty.

Together let us say: "Jesus Christ, with your pierced heart, I adore you and trust in you."

Your archbishop,

+ *Christian Lépine*

† Christian Lépine

ps: according to their discernment, I invite all priests to read this message at the end of each Sunday Mass this Lent