

## *23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time*

**Two days ago Bishop Johnston made public the names of all diocesan clergy with substantiated allegations of sexually abusing a minor. A team of former FBI agents with unsupervised access concluded an independent review of diocesan files from 1956 to the present in order to verify the list. About two thirds of the dioceses in the United States have already published the names of abusers, as have many religious orders. Ours took a little more time out of caution to make the list thorough and accurate. Most of these accused clergy have died, and those who are alive have all been removed from ministry.**

**Bishop Johnston hopes that publishing the list of names will foster the healing of victims and their families by exposing wounds formerly hidden. Perhaps victims who have not yet spoken up will see a name on the list and have courage now to report the abuse. Such reports can also help healing and stop the crisis from spreading any further. In his letter to all the Catholic households of the diocese, the bishop calls the sexual abuse of minors by clergy a “dreadful scourge.” He commits himself to helping eradicate it. He also renews his apology to anyone afflicted by abuse, including family members of victims.**

**I would like to add my apology to all of you for the embarrassment that you have had to suffer because of these horrible crimes and their coverup. Because of your Catholic faith, you suffer taunts from family, classmates, friends, strangers and coworkers. You have sought appropriate ways to express your anger over leaders you thought you could trust to protect your faith. The sins have been deep, so overcoming them is difficult. I truly hope that the published list of names will provide one positive step forward.**

**Jesus says in Luke’s gospel that the only way to be his disciple is to carry your own cross and follow him. The cross he carried at the end of his life was imposed on him by his enemies, some of whom had been within his trusted circle. He was innocent and suffered unjustly. Something similar has been true of you throughout this crisis. You may already carry crosses you did not choose: the cross of an untreatable illness, the cross of a job you’d rather not have, the cross of betrayal - even divorce - from someone you love. You carry all these because your faith in Christ sustains you. You don’t need another cross, especially one imposed on you by the clergy of the church you call your own. Yet here you are, carrying it.**

**Some Catholics have had enough. They have stepped away from the Church. I understand the frustration and disillusionment. I just hope in the light of today’s gospel that they will still follow Christ. He is the way, the truth and the life, not any bishop, not any priest.**

**Bishop Johnston has asked all of us priests to celebrate a special mass seeking forgiveness and invites us to wear purple as a sign of repentance. He asks us to make ourselves available to you individually or in groups. I am at your service. Several months ago Bishop Johnston declared this a holy year of renewal for our diocese under the theme “One Family: Restored in Christ - Equipped for Mission.” Christ alone can restore our family. He owns the mission and he invites us to take up a cross we never wanted and follow him.**

*Sunday, September 8, 2019*