



OFFICE of the BISHOP

April 3, 2019

## The New Moment

### A letter from the Bishop

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

On Thursday, I will release a list of nine priests who have substantiated allegations of sexually abusing children while serving in the diocese. All but two of the names on the list have already been shared publicly. The incidents of abuse occurred from the 1950s to the 1990s.

On behalf of the Catholic Church in Southwest Iowa, I apologize for the pain experienced by those abused by our priests, as well as the pain this has caused to all the faithful and those in our broader society. I share the anger and frustration of recent reports of clerical abuse of minors and young people. It is my sincere hope the release of this list facilitates healing, encourages additional victims who have faced abuse to come forward and begins to restore trust.

However, any expression of heartfelt-regret without reform is not genuine. We have to do more, and we are working toward that. We have made significant progress, but we are not finished with this important work. Over the last 17 years, the Church has undertaken reform with the implementation of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The first step we take when receiving an allegation of abuse is to call law enforcement authorities to undertake their normal processes. In addition, we have implemented background checks for all members of the clergy, ongoing training for church employees and volunteers and have a zero-tolerance policy for abuse of any kind. Entitled “One strike and you’re out,” the policy basically addresses “repeat abuse.” Once a substantiated allegation is established any further abuse within the context of the Church is precluded. In the Diocese of Des Moines, there has not arisen a substantiated allegation of sexual abuse against a minor by a cleric actually happening in real time since 1997.

This is a significant moment for us as a diocese, and for the Catholic Church. In January, I joined more than 200 bishops on retreat at Our Lady of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois. Pope Francis has encouraged us to enter into prayer and focus on our relationship with God as we grapple with a collective broken heart and pain inflicted by past scandals of sexual abuse of children and young people.

Since returning home, I have been asking that God bless our diocese and the universal Catholic Church with the graces of conversion, forgiveness and healing. Now, we put our faith in God that he will lead his Church through this time. As the history of the past 20 years indicate, we are emerging steadfast in our commitment to children and more faithful in our relationship with Jesus.

Would you join me in fervent prayer for the healing of victims and our continuing personal conversion as disciples of Jesus? We know this is essential to full healing and recovery.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard E. Pates". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Richard E. Pates  
Bishop of Des Moines