



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP  
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

February 5, 2019

Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

**At the beginning of January, I had the privilege of attending a retreat at Mundelein Seminary** at the University of St. Mary of the Lake near Chicago with approximately 250 of my brother bishops. The retreat was led by Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, the preacher of the papal household, who has preached to popes and officials of the Roman Curia for over 40 years. The theme of the retreat was “the mission of the apostles and their successors,” and the focus was on the vocation and responsibilities of bishops at this time in our Church. In addition to Father Cantalamessa’s gifted preaching, the retreat included daily Mass, time for personal and communal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, time for personal reflection, silent meals, vespers, and confessions. No business was conducted at the retreat.

Although I was unable to attend all seven days of the retreat due to illness, I was grateful for the opportunity to reflect and pray on my role as shepherd in an environment that was silent and conducive to a personal encounter with the Lord. I am confident that this retreat will serve as a strong foundation for us bishops as we continue to work to address the causes of the abuse crisis and to restore and renew the Church.

I am often asked about whether I will be at the meeting to be held in Rome with the Holy Father from February 21-24, 2019, but to be clear, the meeting is not with all of the thousands of individual bishops throughout the world but only with the presidents of each country’s conference of bishops. His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, our current presiding bishop, will convene with the Holy Father and the other “president” bishops to discuss the protection of minors and vulnerable adults in the Church. The current plans for the meeting include plenary sessions, working groups, common prayer moments, and liturgies. According to the Holy See Press Office, the purpose of the meeting is as follows:

...[T]he goal is that all of the Bishops clearly understand what they need to do to prevent and combat the worldwide problem of the sexual abuse of minors. Pope Francis knows that a global problem can only be resolved with a global response. The Pope wants it to be an assembly of Pastors, not an academic conference—a meeting characterized by prayer and discernment, a catechetical and working gathering.

It is fundamental for the Holy Father that when the Bishops who will come to Rome have returned to their countries and their dioceses that they understand the laws to be applied and that they take the necessary steps to prevent abuse, to care for the victims, and to make sure that no case is covered up or buried.

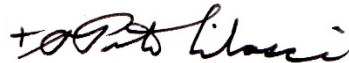
I hope to have more information to share with you in the coming months about the steps that the Church is taking nationally and globally to prevent sexual abuse in the Church. In the meantime,

our diocese continues to update our policies and our programs to prevent and address abuse in the Church. In the past few months, among other steps we have taken, we have:

- Improved our reporting procedures, to include a dedicated email address for reporting misconduct and an alternative method for reporting misconduct by a bishop;
- Established a plan to systematically train school staff and seminarians about appropriate boundaries in ministry;
- Provided educational materials to schools and parishes for distribution to parents;
- Engaged professional investigators to review clergy files; and
- Enhanced communication through my appointment of a member of the Diocesan Review Board to the Clergy Personnel Board.

I will continue to keep you apprised of any developments in this area. In the meantime, please be assured of my prayers for all of the faithful, especially those who have been harmed. I would be grateful to you for your prayers for victims of abuse, the clergy of this diocese, those who are working to prevent misconduct in the Church, and me.

Sincerely in Christ,

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

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci, D.D.  
Bishop of Manchester