

Statement of the Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph
Concerning
Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report

The widespread disgust among Catholics and others over the revelations included in the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report is entirely justified. So is the anger at and distrust of Catholic bishops.

“In this diocese we have experienced similar shocking revelations in the course of numerous lawsuits relating to abuse dating back decades through to the very recent Shawn Ratigan case,” Bishop James V. Johnston, Jr. said. “What is needed now, is not just promise of change, but a demonstration on the part of the bishops of a change of heart and deep contrition. Effective policies are crucial, but they can only be effective if the heart of those implementing them is one that aches for the suffering of victims of abuse and that burns for justice.”

The Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph has tried to demonstrate a sincere change of heart following our own painful experience:

- In 2016, a Service of Lament was held at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. As part of that Service, Bishop Johnston and his two Vicars General laid prostrate on the floor of the Cathedral as actual statements of victims/survivors were read in a Litany of Voices.
- Bishop Johnston is committed to and has continued to meet personally with local victims of abuse.
- The diocese held 9 healing services across the diocese in 2015-16.
- As part of Five Commitments Bishop Johnston made at the service, the diocese recently held a mandatory training day for priests and deacons to help better equip them to minister pastorally to those harmed by sexual abuse.
- The diocese has instituted an Annual Day of Prayer in late April for victims of abuse and for prevention. Diocesan schools and parishes also participate in this Day of Prayer.
- A Task Force consisting of experts in various fields related to child protection has been formed to review diocesan policies and institute best practices.
- A Victims Services Coordinator has been hired to provide care and compassion to survivors of abuse and their families.
- An Independent Ombudsman, with law enforcement experience, receives and investigates all allegations of sexual abuse of minors. All allegations of the abuse of minors are immediately referred to child services and law enforcement.
- We continue the tradition of annual training for children in diocesan schools and parish schools of religion – to understand and practice appropriate boundaries in order to protect themselves from potential abuse. This training is age and developmentally appropriate.
- We train adults to recognize warning signs, to report suspicions of sexual abuse and foster safe environments for children.