

My brothers and sisters in Christ:

I am writing to the entire Catholic community of San Diego and Imperial Counties this week to speak about the unspeakable — the sexual abuse of minors by priests which was detailed in the report of the grand jury in Pennsylvania. The individual stories of abuse that robbed the souls and violated the bodies of so many innocent children and young people during the past seventy years are shattering. For me as a bishop there is an additional level of shame, because in many instances, this abuse was magnified by the leadership of the Church that placed fear of scandal and the culture of clericalism ahead of the protection of young people.

The Pennsylvania grand jury report demands action and also points the way toward reform in the life of our Church. That report reveals that the imposition of the zero tolerance policy in 2002 substantially worked. It ushered in a period in which sexual abuse of minors by priests fell dramatically through consistent reporting to civil authorities, the creation of lay boards to evaluate the truth of allegations, and the education of children about abuse.

The additional reforms that we must undertake at this moment must be based on the principles that produced positive change after 2002 — an unwavering focus on protecting minors and vulnerable adults and a binding voice for the laity in determining whether an allegation is true. Any genuine reform must forcefully integrate these principles in a framework of accountability that applies to bishops in their personal lives and administrative actions.

I have already begun a process of consultation with priestly and lay leadership in the diocese of San Diego focusing on the steps we need to take locally and nationally to accomplish genuine reform. During October and early November, I will hold eight listening sessions throughout the diocese. (See schedule below.) These meetings will focus on seeking input from people in the pews on the pathway to such reform, listening to those who have been victimized by clerical sexual abuse either directly or in their families, and praying for God's grace to be our only guide. I invite you to be part of this effort by your presence or your prayers.

**Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Robert W. McElroy, Bishop of San Diego**

Schedule of Listening Sessions

Oct. 1, Monday, 7 p.m., Our Mother of Confidence Parish, 3131 Governor Drive, San Diego, 92122

Oct. 3, Wednesday, 7 p.m., St. Joseph Cathedral, 1535 Third Ave., San Diego, 92101

Oct. 4, Thursday, 7 p.m., Our Lady of Grace, 2766 Navajo Road, El Cajon, 92020, Moloney Center

Oct. 5, Friday, 7 p.m., St. Charles Parish, 990 Saturn Blvd., San Diego, 92154

Oct. 6, Saturday, 9 a.m., St. Mary Parish, 795 La Brucherie Road, El Centro, 92243

Oct. 17, Wednesday, 7 p.m., Church of the Nativity, 6309 El Apajo Road, Rancho Santa Fe, 92067

Oct. 18, Thursday, 7 p.m., St. Gabriel Parish, 13734 Twin Peaks Road, Poway, 92064, Msgr. Charles Dollen Hall

Nov. 5, Monday, 10 a.m., USD-Joan B. Kroc Institute, 5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego, 92110