



Office of the Bishop

August 5, 2019

My Dear Brother Priest:

Yesterday, on the Feast of Saint John Vianney, Pope Francis wrote a letter to the priests of the world, which is attached.

The Holy Father's desire to speak directly to every priest who has laid down his life in service to the Lord Jesus Christ springs from a recognition that the current moment in the history of the Church is particularly difficult for that enormous majority of priests who have remained faithful to their vocation to priesthood, but know that they walk in a world where every priest is subjected on some level to suspicion of the abuse of minors. For all of us who love Christ's priesthood and his Church, this is heartbreaking. And we are suffering.

Pope Francis reminds in his letter that this suffering in no way diminishes the Church's need to definitively eliminate the shame of clerical abuse of minors and the clerical culture that breeds it. For our suffering as priests is rooted precisely in the Priestly identity of Jesus Christ, who is shepherd to the wounded, healer of souls, and guardian of the defenseless.

To the priests of the world, the Holy Father's letter offers encouragement, gratitude and love.

And I, as your bishop, want to affirm for our local church what Pope Francis affirms for the priests of the world. "I want to say a word to each of you who, often without fanfare and at personal cost, amid weariness, infirmity and sorrow, carry out your mission of service to God and to your people. Despite the hardships of the journey, you are writing the finest pages of the priestly life."

May you continue to write these finest pages in service to the People of God to whom we have committed the whole of our lives.

With all best wishes

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Robert W. McElroy  
Bishop of San Diego