

HEALED

BY TRUTH

Dear Bishops of the Catholic Church,

When I was a child, my parents did not protect my innocence, and they did not teach me the truth about love and sexuality. It has taken me many years to find hope and healing, and I want to share some thoughts with you.

I know the sex abuse scandals in the Catholic Church have hurt everyone. The whole Church has felt betrayed and confused by those who went against Church teaching and harmed children and vulnerable people. It is unthinkable that a betrayal like this was even possible and that so many people were harmed. It will take time, dedication, and perseverance to heal and reclaim all that was lost.

While Church leadership continues to work through this scandal and takes ownership and responsibility, I want to point out another great need that is facing the Church at the present time.

In the wake of the scandals, it may seem hypocritical for Catholic Bishops to speak out on issues of sexual morality and child protection, but this couldn't be further from the truth. While your voices have been weakened, and in many cases almost silenced, another voice has called out to our children in the arena of sexuality: the voice of the world and *the father of lies*. Without your protection and the Church's strong stance, our children have been left to the 'wolves in sheep's clothing.' Our children are being misled and abused by all the predators *outside* the Church.

But this doesn't have to be the case. Many of you have remained faithful and true to both Christ and the Church during this time of scandal. I thank you for this, and I encourage you to embrace your calling to both heal and defend the Church.

I understand if you feel uncertain about what will happen next, and I can assure you, this wouldn't be the first time that bishops found themselves in a precarious situation. It's been the legacy of your predecessors to be mocked, derided, ridiculed, and worse, for standing up for Christ and the faith.

If you are afraid that no one will listen to you if you speak, that may be true. Many have left the Church and have turned away from your voices. But many have stayed. Many have listened and still believe.

If you are not quite ready to speak on your own to defend the innocence of the young, I humbly ask that you please support those in the Church who do. There are many priests, religious, lay ministers, teachers, and parents who stand by the Truth, and who work very hard to protect the young and the vulnerable. Please pray for them. Pray that their voices and their words will reach children and those who need them most.

In closing, I am happy to share one example of a Bishop who is helping the Church to process and heal from the wounds of abuse. Bishop Bill Muhm, from the Archdiocese of the Military Services, U.S.A, stepped into the unknown with me and together we had a deep conversation about child sexual abuse, the scandals in the Church, and the Gospel message. We published our conversation as a book, *Matthew 18: a conversation between a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and a Catholic Bishop*.

I hope you consider reading it. All the proceeds go to children in crisis around the world, and this book will give you an idea of how bishops, survivors, and the faithful can work together to both heal and build up the Church.

Please be assured of my love and prayers for all of you.

Sincerely your daughter in Christ,

CARRIE  BUCALO