



ST. FRANCIS XAVIER  
MISSOULA'S JESUIT PARISH

Dear St. Francis Xavier Community,

In recent years, we have all been struck, by the crisis in the Church. Allegations of the abuse of children and the abuse of power, of cover-up and clericalism have formed deep wounds not just in the institution of the Church, but in our own hearts. It is clear that bishops ignored and silenced victims and abetted and protected their abusers. This created a situation of distrust and suspicion that affects each of us individually and all of us together.

In the last few months, the suffering of the greater Church has come home to me in a very personal way: I was accused of abuse and molestation of an adult and of minors—accusations which I absolutely and unequivocally deny, and which have no basis in fact. At the same time, given the history of cover-up, I accepted that even such unjust accusations must be fully and independently investigated, so as to promote the healing needed for the Church. Thus, there have been investigations by civil authorities, a Diocesan review, and an investigation by persons hired by the Society of Jesus—each of which have determined that these accusations are not credible. I have been completely exonerated of these claims.

It is with an extremely heavy heart that I can now say first hand that there are people who attempt to profit from the horrors and atrocities of actual victims. We cannot abide this conduct and must be vigilant in exposing the actual violators while defending and protecting the innocent. I am innocent and have accepted and cooperated with all of these investigations, which, as you can imagine, have been both exhausting and personally depleting. Given the history of failure and cover-up in the Church, it is easy to conclude that any accusation of abuse is true. I pray you who know me will believe me when I say that I have never done nor would ever do anything to harm either a child or an adult in this terrible way.

Although the process and exoneration from these various sources is now complete, the shadow of gossip and malice of rumor have become a second injury and a burden unto themselves, and remain difficult to expunge.

In spite of the personal toll of these unfounded accusations, my continued efforts have been to serve this community with the love and zeal to which Christ calls me. Yet, they have also taken much out of me, and now, after conversations with my Provincial, I have decided to take a three-month leave to re-ground myself in the grace of God. During this time, I would ask this community to pray for me, that I might be free of any anger towards my accuser or the institutional Church; that I might find a way to the peace, which the Resurrected One offers. I have complete trust in the Jesuits who will be ministering here at St. Francis Xavier throughout the coming months. I ask that you give them the same gracious welcome and support you have always given me.

I will meet you in prayer,

Pastor