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My dear friends in Jesus Christ,

I write to you with a heavy heart as we continue to receive a daily diet of news reports about clergy abuse, including the multiple cover-ups and abuse of authority by some bishops, most especially by those who knew about ex-Cardinal McCarrick's assaults.

Many of you know that the New Jersey Catholic bishops have decided to release the names of all clergy members who have been "credibly accused" of child sexual abuse. The full list of names is available online at <https://diometuchen.org/clergy-abuse-resources/list-of-clergy/>. Among the names released is a former priest, Gregory Littleton, who served at Saint Elizabeth-Saint Brigid Parish for 8 months from January 14, 1997 until August 31, 1997. To my knowledge there were no reported incidents of any child being abused during this time by him.

The bottom line is that we all want our children to enjoy safe environments whether at school, at a neighbor's house, at a hospital setting, in a social setting and certainly in the place where we go for worship and spiritual formation. The Church should always be held to the highest standard and that is why our present protocols of vetting clergy as well as lay Catholics who volunteer to teach our children is arguably higher and more intense than any other organization. If only this had been the case in the past, especially before the so called "Dallas Charter" in 2002.

In our present state of affairs we are also bombarded by the horror of crimes deemed acceptable in our civil society against the most innocent children. This was most obvious during the recent 46th anniversary of the infamous Supreme Court decision of Roe vs Wade on January 22 when New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed a bill allowing abortion during all 9 months of pregnancy. Soon after, you may recall, that the Governor of Virginia, a pediatric doctor, pushed for a similar law that would include a child with a disability to be born — and even after the birth — the mother, in consultation with her doctor, could decide the fate of her newborn child to live or die.

Whether we are talking about an innocent child (pre-born or at birth) or other children who are fast growing into their teenage years and early adulthood, there is never a circumstance when one of these innocent ones should be subject to abuse or any other unsavory assault. All are children of God with their right to a joy-filled life.

The thought of a child being hurt by a health practitioner or a member of the clergy is absolutely sickening to me and to every parishioner I've had the opportunity to discuss these matters with. Our feelings reflect the sentiments of Our Lord himself who said: "if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be thrown into the sea" (Mark 9:42).

In Christ Jesus Our Lord,



Reverend Monsignor Edward C. Puleo, Pastor