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MESSAGE FROM THE MOST REV. ARMANDO X. OCHOA BISHOP, DIOCESE OF FRESNO

The breaking news of the scandal created by Cardinal McCarrick; the incomprehensible findings of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury involving six dioceses; and the exposed intolerable systemic immorality that sustained the abuse of countless children demands a response. I agree that it is the episcopate that must answer this call to action in a practical way that is rooted in the tenets of our faith as Catholic Christians. I look forward to the opportunity to address this grievous and detrimental reality that is overshadowing us, along with my brother bishops.

I stand firm in my conviction that all clergy must live out their lives as ordained ministers with integrity. As bishop, I have fully accepted my responsibility to address any serious matter that knowingly puts at risk any of the souls entrusted to my pastoral care and will continue to do so.

One of my greatest concerns is the culture of secrecy that exists in many dioceses among the clergy and even among some of the laity who feel that they need to protect the Church at all costs. This must be addressed more effectively. To remain silent and abandon victims when they need their faith community the most is indefensible.

I know that this massive wave of scandal is hurting many people. I encourage you to see this as a sign that God is purifying the Church. I will do all that I can to cooperate with this healing process and to work towards restoring trust. I encourage you to continue your good works and not be distracted away from the needs of the poor, weak and vulnerable in our midst. We must work through this together, while taking care of the day to day needs of the people we serve.

During the first week of September our Diocese will be undergoing our annual Safe Environment audit. I look forward to sharing the results with you. In the meantime, I ask all clergy, religious and lay leaders in my Diocese to be sensitive to those who are experiencing a crisis of faith as a result of this monumental betrayal of trust. Together, we can heal and build a Church that faithfully lives out its call to be disciples of hope. May God bless you and give you peace.