

Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska
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17 March 2010

Dear Survivors of Clergy Sexual Abuse,

Let me begin by telling you how sorry I am for your suffering. Through the many years of litigation, I was barred from approaching you. Now, it is my welcome responsibility to communicate publically and personally with each of you.

In the coming weeks and months, I will write letters to each of you to express my contrition and ask for forgiveness. I will travel to every community where you suffered harm and meet with you. I will conduct healing ceremonies and listening sessions. I will broadcast my announcement on our radio station KNOM, and publish it in church bulletins. I will also issue advance notice of my visits through radio announcements and postings in village gathering spots.

Let me take this opportunity to put to rest some concerns you may have. You bear absolutely no responsibility for the harm you have suffered. Further, let me assure you any sacraments you received from clergy perpetrators are valid and by reporting them you have helped correct a terrible wrong.

In addition, some abuses were committed in our boarding mission schools, including Holy Cross, Nulato and St. Marys. As a result, some of you may feel harm was committed not just against you, but against your culture. If so, I apologize for that as well.

My message, apart from my apologies and requests for forgiveness, is to tell you some good has come from your suffering. Today our churches and rectories, our schools and meeting halls are safer in the aftermath of these terrible acts. We screen every employee, volunteer and minister who works with children or vulnerable adults. We educate our children, employees and volunteers on how to spot and respond to suspected abuse. We have instituted an independent panel that handles any accusation of abuse that is raised. We also contact immediately law enforcement whenever there is an allegation. I know in the face of your suffering this may seem late in coming, but I take some measure of comfort knowing that we are doing what we can so no future generation goes through what you did.

I look forward to writing you, meeting with you and walking down the long road of recovery with you. May God in his Grace grant us peace in our day.

In Christ's Name, I remain yours,

+ Donald J. Kettler

Bishop Donald J. Kettler