

Homily -- San Fernando Cathedral

February 3, 2019

In today's gospel, Jesus is at home in the synagogue at Nazareth. He had just proclaimed his God-given mission: to bring good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind. His neighbors are skeptical. They want him to stay in Nazareth and prove himself by working many signs there. But Jesus' life belongs to God the Father. He goes wherever the Holy Spirit sends him to proclaim the word of God faithfully, heal the brokenhearted, and expel demons.

Change to conform to the will of God is a challenge for every generation, including ours today. It is particularly a call to the leaders of our Church to respond appropriately to the sexual abuse of minors by some priests and deacons.

On Thursday the bishops of the fifteen dioceses of Texas published lists of priests and deacons who have been credibly accused of sexual abusing minors. We have taken this action after much prayerful discernment and consultation. As Archbishop, I want the Archdiocese to be fully transparent in our account of this painful chapter of our history from 1940 to the present. We express our deep regret and apologize for the failings and sins that have hurt

the whole Church so deeply. We ask forgiveness for the failings of those who have held leadership positions in the Church. We offer public support to those who have survived clergy sexual abuse as minors. We share the painful truth in this report in order to invite the entire Church to a more authentic holiness – a life lived in accord with the gospel, entrusted with Jesus’ own mission and ministry.

Our report covers more than seventy-five years and contains a little more than fifty names, about half of whom are religious priests or priests on loan who worked in the Archdiocese for only a limited time. During this same period about 2,850 priests served the Church here. That puts our report into clear perspective even as we commit ourselves to ensuring that this sin and crime is eradicated.

In 2002 the U.S. Catholic bishops adopted the Dallas Charter for the protection of minors in the Church. In the past ten years our report shows that since 2010 there have been no reported allegations of abuse here might have occurred during this decade. Between 2000 and 2009 only two allegations were reported and the two clergy were removed from ministry and reported to civil authorities.

Forgiveness and true change in individuals and the Church cannot take place until a clear understanding of the depth of the problem is both accepted and addressed. The sin of these events, the pain of the survivors, and we who are angry, embarrassed and ashamed of some of our Church's leaders can only be healed if we acknowledge and reflect on the causes and neglect that allowed these tragic stories.

Please join us in prayer that this action taken by the Bishops of Texas will lead to the healing of the survivors of abuse as minors. Let us listen attentively to the word of God who calls us to faithful ministry as missionary disciples of the risen Lord. Help us to bring God's mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and healing to our community of faith. Our Lady of Guadalupe, embrace all of us with your maternal love!