

**From Bishop Timothy L. Doherty**

**November 4, 2018**

## **A message to the people of the Lafayette diocese**

This November, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will gather for its annual Fall General Assembly. During the meeting, which takes place in Baltimore, Md., Nov. 12-14, the full body of bishops, myself included, will address a variety of vital issues confronting the Church and society; most especially, the recent sexual abuse crisis.

The idea of a general council of bishops dates back to 1917, when spiritual care was needed for service members during World War I. In 1966, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) and the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) were established. According to the USCCB Web site, the NCCB attended to the Church's own affairs in the country, fulfilling the Vatican Council's mandate that bishops "jointly exercise their pastoral office" (Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church, #38).

In the USCC, the bishops collaborated with other Catholics to address issues that concern the Church as part of the larger society. Its committees included laypeople, clergy and religious, in addition to the bishops.

On July 1, 2001, the NCCB and the USCC were combined to form the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. It continues the pastoral mission, but has no governance authority over individual bishops or dioceses.

The mission of the USCCB, as outlined on its Web site, is the following:

- To act collaboratively and consistently on vital issues confronting the Church and society.
- To foster communion with the Church in other nations, within the Church universal, under the leadership of its supreme pastor, the Roman Pontiff.
- To offer appropriate assistance to each bishop in fulfilling his particular ministry in the local Church.

All of the bishops form approximately 17 committees, each with its own particular responsibility. As many of you know, I currently serve as the chair of the Committee on the Protection of Children and Young People, and as a member of the Administrative Committee (Board of Trustees).

In advance of this year's assembly, where we will continue making critical decisions in response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis, the U.S. bishops are joining together in a commitment of prayer and reparation. With my brother bishops across the nation, I will be dedicating myself to seven days of intensified prayer and fasting, from Monday, Nov. 5, through Sunday, Nov. 11. The intentions for this period of prayer and sacrifice are three-fold:

- For the healing and support of all victims of clergy sexual abuse.

- For the conversion and just punishment of the perpetrators and concealers of sexual abuse.
- For the strength of the bishops to be holy shepherds in protecting and leading our sheep from all harm.

If you feel called to do so, you are welcome to join me in praying for these intentions. I would also be grateful for any prayers for me and my brother bishops during our general assembly, that we may follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in responding to the tragedy of clergy sexual abuse in the Church.

Please be assured of my prayers for you, as well.

Sincerely,

Bishop Timothy L. Doherty