

September, 2019

Dear saints,

In light of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester's announcement to file for bankruptcy, I write to address the serious issue of sexual harassment and assault, which is a sin. The sin lies solely on the perpetrator. Such behavior fails to respect the inherent dignity of each person as created in the image of God. However, the wonder with which God creates us cannot be undone by the sinful actions of another person. In recent times, we have witnessed allegations of and admissions to sexual harassment and assault by public figures who are church leaders, politicians, media personalities, and celebrities. In every situation, victims have suffered and cried their silent tears.

Our prayers are with our ecumenical siblings in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester at this time. Our prayers and actions continue for victims of sexual abuse and against all forms of institutional protection of abusers.

This is a tender time and I invite us to be compassionate, wise and gentle with each other as we work toward a better future. I wish to clarify for those who may not know how we strive to steward those entrusted to our care. Let me remind you of the policies and practices of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, especially in light of the recent requirement by New York State's Prevention of Sexual Harassment Training for employees annually. This training needs to be completed by all employees online by October 9, 2019. Let me also remind you that Safe Church Training is required of all employees as well as volunteers and needs to be renewed every three years. This too can be done online.

We are most grateful to the team of Vice-Chancellor Paul Greene, Ms. Liz Salamone and Ms. Johanna Bond for serving on the task force to give us the now consolidated resources for education and training. [All these resources are on our Diocesan website](#), and I commend them to you. I invite you to please go to the site to learn about and attend to the stewardship of protecting all who are entrusted to our care, and especially the vulnerable, as Beloved Community. I am grateful to our diligent Chancellor Phil Fileri, Canons Johnnie and Todd, and especially Ms. Kristy Estey and Ms. Carolyn McConnell, for shepherding these holy resources and processes on our behalf. I invite each of you to be diligent stewards who make all the spaces we inhabit at home, work, church or anywhere safe for all.

Let us pray for trust:

*Gracious God, we pray for all who are vulnerable and everyone who is impacted by abuse. We also pray for those who are called to steward authority and power over others will model the Jesus way of love. Teach us not to dominate but serve and respect the dignity of all. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. May all our spaces be redeemed and sustained as safe places. In the Holy Name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.*

Let us pray for the Church:

*Gracious Father, we pray for your Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Savior. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer,*

page 816)

With affection,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. L. S.', written over a horizontal line that extends to the right.