

Eleven years ago, I took a vow of obedience to the Catholic church, as a Permanent Deacon. For the past decade I've served as the victim assistance coordinator and as a Vice Chancellor, until recently.

I took my role seriously as Victim Assistance Coordinator to promote healing and reconciliation.

To you victims of sexual abuse, I know your distress is real. **It takes so much courage to come forward.** **The last thing you need is someone denying your truth without you justly being heard.** I am so sorry some of you have either felt forced into litigation or to just give up and go away.

When a process re-victimizes those people harmed by priests, deacons, religious and lay people working for the Catholic Church—**victims who have bravely come back to our doors** longing to be heard, believed and helped—it is evident that that process needs to change.

To all Diocesan Colleagues, we must avoid dismissing victims with raw wounds, regardless of how old, or quickly defaulting to “the statute of limitations” and/or mistreating them again by conducting a limited, biased investigation. Instead

we must show the love and compassion of Christ to these victims.

Bishops, you are ordained to lead the Church. Years of prolonged mishandling of sexual abuse victims continues to plague the Catholic church.

The checks and balances put in place in the 2002 Dallas Charter have been compromised. At times, it seems that protecting the institution is a higher goal than caring for victims.

We are here today to call for a deeper reckoning and transparent reporting of the past and present mishandling of victims and their perpetrators. This can only be accomplished by the use of a truly independent auditor beholden to the good of the public, not to the Catholic Church as a client.

Our global witness has been deeply damaged by these mishandlings as leaders fail to lead with, dignity and righteousness.

I present these matters out of respect and obedience for God, for the Catholic Church, and for **you, the victims**.