

MOST REVEREND ALFRED A. SCHLERT
SACRED HEART PARISH, BATH
30 JUNE - 1 JULY 2018
REMARKS

My dear Friends, I have been to Sacred Heart Parish on many joyful occasions in my years as a priest, but today I come with profound sorrow, to pray with you. As you are aware, your longtime pastor, Msgr. Francis Nave, has been accused of improper online behavior with a minor in Virginia.

The Diocese was taken completely by surprise with this news, and only learned of the allegations late Wednesday afternoon. We were not aware of them until we were contacted by a newspaper reporter. The reporter had been sent a copy of a lawsuit that had just been filed by an attorney from Florida.

The Diocese of Allentown has a Zero Tolerance Policy for such allegations. As a result, we quickly notified the Northampton County District Attorney's office. I also immediately removed Msgr. Nave from his assignment, and he is forbidden from all priestly ministry, pending the results of an investigation.

Because of an ongoing investigation, the Diocese cannot provide more details about the allegation at this time, except to say that Msgr. Nave has retained his own legal counsel, at his own expense.

I know that this has been a great shock to everyone here at Sacred Heart Parish. I am here today as your Bishop, wounded myself, to tend to a wounded flock. Like you, I have a mix of emotions. That's why I'm here humbly to absorb your anger, your sorrow, your disbelief, and your sadness. I am also here as your shepherd, to try to begin to heal the hurt. It is understandable for all of us to feel disheartened, but we cannot let ourselves be defeated.

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus tell the synagogue official: "Do not be afraid; just have faith." We can imagine that for this official and his wife, it was very difficult for them to do this, because they could not have anticipated how God would work through this desperate situation. In the end, He brought the little girl back to life, and gave her back to her parents. I invite you today to be hopeful, even in this hour, when it may be difficult to imagine how God will work through this situation, that He will show us His goodness, and that He will heal us and make us a stronger community of faith.

To my young friends who are here, I ask you not to judge the Priesthood on these sad events. Rather, I ask you to pray that we will always have good and holy priests to serve in the Church.

As always, I encourage anyone who knows of an incident of abuse, whether in the Church or elsewhere, to be sure to come forward and report it.

Thank you for your perseverance as we work together through this difficult period. Please know that each of you is in my prayers. I would ask you to join me in praying for everyone affected by this situation, as well as their families.