

УКРАЇНСЬКА КАТОЛИЦЬКА ЄПАРХІЯ
СВЯТОГО МИКОЛАЯ



UKRAINIAN CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF
SAINT NICHOLAS

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Glory Be to Jesus Christ!

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last year having started my episcopal ministry in the United States I encountered a new culture and religious situation, in particular relating to the Catholic Church in the United States. There are many new challenges and problems. Recently I learned about the scandalous and unacceptable situation about which I, as well as all of you, are equally very upset and outraged. I have in mind the information of recent weeks about the sexual scandals committed by the clergy. Even one instance of sexual abuse is inadmissible, and we have learned from reliable sources of allegations in isolated cases more than once. It seems that there is a deep and systemic problem with sexuality among those who promised to live a chaste life. Likewise, it is a great evil to conceal scandalous situations, which wound thousands of innocent souls. The same as you, I am experiencing moments when I'm completely shocked by the thought of the prevalent nature of this problem.

The question is: how do we deal with this scandal? My advice can be found in the Gospel pages when St. Peter walked on the water towards Jesus, he was safe as long as he kept his gaze on the Lord and trusted Him completely. As soon as he turned his attention away from the Lord and looked upon the threatening wind and waves, he began to sink in the dark and turbulent waters. This is the answer for us in this time of darkness. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, not on all of this evil that threatens us and the Church at large.

I want to assure you that our Eparchy takes any substantiated accusations of abuse by clergy most seriously. For this reason, we have invested a great amount of energy into an effective Safe Environment Program. If you have been the victim of any past or present abuse by a member of the clergy of whatever rank, please report this to the civil authorities and notify the Eparchial Office for Safe Environment. In such cases there can be no talk of any cover up, nor can any abhorrent behavior be tolerated. We can also expect various enemies of the Church to create false claims and fill the headlines with reports aimed at destroying the Church. At the same time, I want to assure our faithful that the innocent will be vigorously protected immediately to the full extent of our power.

During this time of darkness, we need to walk the path of light and we will find this path through prayer and fasting. Please utilize all the prescribed times of abstinence: Wednesdays and Fridays, the four fast periods of our liturgical year, and other prescribed days of abstinence. Prayer and fasting is our weapon against the Evil One; and make no mistake about it, the Evil One has

infiltrated the Church, hoping to undermine the Church from within. Let us remember that our Risen Lord is infinitely more powerful and through prayer and fasting we permit the Lord to empower us, protect us, and render us ready to do battle with Satan and his forces. Christ is Risen, and He has defeated all the powers of Hell. We shall stand firm in our Lord Jesus Christ, and through Him, together with His Eternal Father and His All-Holy, Good and Life-giving Spirit, to Whom be glory now and forever and ever.

The blessing of the Lord be upon you!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Benedict". The letter 'B' is large and stylized, with a small cross-like symbol to its left. The rest of the name is written in a cursive, flowing script.

MOST REVEREND BENEDICT (ALEKSIYCHUK)
Bishop of St. Nicholas Eparchy