

HOLY FAMILY PARISH

August 18-19, 2007

Bishop Gerald A. Gettelfinger

How does an innocent young boy tell his mom or dad that he has just been violated by the parish pastor especially when the pastor is so trusted by everyone in the entire community?

- *Is the answer to remain silent hoping that the pain and shame will go away?*
- *Is the answer to remain silent thinking that confession will remove the pain he feels?*
- *Is the answer to remain silent fearing that his dad and mom would not believe him?*
- *Is the answer to remain silent certain that his friends would make fun of him?*

How does the innocent boy-victim resolve his pain while he grows into manhood feeling the burden of betrayal by one whom he trusted; for whom he served Holy Mass, to whom he confessed; from whom he received the Body and Blood of Jesus?

How do disillusioned parents console their children upon learning the tragic news so many years later, that one of their sons was violated by a priest?

Dear members of Holy Family Parish:

I wish I knew the answer to the last two questions. That is why I am here today.

A number of years ago it came to my attention that the founding pastor of Holy Family Parish had sexually violated some innocent young boys of the parish. At that time I made a commitment to provide counseling for those men while protecting the anonymity they requested.

Most recently, we have learned that the scope of the abuse by the founding pastor, Monsignor Othmar Schroeder, is greater than we knew.

Seeing his name and picture so prominently displayed continues to cause pain to those who have suffered because of him. While respecting confidentially and anonymity of the victims, I have taken the following measures to hopefully lessen the pain and allow for healing:

- The picture of the founding pastor has been removed from Holy Family Church
- I have requested my brother Knights of the Jasper Knights of Columbus Council to rename it.
- In the near future there will be a public service in St. Joseph Church in Jasper for healing the wounds of unspoken pain for anyone harmed or injured by abuse of any form.

I have the utmost respect for those who have suffered so much for so long. My heart aches for each one. I regret that I feel so helpless to remove the pain. I am most grateful to them for their courage. I entrust each of them to Mary, our Lady of Sorrows who knows pain beyond our imagination.

I pray the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, to embrace the Schroeder family in their grief as well as all the members of Holy Family Parish.

Following all the weekend Masses, I will be available to anyone who wishes to speak with me.

Let us pray for those who have suffered so much for so long and for us now!