



Statement from the Attorney General Regarding Clergy Report of Sexual Assault

One of the primary guiding principles of the Nebraska Department of Justice is to protect the most vulnerable in society. It is that principal which prompted our office to do this investigation. The ability of law enforcement and the justice system to protect children from sexual and physical abuse is one of the most essential duties we have as the State. To that end, we have attempted to take painstaking efforts to make sure that this investigation has been as thorough as possible. We are also fully aware that because of the nature of the offense, and the shame associated with these crimes, that we will never be able to fully address the scope of violations and redress the significant harm caused to so many innocent young victims. The reality that we are unable to prosecute the offenders because of the perpetrator's death, or as a result of the barrier created by the statute of limitations is beyond frustrating.

The most troubling finding from this report is the fact that on numerous occasions, when there was an opportunity to bring justice to the victims, those in authority chose to place the reputation of the church above the protection of the children who placed their spiritual care in the hands of those in church authority. The depth of physical and psychological harm caused by the perpetrators, and the decades of failure by the church to safeguard so many child victims, is unfathomable. We can only hope that the victims have been able to find some sense of healing from a source higher than our justice system.

Going forward, vigilance in protection will be the most important element to assure children are shielded from these violations in the future. That vigilance includes the strongest commitment possible made by the church, its members, and the engagement of law enforcement as soon as possible.

Absolutely no institution is entitled to place the preservation of its reputation before the protection of our most vulnerable. True vigilance demands a collective commitment to never allow this tragic history of unspeakable harm to repeat itself. The duty to protect the children is on our watch. May we not fail.

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