

Special Message from Bishop Mark

Last October, Pope Francis pointed out that if the Catholic Church is to be a teaching church, it must also be equally and at the same time a learning church. And he said that in order for this teaching and learning to be effective, we must also be a Church that listens, which is more than hearing. In speaking about last year's Synod on the Family, Pope Francis underscored the importance of listening to the joys and hope, the sorrow and anguish of God's people.

After the publication of the 37th Statewide Investigating Grand Jury Report, I was invited to listen to a representative of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (which is concerned about safeguarding persons of all ages from any kind of sexual assault), as well as representatives of several agencies that provide counseling, education, and other services in the eight counties of our Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown.

I listened and I am learning. I learned especially that we need to do more to educate as many people as possible about sexual abuse of minors and how to keep young people safe.

Today, I am inviting and urging you to listen and learn with me. Beginning this weekend, *The Catholic Register*, our *Proclaim!* television ministry, and our Diocesan website will regularly feature information and reflections from representatives of public agencies. They will help all of us learn more about sexual abuse and what we can do to prevent it. And we have plans for them to speak to you in person at various places around the diocese.

As always, I urge anyone with any information about the sexual abuse of children to report it to the proper authorities. The contact information is provided here in *The Catholic Register* and is always available on our website (www.ajdiocese.org).

Thank you for joining me as we listen in order to learn, and learn in order to teach and protect.