



The Holy See

**LETTER SENT BY THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE BISHOPS OF CHILE FOLLOWING THE REPORT
OF ARCHBISHOP CHARLES J. SCICLUNA**

Dear Bishops of Chile, Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

The receipt last week of the latest documents that complete the report consigned to me by my two Special Envoys to Chile on 20 March 2018, totaling more than 2,300 pages, has moved me to write this letter. I assure you of my prayers and I would like to share with you the conviction that the present difficulties are also an opportunity to re-establish trust in the Church, trust shattered by our errors and sins, and to heal some wounds that continue to bleed in the whole of Chilean society.

Without faith and without prayer, fraternity is impossible. Therefore, on this Second Sunday of Easter, on the day of mercy, I offer you this reflection in the hope that each of you may accompany me on the inner journey that I have been undertaking in recent weeks, so that the Spirit may guide us with his gift and not our interests or, even worse, our wounded pride.

At times, when similar evils have marred our spirit and cast us into the world weak, fearful, shielded in our comfortable “winter palaces”, God’s love comes to meet us and to cleanse our intentions so that we may love as free, mature and discerning men. When the communications media embarrass us by presenting a Church almost always under a new moon, bereft of the light of the Sun of justice (Saint Ambrose, *Hexameron* iv, 8:32) and we are tempted to doubt the Paschal victory of the Risen One, I believe that as Saint Thomas we must not be afraid of doubt (Jn 20:25), but must fear the insistent longing to see without trusting the witness of those who have heard the most beautiful promise from the Lord’s lips (Mt 28:20).

Today I ask you to speak not of certainties, but of the one thing that the Lord allows us to experience every day: joy, peace, forgiveness of our sins and the action of his grace.

In this regard, I would like to express my gratitude to Archbishop Charles Scicluna of Malta and Msgr Jorge Bertomeu Farnós, official of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, for the amount of work involved in the calm and empathetic listening to the 64 depositions they collected recently both in New York and in Santiago de Chile. I sent them to listen from the heart and with humility. Afterwards, when they delivered the report to me and, especially, in their juridical and pastoral assessment of the information gathered, they acknowledged that they had felt overwhelmed by the pain of so many victims of serious abuses of conscience and of power and, in particular, of sexual abuse committed against minors by various consecrated people in your country, which, denied at the time, robbed them of their innocence.

As pastors we must express heartfelt and cordial gratitude to those who, with honesty, courage and *sensus Ecclesiae*, requested to meet my Envoys and showed them the wounds in their very soul. Archbishop Scicluna and Msgr Bertomeu told me that, with impressive maturity, respect and amiability, several bishops, priests, deacons, laymen and laywomen of Santiago and Osorno went to Holy Name Parish in New York or to Sotero Sanz, in Providencia.

Moreover, in the days following the special mission, there were witnesses to another fact worth keeping in mind for other occasions, since not only was the climate of confidentiality established during the Visit maintained, but at no time did anyone succumb to the temptation to turn that delicate mission into a media circus. In this respect, I would like to thank the various organizations and means of communication for their professionalism in dealing with this most delicate case, respecting the right of citizens to information and the good reputation of the declarants.

Now, after a careful reading of the acts of this “special mission”, I believe I can state that all of the collected statements speak in a straightforward manner, without additives or sugarcoating, of many lives crucified, and I confess that this causes me sorrow and shame.

Taking all of this into account, I write to you, gathered in the 115th Plenary Assembly, in order to humbly request your cooperation and assistance in discerning the measures that must be adopted in the short, medium and long term in order to restore ecclesial communion in Chile, in order to remedy the scandal to the extent possible, and re-establish justice.

I intend to summon you to Rome in order to discuss the conclusions of the aforementioned visit and my own conclusions. I have envisioned this encounter as a fraternal moment, with neither prejudice nor preconceived ideas, with the sole aim of making the truth shine forth in our lives. As to the date, I ask the Secretary of the Episcopal Conference to suggest a convenient time.

With regard to myself, I recognize, and I would like you to convey this faithfully, that I have made serious errors in the assessment and perception of the situation, in particular through the lack of reliable and balanced information. I now beg the forgiveness of all those whom I have offended and I hope to be able to do so personally, in the coming weeks, in the meetings that I will have

with representatives of the people interviewed.

“Abide in me” (Jn 15:4): these words of the Lord continually resonate in these days. They speak of personal relationships, of communion, of fraternity that attracts and summons. United to Christ as branches to the vine, I invite you to instil in your prayers in the coming days a magnanimity that may prepare us for the above-mentioned meeting and allow us then to transform into concrete acts all that we will have reflected upon. Now more than ever we cannot fall back into the temptation of verbosity and maintain “universal” themes. In these days, let us look to Christ. Let us look to his life and his gestures, especially when he shows he is compassionate and merciful to those who have done wrong. Let us love truth; let us ask for wisdom of heart and allow ourselves to convert.

I look forward to hearing from you and, asking Bishop Santiago Silva Retamales, President of the Episcopal Conference of Chile, to publish the present letter as soon as possible, I impart to you my blessing and I ask you, please, to never cease praying for me.

Vatican, 8 April 2018

Francis