Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, the Catholic Diocese of Richmond released a report summarizing the results of the Independent Reconciliation Program — a program designed to offer assistance to survivors of clergy sexual abuse within our diocese through an independent arbiter. As you will read in the report, the IRP was able to provide recompense for more than 50 victim survivors, and while we can never undo the pain they experienced and continue to experience, we hope this program helps bring them some sense of greater peace and continued healing.

Reconciliation is a defining aspect of our diocese’s bicentennial year, a year in which we recognize the establishment of our Catholic faith in Virginia and a recognition of all that is part of our history. If we are, in fact, to give authentic witness to the words of the prophet Isaiah, proclaimed by Jesus in the synagogue, that we are ‘to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord,’ then the repair offered by the Independent Reconciliation Program must be a part of it.

With the celebration of a jubilee year comes another opportunity to work for justice — for acknowledgement of wrongs, reconciliation with those we have wronged, and attempts to repair the hurt we have caused. Those three facets — confession, reconciliation and repair — are at the foundation of the Catholic Church’s sacrament of reconciliation which was the model for our entering into the Independent Reconciliation Program.

As bishop of the Diocese of Richmond, I take very seriously my responsibility to provide for victim survivors within our community. I am deeply grateful to the independent administrators at BrownGreer for managing this program, and in doing so, working with our victim survivors in a way that mirrored our spirit of concern and reconciliation. You will find a summary of the Independent Reconciliation Program report on our diocesan website: https://assistance.richmonddiocese.org.

The completion of this program is by no means the end of our efforts to provide for victim survivors. Our outreach is ongoing. We must, and we will, continue to meet victim survivors with support and compassion motivated by our shared love of Jesus Christ.

I ask for your continued prayers for victim survivors and that the nearness of Jesus may dispel the darkness of sins and reconcile us with all who have been hurt.

Wishing you every grace and blessing, I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop of Richmond