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## **The painful process of restoring trust**

A 2005 Philadelphia grand jury report blasting the Church in Philadelphia with sordid details of hundreds of cases of sexual assault of minors by clergy in the Archdiocese was bad enough at that time. Catholics here may well remember the shock and outrage over horrific stories of violations of children by some priests. Many people at that time felt their trust as Catholics — trust in priests, trust in the hierarchy that governs the Archdiocese — had been shaken.

For most people, the pain and bitterness eased over time. They supported the good priests that served them so well. And some measure of solace was found in the knowledge that the Archdiocese was taking steps to protect children above any other consideration. That thawing of hard feelings proved to be a temporary respite.

With the release of a new grand jury investigation last week and, for the first time, criminal indictments against alleged abusers and a former archdiocesan official, Catholics have plunged again into the pain and disillusionment. Yet somehow it feels worse this time.

That's because Catholics were assured that the Archdiocese had taken steps to care for victims, to investigate and remove abusive priests and to train adults and children to be aware of the signs of potential sexual abuse and thereby prevent it. These were, in addition to their positive contributions to confronting and ending this cancer in society, confidence building measures for the Catholic faithful.

Clearly, the Archdiocese's child protection efforts have educated thousands of Church workers, volunteers and the children they serve. But it's also clear the programs have fallen short of the stated goals of doing every possible to safeguard young people within the Catholic Church.

New measures featuring greater transparency must emerge. That is happening already, as we recount in this week's edition. But the larger goal of restoring confidence in Catholics — trust

that archdiocesan officials really are working transparently and sincerely for the protection of children and genuine care of victims — remains the work of the coming weeks.

That process will take time. The Catholic faithful are waiting with hope. They love the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. They await new policies that restore people's trust and live up to the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Matthew: "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers (and sisters) of mine, you did for me."

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