

May 16, 2026

Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archdiocese of Seattle
710 – 9th Ave.
Seattle, WA 98104-2017

Dear Archbishop Etienne:

Heal Our Church (HOC) appreciates your detailed letter of April 28, 2026. We agree with many points but dispute a few others. Please feel free to share this response as you wish. We will include both letters on our website.

We want to make two points very clear: First, we strongly support the efforts of the Attorney General to subpoena relevant records relating to the clergy abuse scandal, most recently affirmed by the Washington State Court of Appeals. As you know, we earlier asked for an independent review of the records through a Truth and Reconciliation process, addressing the 'how and why' this scandal occurred, which you have refused to support by claiming to protect victims. The publication of the names of victims has never been a part of any review that we are aware of and strikes us as rather offensive that the institution responsible legally is now refusing information which they hold in trust for, at minimum, all Catholics, beginning with those victims who voluntarily support this process. We hope that the underlying premise is not the result of a strategy to 'slow walk' this issue of transparency knowing there are more victims who have not come forward.

This also relates to your apparent complaint that HOC has publicly requested certain actions by you. We are not clear if that has anything to do with the merits of what we are requesting, e.g., Truth and Reconciliation. There had been numerous unsuccessful efforts, prior to your appointment as archbishop, for more transparency with the records. It was apparent to us that the Church's response to the clergy abuse scandal is measured primarily by public pressure to do something. The Dallas Charter and Norms were a direct response to ongoing publication of serious issues of abuse highlighted by the Boston Globe articles. 'Scolding' HOC for publicly requesting more transparency seems like a diversion from answering the basic question – how can the representatives of our Church be opposed to Truth and Reconciliation? Why not engage in the dialogue, so frequently requested by our Holy Father, to address this issue?

Second, we disagree that we "Have repeatably chosen to ignore the good work, efforts and more that have taken place in our archdiocese and have been shared with you." Many of our supporters have been active in their parishes in all activities and HOC fully supports and applauds many of your efforts. In fact, from the very beginning HOC documents have endorsed many of the actions you outline, especially those that involve outreach to the laity. Note, too, that we were calling for assemblies or synods before the recent overtures of the Church in that regard.

In your letter, you imply that we may be questioning your authority as a bishop of the Church. There is no question that our Church traces its roots to Our Lord and needs structure through its hierarchy. But, there is also the 'sensus fidei,' acknowledged by the Church as a reflection of the Holy Spirit, that has to be a part of the dialogue and which you acknowledge from the synod reports and our various forums. On the other hand, we have specifically asked for your views, beyond ongoing listening sessions for the faithful, on matters like celibacy, the role of women in ministry and welcoming of marginalized groups. As our leader, we would expect an answer and have not received one. Yes, we feel that certain areas

have not been adequately addressed but would remind you that a recent Pew report (Feb., 2026) found that 46% of former Catholics leave the Church "No longer believing in the religion's teachings...followed by 39% (due to) Scandals involving clergy or religious leaders." There is a serious problem here of Church credibility. We hope you are not implying that the Church's current teaching on issues like celibacy and the role of women are divinely mandated.

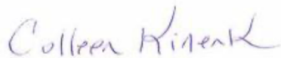
A heartening response in your letter relates to the Partners in the Gospel program where you say results are not predetermined; and, you hope that the discernment in the parish families will lead to better results. We agree. You are well aware that the Partners program has caused great uncertainty in the community, not just with the concept of parish families but, as importantly, where all this is going as the various published deadlines seem set – especially the potential closure of parishes and/or sale of Church assets. We were a bit taken aback when you indicated that the shortage of priests is not a factor in creating the Partners program. We disagree and view it as a fundamental problem that, hopefully, will lead to greater lay participation within the Church.

All of the above point to a need for dialogue which you dismiss. Yet, we found your comments offensive when you say: "While I appreciate your desire for healing... I do not see how your efforts are fostering healing for victim survivors and Catholics in general." Please show us the courtesy of telling us where the views of HOC are outside of Church faith and morals. Certainly, our disagreements on matters relating to transparency of files or lay involvement are open for dialogue or discussion. Correct? Our door is always open. We hope yours is as well.

We have faith that, with the grace of God, our Church will continue to adjust and reform as it has throughout its history. Change can be difficult. HOC was created to address issues which, in these especially challenging times, it deems important to laity and clergy--and we will continue to do so. Archbishop, we wish no conflict with you. Most of our steering committee are comprised of persons who have lived their lives in the Catholic community, raised children, continue to seek Our Lord's presence and live honestly. Just as you have asked us to reexamine our approach to the complex issues we together face, we ask that you do the same and agree to open a respectful dialogue in good faith for the good of our Church.

Respectfully, on behalf of supporters of Heal Our Church.

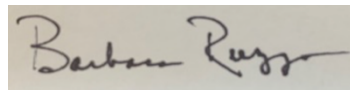
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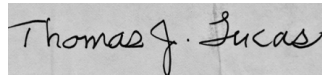
Barbara Ruzzo



Terence Carroll



Thomas J Lucas



"Holy Spirit...heal your people's wounds...(and) Grant that all harmed by abuse may find peace in justice." (Prayer for healing Victims of Abuse)