*The letter by Pope Francis to the Bishops of Chile, following the submission of the report by Mgr Charles J. Scicluna, Archbishop of Malta. This unofficial translation to English has been provided by Catholic News Agency www.catholicnewsagency.com*

Dear brothers in the episcopate,

The reception last week of the final documents which complete the report delivered to me by my two special envoys to Chile on March 20, 2018, with a total of more than 2,300 pages, moves me to write this letter. I assure you of my prayers and I want to share with you the conviction that the present difficulties are also an occasion to re-establish trust in the Church, a trust broken by our errors and sins and in order to heal the wounds that do not cease to bleed in the whole of Chilean society.

Without faith and without prayer, fraternity is impossible. Thus, on this second Sunday of Easter, on the day of mercy, I offer you this reflection with the desire that each one of you accompany me on the inner journey that I have been traveling in recent weeks, so that it would be the Spirit who would guide us with his gift, and not our interests, or even worse, our wounded pride.

Sometimes when so many evils frighten the soul and throw us listlessly into the world buttoned up in our comfortable “winter palaces,” the love of God comes out to meet us and purifies our intentions in order to love as free, mature, and judicious men. When the media shames us, presenting a Church almost always in the darkness of the new moon, deprived of the Sun of justice, we have the temptation of doubting the Paschal victory of the Risen One. I believe that like Saint Thomas the Apostle we must not fear doubt but rather fear the pretension of wanting to see without trusting the testimony of those who heard from the lips of the Lord the most beautiful promise.

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

In that regard I wish to express my gratitude to His Excellency Charles Scicluna, the Archbishop of Malta and to Rev. Jordi Bertomeu Farnós, official of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, for his prodigious work in considerately and empathetically listening to the 64 testimonies he recently gathered both in New York and Santiago de Chile. I sent them to listen from the heart and with humility. Later on, when they delivered to me the report and, in particular, its juridical and pastoral assessment of the gathered information, they acknowledged before me of having felt overwhelmed with the pain of so many victims of grave abuses of conscience and power and, in particular, of the acts of sexual abuse committed by various consecrated men of your country against minors, those who were not taken seriously then and were even robbed of their innocence.

The most heartfelt and cordial gratitude we must express as pastors to those who with honesty, courage and the sense of the Church requested a meeting with my envoys and showed them the wounds of their souls. Bishop Scicluna and Rev. Bertomeu have told me how some bishops, priests and deacons, lay men and women of Santiago and Osorno came to Holy Name parish in New York or to the office of Sotero Sanz, in Providencia, with a maturity, respect and kindness that was overwhelming.

In addition, the days following that special mission, have witnessed another meritorious fact that we should keep very much in mind for other occasions, because not only has the climate of confidentiality achieved during the visit been maintained, but at no time has the temptation been yielded to to turn this delicate mission into a media circus. In that regard, I wish to thank the different organizations and media for their professionalism in treating such a delicate case, respecting the right of citizens to the information and the good reputation of the declarants.

Now, after a careful reading of the proceedings of this “special mission,” I believe I can affirm that the collected testimonies speak in a stark way, without additives or sweeteners, of many crucified lives and I confess to you that that causes me pain and shame.

Taking all this into account, I am writing to you, meeting together in the 115th Plenary Assembly, to humbly request your collaboration and assistance in discerning the short, mid and long term measures that must be adopted to re-establish ecclesial communion in Chile, with the goal of repairing as much as possible the scandal and re-establishing justice.

I plan to call you to Rome to discuss the conclusions and the aforementioned visit and my conclusions. I have thought of that meeting has a fraternal moment, without prejudices or preconceived ideas, with the only goal of making the truth shine forth in our lives. Regarding the date, I entrust it to the Secretary of the Bishops' Conference to show me the possibilities.

As for my own responsibility, I acknowledge, and I want you to faithfully convey it that way, that I have made serious mistakes in the assessment and perception of the situation, especially because of the lack of truthful and balanced information. Right now I ask forgiveness from all those I offended and I hope to be able to do so personally, in the coming weeks, in the meetings I will have with representatives of the people who were interviewed.

Abide in me: these words of the Lord resound again and again in these day. They speak of personal relationships, of communion, of fraternity which attracts and summons. United to Christ as the branches are to the vine, I invite you graft into your prayers in the coming days a magnanimity that prepares us for the aforementioned meeting and will then allow what we will have reflected on to be translated into concrete actions.

It maybe even be opportune to have the Church in Chile be in ongoing prayer. Now more than ever we cannot fall back into the temptation of verbiage or dwell in “generalities.” These days, let us look at Christ. Let us look at his life and his gestures, especially when he shows compassion and mercy to those who have erred. Let us love in truth, let us ask for wisdom of heart and let us be converted.

Waiting for news from you and asking His Excellency Santiago Silva Retamales, President of the Chilean Conference of Bishops, to publish this letter as quickly as possible, I impart my blessing and ask you to please keep praying for me.

Vatican, 8th April 2018

**FRANCIS**