

PASTOR'S COLUMN

Clergy Sexual Abuse

Because we mail our parish bulletins, the bulletins go to the printer about 10 days before the weekend they cover. I have to write these Columns early to accommodate the schedule for printing and mailing. If I am writing about an upcoming parish event, the time realities usually aren't a problem, but if I am writing about a developing story in the news, the bulletin "lag time" might produce articles that are dated by the time you read them. So, forgive me if that is the case by the time you read this, but because the issue of clergy sexual abuse is so significant, I wanted to share excerpts of an article written on August 27, 2018 by Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President of the U.S. Bishops' Conference:

"In communion with the Holy Father, I join the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in taking upon ourselves his exhortation, 'this open wound [of abuse] challenges us to be firm and decisive in the pursuit of truth and justice.'

"On August 1st, I promised that the USCCB would exercise the full extent of its authority to pursue the many questions surrounding Archbishop McCarrick. On August 16th, I called for an Apostolic Visitation, working in concert with a national lay commission granted independent authority, to seek the truth. Yesterday, I reaffirmed the call for a prompt and thorough examination into how the grave moral failings of a brother bishop could have been tolerated for so long and proven no impediment to his advancement.

"The recent letter of Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò brings particular focus and urgency to this examination. The questions raised deserve answers that are conclusive and based on evidence. Without those answers, innocent men may be tainted by false accusation and the guilty may be left to repeat sins of the past. "I am eager for an audience with the Holy Father to earn his support for our plan of action. That plan includes more detailed proposals to: seek out these answers, make reporting of abuse and misconduct by bishops easier, and improve procedures for resolving complaints against bishops. I am confident Pope Francis shares our desire for greater effectiveness and transparency in the matter of disciplining bishops. We renew our fraternal affection for the Holy Father in these difficult days.

"To the survivors of abuse and the families who have lost a loved one to abuse, I am sorry. You are no longer alone. Since 2002, hundreds of professionally trained staff across the country have been working with the Church to support survivors and prevent future abuse. Nationwide, the Church has a zero-tolerance policy toward priests and deacons who abuse, safe environment training, background checks for those working around children, victim assistance, coordinators, prompt reporting to civil authorities, and lay review boards in dioceses. "In other ways, we have failed you. This is especially true for adults being sexually harassed by those in positions of power, and for any abuse or harassment perpetrated by a Bishop. We will do better. The more she is buffeted by storms, the more I am reminded that the Church's firm foundation is Jesus Christ. The failures of men cannot diminish the light of the Gospel. Lord, by the help of your mercy, show us the way to salvation."

As this story continues to unfold, we pray for the healing of all victims of sexual abuse and for the grace of the Holy Spirit for renewal and purification in our Church.

God bless,

Fr. Joe