

Sexual Abuse of Minors  
20<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B  
19 August 2018  
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It took just days for things to collapse. It took just days for the Catholic bishops of the United States to lose what credibility and moral authority they had left, with the revealing of the disgusting collusion between bishops and priests to exploit children, youth, and young adults for their own filthy pleasures.

It began about three weeks ago with the unfolding of the sordid history of the former Archbishop of Washington DC, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick - or "Uncle Ted" as he asked his victims to call him. Despite years - decades - of Uncle Ted exploiting kids, teenagers, and adult seminarians, Uncle Ted kept being given greater and greater responsibilities until Uncle Ted was made Archbishop of Washington, DC and a Cardinal, an elector of the Pope - Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, one of the most powerful men in the Church. Thanks be to God, some Church officials in the Archdiocese of New York finally took seriously the stories of two victims, and from that everything else he had done came to light. Now Cardinal McCarrick is no longer a cardinal; he essentially is under house arrest; and he faces a Church trial which most certainly will end with his being removed from the priesthood. All within three weeks.

The problem is - all through the decades, other bishops knew what Cardinal McCarrick was doing, and said nothing. Or other bishops heard rumors, and did nothing. You'd think that even if it was only the smoke of rumors, there was so much smoke that some bishop would investigate to see if there was a fire! But no. The bishops did nothing.

Then, on Tuesday, the grand jury in Pennsylvania released the report of its investigation into six Catholic dioceses. Over a period of seventy years, at least 1,000 victims of 300 priests in situations in which their bishops weren't just silent; their bishops were complicit in the cover-up, a grand collusion. And that is in just one state.

In our Archdiocese of Seattle, since 2002 I have been the Archbishop's prosecutor of priests who abuse children and youth. Working alongside the civil authorities, since just because a priest

is put in prison, he doesn't stop being a priest: only the Church can do to that. And when the civil authorities can't act, the Church can. In every case we have prosecuted, the offender was prevented from ever again functioning as a priest – forever – even while his fellow priests, *my fellow priests*, were making excuses for these evil priests. So it *can* be done, if the bishop has the resolve. This has happened in some other dioceses, the Diocese of Tucson among them, but in too few dioceses.

Now the United States bishops are offering apologies and making resolutions that this will not happen again. But we've heard these apologies and resolutions before, in 2002, when the same scandal broke in the Archdiocese of Boston. What has changed in sixteen years? **Nothing!**

Despite some places where the crisis was taken seriously, I don't think most bishops have the moral resolve or fortitude to carry out real change. Even Pope Francis has had his failures in this matter. I'd be glad to be proven wrong; I doubt I will be.

It is up to us to bring about change. Once just a few women in Hollywood began talking publicly about the nasty deeds of Harvey Weinstein, things people knew about but didn't say openly, the degradation and exploitation of people throughout the entertainment industry was exposed and changes began. We can do the same for our Church!

What can *we* do? We can take action on a spiritual level and on a corporal level. On the level of spiritual works, we can make works of reparation for the harm done the victims and the injury done the Church. In our Catholic faith, reparation means to repair and make up for the harm and injury caused by sins – in this case the harm caused by the sins of priests and bishops. We can make spiritual reparation for that harm, we can spiritually repair that harm, by taking time to pray for healing; by fasting one day a week or making another sacrifice and offering that for reparation; by spending time in front of the Blessed Sacrament, or reciting a rosary, and offering that for reparation. We can even offer our act of devotion in receiving Holy Communion as an act of reparation towards repairing the harm, and healing the victims *and* healing the Church. Those are some of the spiritual works we can do.

On the level of corporal works: keep up the pressure on the bishops and make your voice heard, so they get the message that we will not stand for this anymore. Every diocese has a website you can send an email through. You can mail real letters and postcards – and, yes, those *are* read: I

know, because after they are read I've had some of them passed on to me to compose a reply. You can call and leave a message with the bishop's secretary or receptionist - and those messages indeed come to the bishop, because - once again - after those messages are read by the bishop I've had some handed on to me to answer. Communicate in any way possible, and do not stop. Be relentless, so the bishops come to know that this is not going away.

What can the *bishops* do? The Twelve Apostles of Jesus are the original bishops of the Church. Our bishops today consider themselves the successors of those Twelve Apostle-Bishops. Of those Twelve Apostles, two of them betrayed Jesus: Judas Iscariot, by collaborating with the authorities to have Jesus arrested, and Peter, by three times denying he knew Jesus and was his follower. Judas never repented to Jesus. Whereas in the Gospel of Luke, the first person Jesus appears to after his resurrection is Peter. We don't know what was said in that private meeting between Peter and Jesus, but there must have been repentance, because later Peter makes reparation by telling Jesus three times that he loves him, to repair the three times Peter denied him. Judas did *not* repent, and died in despair and infamy. Peter wept for his sins and repented, and became the rock of leadership for Jesus' Church. If our bishops are the successors of the Twelve Apostles, the bishops must decide whether they want to go the way of Judas, or the way of Peter.