



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE *of* ALBANY

BISHOP SCHARFENBERGER: LAITY ARE “ESSENTIAL,” MUST LEAD ANY INVESTIGATION

August 6, 2018

Statement by Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany:

While I am heartened by my brother bishops proposing ways for our Church to take action in light of recent revelations – and I agree that a national panel should be commissioned, duly approved by the Holy See – I think we have reached a point where bishops alone investigating bishops is not the answer. To have credibility, a panel would have to be separated from any source of power whose trustworthiness might potentially be compromised.

It is time for us, I believe, to call forth the talents and charisms of our lay faithful, by virtue of their baptismal priesthood. Our lay people are not only willing to take on this much-needed role, but they are eager to help us make lasting reforms that will restore a level of trust that has been shattered yet again. In speaking with them, we all hear their passion for our universal Church, their devotion to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and their hunger for the truth. They are essential to the solution we seek.

What is needed now is an independent commission led by well-respected, faithful lay leaders who are beyond reproach, people whose role on such a panel will not serve to benefit them financially, politically, or personally. These will be people with a deep understanding of the Catholic faith, but without an axe to grind or an agenda to push. It will not be easy, but it will be worth every ounce of effort, energy, and candor we can muster.

We bishops want to rise to this challenge, which may well be our last opportunity considering all that has happened. We must get this right. I am confident we can find a way to look outside ourselves, to put this in the hands of the Holy Spirit, and to entrust our very capable lay people, who have stood with us through very difficult times, to help us do the right thing. We need an investigation — the scope of which is not yet defined but must be defined — and it must be timely, transparent and credible.

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