



Rev. January 9, 2009

ON THE SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 2002 SEXUAL ABUSE DISCLOSURES IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL CALLS ON ALL BISHOPS TO EXAMINE THEIR CONSCIENCES, AND WHERE FAULT EXISTS, TO RESIGN THEIR OFFICES.

The Catholic Church now stands seven years after the latest wave of public revelations of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in the U.S. appeared in the pages of the *Boston Globe*. By general consensus, the scandal caused by thousands of predator priests and compounded by bishops who secretly aided and abetted their repeated abuse has become the greatest scandal to confront the Church since the Reformation. To date, only one member of the U.S. hierarchy, Bernard Cardinal Law of Boston, has stepped down from office. Rather than being punished by the Vatican for clear crimes of omission and commission, Cardinal Law was rewarded with a sinecure in Rome, exposing our Church to ridicule and charges of hypocrisy.

Many predator priests have been removed from their positions or are under investigation. Much more work remains to be done in this regard. But no one believes that Cardinal Law was the only member of the American hierarchy responsible for the transfers and protection of predator priests. Why, seven years later, have others not resigned, especially in light of the call by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI that “those responsible for these evils must be brought to justice.” Many concerned Catholics ask how we are expected to have confidence in our bishops, and how our Church can stand as a moral beacon to the world, when so many bishops who repeatedly and secretly transferred known predators have not been held accountable? Without justice for the abused and accountability from the bishops, this crisis will continue to plague our Church.

We the Voice of the Faithful, speaking on behalf of our 30,000 members in the U.S. and around the world, have come to recognize that the Church can never recover from this scandal until those priests and religious who abused children are identified and removed from their positions of trust and authority, and until those bishops and religious superiors who secretly protected or enabled abusers to hurt children resign their offices. We do not make such a statement lightly, for we understand the turmoil such actions will entail. We nevertheless are convinced that until we undergo this painful process of purification, confidence in the leadership of our Church will not be restored, and the moral authority of the Catholic Church will remain fundamentally compromised.

A General Call for Examination of Conscience And Resignation Where Culpability Exists

We therefore call openly and explicitly upon all Catholic bishops and superiors of religious orders of men or women who do hold or have held positions of authority to examine their consciences in light of Canon Law 1389 (§2) which states that “A person who, through culpable negligence, unlawfully and with harm to another, performs or omits an act of ecclesiastical power or ministry or office, is to be punished with a just penalty.”

After an honest and candid examination of their culpability, whether through actions or failures to act, **we ask those authorities that failed to protect the well-being of our children by knowingly and secretly transferring predator priests from parish to parish without informing the laity of the reasons for such transfers to resign their current office before June 30, 2009.** In our view, any secret transfer constitutes prima facie evidence that, regardless of the professional advice or counsel they may have received, such bishops and other religious authorities, by acting in secret, put the interests of the institutional Church before the safety of its people and their children.

In addition to requesting all such resignations, we call on these bishops to acknowledge personally and publicly their involvement in the sexual abuse crisis, and to ask for forgiveness from the survivors and their families who were so badly wounded by their decisions.

In cases where bishops, despite the weight of the evidence against them, refuse to resign their office, we call on the Holy Father to request their resignations. At the same time, we ask the laity of the Catholic Church, whether the people of the diocese(s) where the abuses occurred, or laity in those jurisdictions where these bishops now hold authority, to petition the Holy Father on or before December 31, 2009 for their resignation as just punishment for violation of Canon 1389 S 2.

Selected Instances

Who can sit in just judgment on the actions or inactions of so many, particularly when so many church records have been kept secret from public view? At the same time, who can ignore those specific cases where the public record is available to all the world? In several instances, the record is clear, whether in public documents, court testimony, or multiple accounts of survivors. In such cases, the bishop in question has a clear obligation to the Body of Christ to resign.

By way of illustration, consider the following specific cases:

1. **Bernard Cardinal Law** implicitly acknowledged his guilt by resigning his office as Archbishop of Boston under the pressure of public outrage in late 2002. We now call upon him to resign explicitly and formally from all official, titular or honorary positions of the Catholic Church.

2. **Bishop William F. Murphy**, presently head of the Diocese of Rockville Centre in Garden City, New York, previously served under Cardinal Law in the Archdiocese of Boston, and was directly involved in the assignment and transfer of priests there. A Report by the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, dated July 23, 2003, on the sexual abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, concluded that "There is overwhelming evidence that for many years Cardinal Law and his senior managers had direct, actual knowledge that substantial numbers of children in the Archdiocese had been sexually abused by substantial numbers of priests. Any claim by the Cardinal or the Archdiocese's senior managers that they did not know about the abuse suffered by, or the continuing threat to, children in the Archdiocese is simply not credible." (P. 25) The report further concludes that: "Top Archdiocese officials regularly addressed and supported the perceived needs of offending priests more than the needs of children who had been, or were at risk of being, abused." The report further states that "...even with undeniable information available to him on the risk of recidivism, Bishop Murphy continued to place a higher priority on preventing scandal and providing support to alleged abusers than on protecting children from sexual abuse." In light of these findings, we call on Bishop Murphy in good conscience to resign his current position.

3. **Francis Cardinal George** of Chicago has testified under oath in a court deposition that in 2006, long after the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops that he now serves as president instituted clear and explicit guidelines for the reporting of sexual abuse to public authorities, he decided to ignore such guidelines, placing the interests of priests above the safety of the people he is in office to protect. As a consequence of his decisions, it is absolutely clear and a matter of public record that one priest, since convicted, was able to continue abusing children. In light of these known facts and sworn testimony, we believe Cardinal George must in good conscience resign his position as Archbishop of Chicago and as President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

4. **Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk** of Cincinnati, Ohio, pleaded no contest in 2003 on behalf of the Archdiocese for its failure to report felony acts of sexual abuse in 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981 and 1982, making Cincinnati the first diocese in the U.S. to be convicted in connection with clergy sexual abuse. Archbishop Pilarczyk was not in a position of authority in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati during the years when the archdiocese, according to Hamilton County Prosecutor Mike Allen, "knowingly failed to report" sex crimes involving minors and members of the archdiocese. However, Pilarczyk was the sitting ordinary during the 18-month investigation during which the archdiocese repeatedly asserted that it had reported all crimes to the authority, when the court clearly found that the

archdiocese had not reported such crimes. Pilarczyk was the sitting ordinary responsible for the implementation of a legal strategy built on lies. In light of his plea, we call on Archbishop Pilarczyk in good conscience to resign his current position.

5. Bishop John B. McCormack, currently the Bishop of the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire, was formerly a priest in the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, where he was directly involved in the evaluation of many cases of sexual abuse. During his years of service in Boston, he worked in close contact with or in positions of authority over several priests revealed to be notorious serial predators, including the Rev. Joseph E. Birmingham the Rev. John Geoghan and the Rev. Paul Shanley. In a court deposition, the Jesuit psychiatrist Dr. Edwin Cassem testified that McCormack deceived him by failing to share critical information about past abuse by priests such as Shanley, leading Cassem to make inappropriate recommendations about treatment. Written evidence shows that McCormack was aware of abuse by John Geoghan four years before McCormack admitted knowing such facts. Although Sr. Catherine Mulkerrin recommended repeatedly to McCormack in 1992-1994 that parishes where allegedly abusive priests had served should be notified of allegations, no such notifications were ever made. Survivor depositions place McCormack in the St. James Rectory in Salem, where sexual abuse occurred, and in conversation with Rev. Joseph Birmingham in full view of the victim on Birmingham's bed. Despite this record, which includes many other documented lies, dodges and disavowals, McCormack said to parishioners in New Hampshire in 2004, "I have apologized for what I have done and failed to do, and acknowledged that my responses to people who reported being harmed were inadequate." In light of his extensive record of failing to protect children, and in recognition of his own admission of culpability, we call upon Bishop McCormack to resign his office.

6. Roger Cardinal Mahony, currently the Archbishop of Los Angeles, was the Bishop of Diocese of Stockton, California from 1980-1985. During this time, a priest named Oliver O'Grady was working under the supervision of Mahony. As documented in the film "Deliver Us from Evil," O'Grady subsequently acknowledged repeated notorious acts of sexual abuse of minors. In a 2004 videotaped court deposition, Mahony repeatedly denied that his transfers of O'Grady from parish to parish were a consequence of O'Grady's sexual abuse of children under his care. Mahony was evasive and unresponsive under direct questioning by public authorities during this lengthy deposition. In subsequent legal proceedings involving the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Mahony employed similar strategies of evasion, delay and denial over many months before finally agreeing to a financial settlement with survivors. In light of his tortured legalistic efforts to avoid any admission of culpability, we call on Cardinal Mahony in good conscience to resign his current position.

Other Church Authorities throughout the World

Many more such instances are becoming public over the course of time. Consider only the latest example, in the tragic failures of Doctor John Magee, Bishop of Cloyne in Ireland, to adhere to public reporting requirements in that nation. To date, public reports of the sexual abuse scandal have largely focused on Australia, Canada, Ireland and the U.S. Sexual abuse is manifestly an institutional problem in the Catholic Church, and so it is only reasonable to surmise that the problem will be found wherever the institution exists. For this reason, our call is a universal one, issued to all bishops of the Church worldwide.

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Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) is a worldwide movement of concerned, mainstream Catholics formed in 2002 in response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis. Our Mission is to provide a prayerful voice, attentive to the Spirit, through which the faithful can actively participate in the governance and guidance of the Catholic Church. Our goals are to support survivors of clergy sexual abuse, support priests of integrity, and shape structural change within the Church.