

From Fr. Michael and Fr. Gary  
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The tragedy of clergy sexual abuse is back in the news again.

Over the past few weeks we learned of credible accusations against Archbishop Theodore McCarrick, who, for several decades was a prominent leader in the American Church.

On Tuesday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, a grand jury in Pennsylvania issued a report detailing clergy sexual abuse in six of the eight dioceses in Pennsylvania, covering abuse cases occurring over the course of 70 years, involving over 300 priests and more than 1000 child victims. The report also showed a pattern of cover-up that made clear that bishops and others in authority were more concerned with the protection of priests than they were with the protection of children.

This news has been devastating to us. As priests, this news has brought shame, hurt, guilt, sadness, and anger. Those who were in positions of leadership, who were ordained to bring to people the tender love of God, destroyed lives by their own criminal and sinful behavior towards children. Both the abusers and those who covered for them have participated in an evil that is almost unfathomable.

One of the most disturbing revelations of the past few weeks has been the abuse of power by bishops. The terrible fact is that in most of these cases, the clergy were focused more on the status and position of the Church than healing the damage and bringing justice to the injured children of God that were before them.

This past Monday, August 20<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis issued a letter in response to this crisis.

In his letter, the Pope, reflecting on the, “crimes that inflict deep wounds of pain and powerlessness, primarily among the victims, but also in their family members and in the larger community of believers and nonbelievers alike,” writes that “looking back to the past, no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient. Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared

to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated.”

And so we, as priests, share your feelings, as we have heard from many of you of your pain and outrage. And the lack of accountability for those who placed the protection of priests above the protection of children has scandalized us all.

Calls for an independent investigation of the Church in the United States by a team made up of lay people, has resonated with many in our Church and beyond.

We hope and pray that our leaders – our bishops, and our Holy Father – will have the courage to ask for such an investigation. At the same time, we have to admit the sad truth of the Holy Father’s words, that “no effort to beg pardon and to seek to repair the harm done will ever be sufficient.”

But, we are a people of hope. We hope, not because of our own efforts, but because we know God’s promise and God’s power. We know that there is nothing that can exhaust God’s healing love – a love that necessarily includes accountability and justice for those who commit crimes, and healing for those who have been harmed.

We pray for that healing now, and in the days to come – healing for the whole Body of Christ, and especially those who have been harmed by clergy sexual abuse.

God Bless You,  
Fr. Gary Lazzeroni and Fr. Michael Dion

P.S. We encourage all of you to participate in the Safe Environment training that has been instituted across the Archdiocese of Seattle and within our parish. While it is required for all priests, deacons, seminarians, paid staff, and for all volunteers who have contact with minors or vulnerable adults, by your participation you can help us stay vigilant and focused on the safety of those who need our protection the most.