

From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

I have been reading with a troubled heart about Cardinal Mccarrick due to charges of pedophilia against him . I have also been reading stories from across the United States including in Montana where bishops are asking parishes and the people in the pews to pay for all the lawsuits which have come about due to pedophilia and sexual abuse by the clergy. I know you have read these reports and heard these reports yourself and your hearts are troubled as well.

Cardinal Mccarrick has been ordered to resign from the College of Cardinals who choose the next pope and is to spend a life in prayer and penance. This was handed down by Pope Francis. But if Cardinal Mccarrick is convicted of any of these charges he should not be sheltered by the Vatican but rather have to answer to the laws in our country which may include imprisonment. The Holy Father should not protect a criminal as Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict did with Cardinal Law in Boston (who not only brought to Rome to escape prosecution because of his moving pedophile priests around when he should have called the police on them) but then was given directorship of St. Mary Major which is one of the four great basilicas of the Church in Rome. Scandalous!

I know we all grow tired of the scandals but I said several years ago when I wrote my series on this crisis that from the pope on down to the hierarchy we have a crisis of leadership in the Church and the pedophilia crisis is far from over. Sadly my prediction was correct. I ask you to read the following letter from the Bishop of Albany which is a brilliant synthesis of the crisis in leadership in our Church and I applaud this brave Bishop for his words of wisdom.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Jim Farrell

Pastor

My dear brothers in Christ,

A psalm-prayer this morning from the Office of the Hours reads: "Lord Jesus, you were rejected by your people, betrayed by the kiss of a friend, and deserted by your disciples. Give us the confidence that you had in the Father, and our salvation will be assured."

Like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, many of our faithful are now feeling betrayed and abandoned by their spiritual fathers, especially the bishops. Perhaps you share this feeling, too. No doubt you have been and will be hearing from our people about how shaken and discouraged they are over public revelations of despicable behavior on the part of a very popular and charismatic Cardinal with priests and seminarians in his care. One holy and faithful Catholic gentleman - a medical professional and a dear friend - texted me just this morning about his family's utter despondency over this and that the USCCB should disband itself: "(t)heir credibility is shot, probably for decades."

More words are not going to repair, let alone restore, the damage that has been done. Lawyering, pledges and changes in the bureaucratic structures and policy - however well intentioned - cannot do it either. I do not see how we can avoid what is really at the root of this crisis: sin and a retreat from holiness, specifically the holiness of an integral, truly human sexuality.

In negative terms, and as clearly and directly as I can repeat our Church teaching, it is a grave sin to be "sexually active" outside of a real marriage covenant. A cardinal is not excused from what a layperson or another member of the clergy is not. A member of the clergy who pledges to live a celibate life must remain as chaste in his relationship with all whom he serves as spouses within a marriage. This is what our faith teaches and what we are held to in practice. There is no "third way."

"Sexual activity" includes grooming and seduction - the kind of experience that one of our brothers tells of in a recent interview in America magazine that you may have seen. The psycho-

logical and spiritual destructiveness of such predatory behavior, really incestuous by a man who is held up as a spiritual father to a son in his care - even if not a minor - cannot be minimized or rationalized in any way. On that, it seems to me, we are experiencing an unusual unity amidst the many political and ecclesial tensions in our communities.

Abuse of authority - in this case, with strong sexual overtones - with vulnerable persons is hardly less reprehensible than the sexual abuse of minors, which the USCCB attempted to address in 2002. Unfortunately, at that time - something I never understood - the Charter did not go far enough so as to hold cardinals, archbishops and bishops equally, if not more, accountable than priests and deacons.

It is my belief that the vast majority of clergy - priests, deacons and bishops alike - live or, at least, are striving to live holy and admirable lifestyles. I am ashamed of those brothers, such as the Cardinal, who do not and have not. As your Bishop, you can be sure of my support for you and all the faithful during this very difficult time. As the Holy Spirit impels me, I will use every power my office holds on all levels at which I serve local and national, to further this charge.

We should be grateful for all of those who have come forward to expose these patterns of sin in the lives of some - as well the institutional sins of denial and suppression of those brave witnesses whose warnings went unheard or unheeded, so that some of the harm might have been prevented.

I hope and pray that others who may have suffered such traumatic experiences at the hands of their spiritual fathers will find the courage to say so. To you, if you are among them, and to them I offer my support and assistance in any way the resources I have can muster.

Let me be clear, however, in stating my firm conviction that this is, at heart, much more than a crisis of policies and procedures. We can - and I am confident that we will - strengthen the rules and regulations and sanctions against any trying to fly under the radar or to "get away with" such evil and destructive behaviors. But, at its heart, this is much more than a challenge of law enforcement; it is a profoundly spiritual crisis.

Blessed Pope Paul VI prophetically warned us in *Humanae Vitae* of the long-range consequences of the separation of sexuality and sexual behavior from the conjugal relationship. Contemporary culture in our part of the world now holds it normative that sex and sexual gratification between any consenting persons for any reason that their free wills allow is perfectly acceptable. This is not a sexuality befitting of human beings that responds to the need and true desire of every human person to be respected and loved fully and unconditionally.

All of us who are ordained to preach what the Church teaches must practice what we preach and teach. We also need to uphold what our faith proclaims about the gift and beauty of human sexuality, fully lived in its essential conjugal meaning. A culture of virtue and chastity - in short, personal holiness - rooted in a trusting and committed relationship with Jesus Christ is the path toward healing and wholeness, even as we seek to drive the evil behaviors among us from the womb of the Church.

Our preparation for the upcoming Eucharistic Congress on September 22nd, in the Shrine of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs, will be a time of spiritual renewal for all of us seeking to follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Master who was himself betrayed by his closest friends, but died for us to save us from ourselves and to offer us a way to living our humanity fully in this life and in the heaven to come.

I invoke upon you and all of those whom you lovingly serve, the Lord's blessing, through the intercession of Mary Immaculate, to whom our Diocese is consecrated.

In the peace of Christ that surpasses all understanding.

Your brother and servant in Christ,
+Edward B. Scharfenberger
Bishop of Albany