

The Pennsylvania Grand Jury report that was released last week describes gravely scandalous and unspeakable behavior by priests and bishops that has shaken the Church to her very core. The report is nine hundred pages long but I had to stop reading after almost two hundred because I became physically ill. The absolutely depraved and sickening accounts of abuse detailed in that report are truly horrific. This is a widespread epidemic and there is no getting around it.

I am tired of this. I am especially tired of seeing so many innocent boys, girls, and seminarians abused for years by the very people who have violated their sacred duties, and neglected the immense responsibility that comes with caring for and shepherding God's children.

The prophet Jeremiah lets us know loud and clear that God will not stand for this, and that He will hold bishops and priests accountable for how they lead the faithful entrusted to them: "Woe to the shepherds," the prophet says, "who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! You have scattered my sheep and driven them away. You have not cared for them, but I will take care to punish your evil deeds."¹ Our Lord Jesus Christ confirms this when he said, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and be drowned in the depth of the sea."²

Let's be clear about what the issue is. The hierarchy of the Church is infested with the cancer of moral depravity. This cancer has spread throughout the Church's leadership around the world and has deep roots... and it needs to be destroyed. It needs to be dug up, torn out by the roots, and sprayed with weed killer so that it never grows back.

¹Jeremiah 23:1-3.

² Matthew 18:6.

In other words, we need to focus our hearts, minds, and lives on Jesus, who destroyed the weeds of sin on the cross with His precious blood. The bishops and priests who have committed such heinous crimes have taken their eyes off of the cross and we need to remind them that they, like us, are to pick up the cross and follow Christ!

The crisis the Church is facing stems from the fact that “for far too long we have diminished the reality of sin—we have refused to call sin a sin—and we have excused sin in the name of a mistaken notion of mercy. In our efforts to be open to the world we have become all too willing to abandon the Way, the Truth, and the Life. In order to avoid causing offense”³ we opt for political correctness, where becoming “meaningful” and “relevant” means being liked and accepted by the culture.

“The [still] deeper crisis that must be addressed is the license for sin to have a home in individuals at every level of the Church. There is a certain comfort level for sin that has come to pervade our teaching, our preaching, our decision making, and our very way of living.”⁴ In short, we’ve become too comfortable and if we are to overcome the power of sin we, like Christ crucified, need to get uncomfortable!

We must become so filled with the love and joy of Jesus Christ that there is no room left for sin to hide. “The Church [founded by Christ] must be a place where sinners can turn to be reconciled.”⁵ The Church’s guiding principle is this: **we love everyone but we always don’t love their actions, and we judge actions, we never judge people.** “To be clear, in the specific situations [that we are dealing with today], we are talking about deviant sexual—almost exclusively homosexual—acts by clerics. We’re also talking

³ Most Reverend Robert C. Morlino, Bishop of Madison, Letter to Diocese issued 18 August 2018, page 2.

⁴ Most Reverend Robert C. Morlino, Bishop of Madison, Letter to Diocese issued 18 August 2018, page 2.

⁵ Most Reverend Robert C. Morlino, Bishop of Madison, Letter to Diocese issued 18 August 2018, page 2.

about homosexual propositions and abuses against seminarians and young priests by powerful priests, bishops, and cardinals. We are talking about acts and actions which are not only in violation of the sacred promises made by some ... but also are in violation of the natural moral law. To call it anything else would be deceitful and would only ignore the problem further. [...] Until recently, the problems of the Church have been painted purely as a problem of pedophilia—this despite clear evidence to the contrary. It is time to be honest that the problems are both. [...] It is time to admit that there is a homosexual subculture within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church that is wreaking great devastation in the vineyard of the Lord.”⁶ Again, I am talking about actions and behavior, not people.

So what *can* be done? Here’s what should **not** happen:

1. Leaving it to the bishops to fix the problem: you don’t go to the person who gave you cancer and have them treat it.
2. Married priests. The sex abuse issues have absolutely nothing to do with priestly celibacy. If that were true, the crisis today would be priests having sexual affairs with adult women their own age.

Here is what **must** be done. [These are meant to be general principles, not an exhaustive list]:

1. First and foremost, we must always make sure the faithful are protected by strictly enforcing the Child Protection and Victim Assistance directives issued by the archdiocese, and involve law enforcement right from the beginning. The support and care for

⁶ Most Reverend Robert C. Morlino, Bishop of Madison, Letter to Diocese issued 18 August 2018, pages 2-3.

current victims, and the prevention of future victims, must be the top priority.

2. “The love and mercy which we are called to have even for the worst of sinners does not exclude holding them accountable for their actions through a punishment proportionate to the gravity of their offense.”⁷ Therefore, the pope should **immediately** remove from ministry all priests, bishops, and cardinals who—*where it has been verified*—have committed, participated in and covered-up sexual abuse, ignoring the protection of God’s faithful, **and** they should be criminally prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. The weeds need to be torn out by the roots. Period.
3. Establish an independent lay-lead task force commissioned by the Vatican to examine the scope, breadth, and depth of this crisis in great detail and make recommendations that will be taken seriously. They should be given full access to all personnel, resources, and materials they need to accomplish their task.
4. Ensure rigorous psychological testing and improve human formation programs for seminarians that are in line with Church teaching, **and** ensure that seminaries provide an atmosphere conducive to the holistic formation of holy priests, in the image of Christ.
5. Most priests and bishops are excellent and are doing outstanding work for God’s faithful, and we must acknowledge, thank and uplift them for their faithful service to the Church!
6. Finally, we also need to *pray and fast and offer sacrifices* for these good priests, for the clergy who have committed crimes, and

⁷ Most Reverend Robert C. Morlino, Bishop of Madison, Letter to Diocese issued 18 August 2018, page 3.
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especially for the victims, that they may find healing. Eucharistic Adoration and the rosary are very highly recommended!

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we must bring light of Christ into this present darkness. This scandal has caused many people to doubt their faith (and I don't blame them!) but the light is always stronger than the darkness. If all we do is curse the darkness, nothing will change. We must understand and appreciate the fact that what the Catholic Church *actually teaches* is true, good and beautiful despite the hypocrisy and contradiction of Church members who do not *actually live* the faith they profess. Personal sin and human weakness are not greater or more powerful than the strength of objective truth and God's merciful love. Priesthood means giving your life totally and completely to becoming the bridegroom—the husband—of Christ's bride the Church. Let us pray for an increase of shepherds who will have the courage to identify themselves with the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who offered himself in love for the world and who—through the great gift of himself to us in the Eucharist— leads us to everlasting life. †