

20B '18

**Watch carefully how you live, being wise,
trying to understand what is the will of the Lord**

*Look to the Lord that you may be radiant with joy,
and your faces not blush with shame*

We know that when we look to the Lord, we are filled with joy. We also know that when we turn away from the Lord, our faces blush with shame, as witnessed by the recent news of the church's covering up of abuse of children by priests. We clergy must hang our heads in shame.

Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese in the current issue of the National Catholic Reporter has an article on this titled, "*Pennsylvania grand jury report is a new low for Catholic Church.*" He offers four reasons why bishops have allowed this horrible situation to develop in the church.

- † The church's clerical culture blinds the clergy to the experience of the laity, including child abuse
- † Bishops were told by lawyers and insurance companies not to meet with the victims or their families
- † As late as 1992, bishops were told by psychologists that some priests were safe to return to ministry after treatment
- † Bishops did not want to scandalize the faithful. They also wanted to protect the dioceses' assets from lawsuits

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The following is a letter I received Friday from our Jesuit Provincial to be read by all Jesuits to the people we serve:

August 17, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

"As we read the news the results of the Grand Jury deliberations on sexual abuse by priests in Pennsylvania, we feel disgust, anger, disappointment, and disillusionment among other emotions. The numbers are staggering. It can feel that there is no end to this sinful abuse of authority by priests. It is behavior which is as far from Christ-like as we can imagine. We know now that this behavior springs from illness worthy of treatment as a disease, requiring highly complex, specialized treatment, focused on behavioral change, accountability, and relapse prevention.

"We pray for victims there and everywhere, for their healing from these terrible wounds, and for hope for us all.

"Meanwhile, I want to assure you that Jesuit West has a no-tolerance policy. We have had policies in place since 2002, the time when this issue reached a crescendo in our church, which require that we follow a strict protocol. In the situation when a complaint of sexual abuse of a minor is received, the provincial takes appropriate steps in the removal of that Jesuit from ministry while an investigation ensues.

"Every report of child abuse by a Jesuit is subject to a mandated report to law enforcement and investigation to the degree possible. It is then presented to our Review Board. Our Review Board, composed of competent lay persons in the fields of psychology, law-enforcement, education, and other administrations, assesses an allegation and advises on the disposition of cases in internal investigations, advises on the response to the victim, and makes recommendations to the provincial regarding the disposition of the Jesuit. No Jesuit who poses a risk for abuse is allowed to continue in ministry.

"If you or anyone you know has felt victimized by a Jesuit at any time, please contact Victims Associate Advocate at 408-893-8398 or website: mppanighetti@jesuit.org. They will reach out to you and speak with you, and we will then engage our protocols.

"We pray for forgiveness and atonement for the harm inflicted upon some of the most innocent members of our society, and for the deep sin against God and the church. With prayers, Scott Santarosa, SJ. Provincial"

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Let me read an oped written by Oblate Fr. Ronald Rolheizer back in 2003 which I shared here in 2012. He titled it, "*On Carrying a Scandal Biblically.*"

"How does the church hierarchy carry the church sexual scandal biblically? The hierarchy needs to name the abuse by the church properly and openly. This scandal, this particular time in our history as a Catholic Church in America, is a moment of humiliation, of humbling, of pruning. The clergy must begin the process of healing by clearly and with courage naming that - and then not, through defensiveness or personal distancing, try to escape the humiliation and what that calls us to. The biblical tradition asks of us at this moment to radiate the compassion of Christ. It must go out first towards the victim. The cross itself teaches us this. It highlights the excluded one, the one who has been hurt. Empathy must always move first to the victim.

"Carrying this scandal biblically means that healing and reconciliation, not self-protection and security, must be our first preoccupation. Second, it's too easy to blame the media and press in all this. They are not the problem; in fact they are rendering us, the church and the world, a great service, irrespective of how painful this is. We don't kill the reporter for reporting bad weather.

"Carrying this scandal is something that the church is invited to do right now for the sake of the culture. Priests represent a small percent of the overall problem of pedophilia abuse, but it hits the front pages. This is not a bad thing. If this helps society by bringing the issue of pedophilia into the open, then we are offering ourselves as "food for the world," just as Jesus gave his life for the world. Crucifixions are never easy, and they exact real blood. We are being pruned, humbled, and brought back to where we're supposed to be - with the poor, the outcasts. This scandal is putting the clergy and the church where we belong, with the excluded ones, like Jesus who was crucified between two thieves.

"We are the church, all of us, and we need to carry this, all of us. We carry a tradition of nearly 4000 years, but not just the wonderful parts. We also stand in a tradition that carries murder, slavery, the inquisition, popes with mistresses, racism, sexism, infidelity of every sort, and pedophilia. We can't carry the grace and distance ourselves from the sin. We need to carry it all, as Jesus carried everything, grace and sin, good and bad, without protesting his innocence, who was innocent."

Speaking in union with all the Catholic clergy in this nation, I want to say to you that what we clergy have done is wrong, and - I am sorry.



Again, if you or anyone you know has felt victimized by a Jesuit at any time, please contact Victims Associate Advocate at

408-893-8398 or website: mppanighetti@jesuit.org.