



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF YOUNGSTOWN

August 22, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write to you today in light of the revelations concerning Archbishop Theodore McCarrick and the Attorney General's Report from Pennsylvania. Before writing, I wanted to gather as much information as possible about the events and carefully read the Grand Jury report in its entirety.

As a Catholic who loves the Church, as a priest and a bishop, I am thoroughly appalled, disgusted and angry about both revelations. We went through this in the early 2000s and should not have to go through this again.

The vast majority of priests are men of faith in God and dedication to the Gospel. These are men who bring the light of the Lord's Good News to you whenever you encounter them and who are there during the important moments of your lives and the lives of your families with the life-giving Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Matrimony and the Sacrament of the Sick. You and I trust those men with good reason but some of them have betrayed that trust in ways that are sickening and difficult to speak about in public. This betrayal is sinful, it is evil, and it is a crime where minors are involved.

I am very sorry that the Church has failed to act aggressively to eliminate this evil. As Pope Francis said: "We have abandoned the little ones." I want to stand with the victims of this tragedy and I humbly ask forgiveness for the grave mistakes the Church has made.

Words, however, are not enough. In light of this situation, what action can Church leadership take to resolve this problem and rebuild trust in the Church? We have all heard the term "accountability" in this context, but what does it mean? I would suggest three actions and will advocate for them at the Bishops' meeting in November.

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First, all Church-related lay people, priests or bishops who have engaged in the sexual abuse of anyone should immediately resign from ministry. I can assure you that to the best of my knowledge, there is no one in ministry in our diocese who has abused a child. If someone believes he or she has been abused, I urge that person to contact the civil authorities and/or Retired Sergeant Delphine Baldwin-Casey who is responsible for victim assistance in our Safe Environment office. Her number is 330-718-1388.

Second, after an investigation, any priest or bishop who actually had plausible and reliable information about Archbishop McCarrick's behavior but chose to disregard it or who participated in a cover up should be removed from office.

Third, we, the bishops of the United States, with the approval of the Holy See, should create a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) similar to the one established in South Africa after apartheid. The TRC was a restorative justice body. Witnesses were invited to recount their experiences. Perpetrators of violence could also give testimony and request forgiveness. In the U.S. Church, this Commission should be comprised mainly of competent lay people.

The Gospel tells us that "The truth shall set us free." From experience, I believe that. Only after we, laity and clergy, courageously confront the truth of the cause of this scourge, whatever it may be, can we begin to reconcile and heal the victims and our wounded Church.

Finally, I know that some Catholics have decided to withdraw from the Church because of this scandal. I understand your revulsion. I also believe, however, that in this very difficult time, the Church needs you. The entire Church needs to be strengthened by your resolve to expose corruption and we need your faithful hope and commitment to renew the Church. That is why I ask you to remain among us.

Please join me in praying for the victims, for our Holy Father Pope Francis, and for faithful priests and bishops. Working together with undaunted courage, let us take bold steps to defeat this evil.

With gratitude for your prayers during my recent illness and with the promise of prayers for you and your families, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. V. Murry SJ". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend George V. Murry, SJ
Bishop of Youngstown