

*“Pray for Church leaders to choose painful but real accountability. Be a man and resign if you knew something and did nothing. Start talking to authorities. Unfortunately, such abettors usually don’t. No more ‘deeply saddened’ meaningless phrases. Prison for people who deserve it.”*

## **Where do we go from here?**

*By Fr. Brian P. Gannon, S.T.D.*

A key theme at recent weekday Masses is Jeremiah’s agonizing mission. That is, warning Israelites of impending doom, should they not reform from apathy, pagan worship, and immoral sexual practices. As his reward, this holy prophet was mocked, rejected, beaten.

How many times do holy saints speak truth about God’s love and the need to reject immorality and get treated as such? It is a warning by evil forces to all who seek truth: no reward, just misery here. But Christ reminds us: do not fear those who can kill the body, but those who can kill the soul.



It is all over the news. The former Cardinal archbishop of Washington, DC has been accused at least several times of sexually abusing minors, including one for years. That was before the dam burst. Then shocking stories in *The New York Times* and elsewhere by very dogged reporters told of horrific immoral behavior towards his seminarians while bishop in New Jersey. Two dioceses made hidden settlements after he was made cardinal.

To paraphrase one widely-respected canon lawyer: with no denial, the McCarrick people are conceding the stories as truth. Compounding the damage is that the ex-cardinal became one of the most public faces of the bishops during the abuse uproar of 2002-2003.

Where do we go from here?



First, let history inform. During the 12th century, during a time of known corruption in the Church, great saints arose like Francis of Assisi and Dominic who founded religious orders to combat heresy and to truly live the Gospel life. With corruption among some priests and bishops in the “Reformation,” again the most effective response was not despair, cynicism, but holiness: great saints like Teresa of Àvila, Ignatius of Loyola, and Philip Neri brought many back to the faith.

Greater commitment to God, not less, is always the answer. We need to restore greater reverence to the liturgy, and much stronger catechesis for the People of God. We have a crisis of faith, and we need to respond as such.

Next: pray for Church leaders to choose painful but real accountability. Be a man and resign if you knew something and did nothing. Start talking to authorities. Unfortunately, such abettors usually don't. No more "deeply saddened" meaningless phrases. Prison for people who deserve it.

Spiritual fathers need to assume the passions of a human father who discovers his child's abuse: they want to grab a baseball bat. No, I don't advocate violence, but Church leaders need not only to understand the anger, but need to react with real righteous anger. The silence from many bishops is deafening.

When, as the *New York Times* columnist (a Catholic convert) asserts, one realizes the extent of the evil, we logically conclude that others had to know, and did nothing. This is formal cooperation in evil. It allowed egregious sin, scandal, and sacrilege to continue.

This same reporter makes a very good point. The bishops have to decide. If they want to restore credibility, they must show powerful peer accountability. Otherwise, we risk irrelevance. This evil must be rooted out by serious investigation, and serious consequences for guilty priests and bishops who abetted such horrific behavior. One bishop has called for the ex-cardinal's laicization. If bishops break the law, they should face prison.

As a canon lawyer writes, such horrific behavior of a bishop does not merely amount to unchastity and grave sin, but becomes sacrilege, which accords serious supernatural damage to the Church's mission. Spiritually, because it damages the flow of God's grace into the world. Practically speaking, it wounds more deeply the credibility of the Church.



In this day and age of such sewerage pouring out of the Internet, of public mocking of God, the Church of Christ is needed more desperately to be the Light of the world. Perhaps forefront in Jesus' Divine mind were today's headlines: *Better for one to have a millstone wrapped around his neck and cast into the sea, than cause one of these little ones to sin.*

Consolingly, the Glory of the crucified and Risen Lord can never be destroyed. We cannot despair, Christ is Victorious!! The only solution: let us recommit more deeply to Our Blessed Lord's Holy Church. Go to the Adoration Chapel and pray!!

The more we disciples choose holiness, the more evil is diminished, and the more God's infinite Glory shines forth to heal, give hope, and lead us to eternity.

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