

Greetings Friends,

I am one of the victims whose story was published in the PA Grand Jury Report. Scranton Diocese. While publishing it was necessary, I'm sure many victims including me, were not expecting to see explicit details of what happened to us published for all the world to see. While names were not associated with the stories, reading my story online was devastating. Again, someone does something without my permission. Revictimization. I wish someone would have asked me . . . I feel for others who may be suffering through this.

However, I know it was necessary for a greater good and very long overdue.

Thankfully, I am blessed to have a great support system, including my husband and other family, as well as a great counselor and body worker.

As you know I have not been coming to Church for a while because it brings up so much anger and sadness. But I long for community and spirituality. I would love to celebrate with you, my friends. Another consequence of that man's actions so many years ago.

So I guess I just want you to know that there is a very real victim of the PA horror, right here in your midst. I would be willing to bet I'm not the only one. What are you willing to do to stand up for the victims and make sure nothing like this ever happens again? Is an attitude of *"not going to see this in our lifetime"* acceptable? Is *"It takes time to turn a big ship around"* OK?

Let the grief and anger sink in deeply...don't lose it in the news of the day... This is the time for the laity to take back the Church and restore it to what it was in the early years. My opinion is that nothing short of that is acceptable to restore the Church as the Body of Christ.

I'm not looking for responses - I trust the St. V's love - just please keep me in your prayers as the last several days have been really rough. I will also pray for you, my friends, that the Spirit will guide you.

With Love –

To my mind, the earthly miracle of Christianity is how, despite every obstacle and insult visited on them by the Church-in-Rome (pope, college of cardinals, curia, senior global archbishops), the everyday folks who are the church, have kept Christ's vision a living thing.

The Church-in-Rome -- for a millenia-and-a-half-and-more -- with billions of fine-sounding words, managed to project a vision of church tradition that protects them. And project the mistaken image that they, the Church-in-Rome, are "the church."

The Church-in-Rome is a bureaucracy. A bureaucracy's first instinct is self-preservation. More troubling, the Church-in-Rome has a millenia-and-more-long corruption virus running through it. By no means are all cardinals, archbishops and bishops affected by it.

Nonetheless, the disease is a constant mix of money-sex-power-privilege-and-self-protection. It is the apogee of misogyny and the Old Boys Club. Many cardinals really believe they are Medieval princes, capes and trains and all; that the church is a form of royal court where they can play out their ambitions.

Consequently, the Church-in-Rome is a bastion of privilege and presumed entitlement. And worse.

When, in the Irish Independent in 2011, Dublin archbishop Diarmuid Martin admitted there could be a "cabal" in the Vatican protecting sexual abusers, he wasn't referring to anything recently established.

There is no reason to think such protectionism didn't stretch back to the de Medicis, and earlier. With the exception of John XXIII we have witnessed a long line of popes who used church "tradition" to protect the status quo.

That traditional vision was evident when (under Paul VI) Vatican II approved *Gaudium et spes*, (Joy and Hope) the "Constitution on the Church in the Modern World." The London Tablet's cover read: "Neither *Gaudium* nor *Spes*."

The final point: that "tradition" reveals the enormity of the challenge Pope Francis has set himself to root out the virus, in his valiant efforts to truly reform the Church-in-Rome, and his efforts to explain to the world who is "the church."

My feelings are - enough is enough! The lack of integrity, common sense and solid mental health of many clergy involved in the operation of the Catholic Church is frightening. I realize it is a complex problem on all levels—local, national and globally.

It is time for parishes and laity to be involved in the important “checks and balances” of the Catholic Church—just like boards and committees have involvement and oversight with many organized religions and nonprofits.

Child abuse is only one problem the Catholic Church clergy and hierarchy has attempted to keep secretive. There are the secrets that are related to the lack of celibacy, priests who have stolen major money from their parishes, priest’s addiction to alcohol and drugs and the selling of drugs across state lines. How is the Catholic Church screening the mental health of its priests and leadership as well as how it is managing it from within? Not well enough, I would say.

It is time for laity to have more input and review of the processes and policies used at each level of operation. It is primarily the laity contribution of dollars over time that allows the Roman Catholic Church to exist. Yes, we are a religion—but we are a huge business with many services that must operate well. It is time for major reform in policies and procedures and also the need for more involvement of women in leadership roles as a part of it.

Audits came into being at the parish level when cash was being stolen—it took a long time for the audit process to be put into place. Now it is time to establish additional oversights and conduct a clergy leadership review in order to protect the vulnerable as well as the Catholic Church itself.

I hope St. Vincent’s will actively participate with other parishes in Maryland to voice the need for change and reform from the grass roots to the top—and not just about child sexual abuse.

Nothing counts unless the pope takes the required action. And he might not. Therefore nothing will change in our lifetime – except that pedophiles will be fewer in the Catholic Church for the clerical population will be less. The light we desperately hold on to at St V's is precious beyond telling. But it is only light, we haven't the numbers, nor the access, for heat.

We are a blip in Christian time.

Therefore we trust Jesus to keep the Christ-message alive as the Alt-Right Catholic wave succeeds the di' Medici-Trent wave. And a lone, totally alone leader, wonders what to do next. And we try to emulate St Francis. We fail, of course, but that's the human condition.

Blessings.

Our shepherds have failed us. They have lived off our milk. Their clothes come from us. They have eaten our meat. In return, God has appointed them to protect us. They didn't do it. They allowed us to scatter. Wolves have preyed on some of us. When their time of trial came, the shepherds protected themselves, not us.

I was stunned when I started to prepare this service and I read the reading from Ezekiel. It is so much on point. Normally, I comment on the readings and reflect on my own life and my own thoughts, but I don't really preach. When I read this passage from Ezekiel I felt called to preach. So just today I'm going to preach.

I won't say much about the abuse itself. What can be said. Our priests, our holy ones, defiled our children. They raped them. They sexually abused them. Short of murder and treason, it doesn't get any worse than that. It would be better for these priests if someone put a millstone around their neck and threw them into the sea.

I'm going to talk about the coverup by the bishops. God chose these men to lead the people. God chose these men to protect the people. It is a sacred trust. But when they were put to the test, they failed miserably.

Some bishops knew about priests who were raping children, and adults as well, and they facilitated more criminal acts by moving those priests from one parish to another. Others knew about the abuse but protected the child abusers from punishment even as they removed them from their duties. Even the bishops who had no contact with particular cases knew there was a widespread problem and didn't stop it. Every bishop knew. If there were any heroes among the bishops, we don't know about them.

The bishops chose to protect their money and their assets. They chose to protect their reputation. In doing so ruined their reputation. They chose to protect priests who were, and are, criminals. Why? Was it because of the priest shortage? Was it because, in some cases, these priests were their friends? Was it because that's how other bishops were handling it?

Their motivation doesn't matter. They have a sacred trust. They were to protect their people. They did not protect their people. They particularly failed the most vulnerable of their people.

This was not a matter of mistake or carelessness. The bishops deliberately chose to give a higher priority to protecting church assets and the reputation of the church and their own reputation and a lower priority to the safety of their people and a lower priority to justice and healing for the victims of these priests.

These were hard decisions with severe consequences. Doing the right thing would have brought a lot of pain to the church and to the bishops themselves. But the bishops were chosen to make these hard decisions. They knew they would face great trials and great tests when they took the job. They faced a great trial and a great test and they failed.

The duty of the bishops is a higher duty than an officer has to her or his soldiers, than a teacher has to students, than a CEO has to stockholders, than a politician has to constituents. These others also face difficult tests. But when they fail, they are court-martialed, or disciplined, or fired, or voted out of office. The best of them resign out of a sense of moral responsibility.

The bishops need to resign. All of them. If the pope wants to ask some of them to stay on, fine. But all of them need to admit culpability. All of them need to acknowledge that they deserve to be removed from their posts, even if the pope chooses not to remove them. All of them need to stop hiding information to protect themselves.

That may sound drastic, but it isn't. They'll live.

Which is better than what would have happened under Ezekiel's prophecy:

*"...because my shepherds did not look after my sheep,
but pastured themselves and did not pasture my sheep;
because of this, shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:
Thus says the Lord GOD: I swear I am coming against these shepherds."*