

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, President
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
3211 Fourth Street NE
Washington, DE 2001-1104

Dear Cardinal Di Nardo:

In the spirit of *sensus fidelium*, our parish has recently met together for a series of "town gatherings" to discuss the current pedophilia crisis in the Church. The situation is tragic, heartbreaking. The apologies echoed by the hierarchy have been a step in the right direction, but only a tiny one.

Cooperative actions based on the sensus fidelium rather than a monarchical model of Church authority, should include hand-in-hand laity/hierarchy working together. It might a wise choice now as we try to solve our current issues.. After all, the Holy Spirit does not limit her guidance only in a top-down direction. Indeed, we, all of us, are the Church. An example of how this did not happen was the contraception issue; the laity expressed its thoughts; they were not accepted, so we simply went our own way and followed our consciences.

Too often decisions made by the hierarchy have little or no input from the laity; often Bishops simply say, "Do this", and expect the laity to step up and obey whether there is relevancy to the contemporary lives of the laity or not. We are not little silent robots who don't think. We ARE the Church; we love the Church; for me, trying my best to live my faith and being part of the Church communion is the most important thing in my life.

It would be beneficial for the Bishops' Conference to focus on actions that enliven our faith, that project the Church as willing to make significant changes germane to modern life. There is an obvious need for the addition of both men and women priests and deacons with optional celibacy, as well as the inclusion of lay participation in all aspects of Church life. These changes would shout out, "Yes, the hierarchy is sincere; their actions prove it!"

Ms Lorna Patterson

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