

Provincial Perspective- Published Fall 2018

This is not a writing to which I have looked forward to presenting. Unfortunately, we as a church, have been silent too long. Our silence has only exacerbated the problems we face. This is, indeed, a time of crisis. The sexual abuse scandal has rocked us to our very core. I have a flurry of emotions when the topic is raised: anger, shame, rage, disappointment. All of these surface and certainly cause me to pause and reflect on our situation as Catholic Christians and on our relationship with the Church. The Church is and always been made up of simple human beings. Each of us bring with us our faith, our strengths and our faults. Sadly, over time things changed and people were taught that members of the clergy were not like everyone else. They were something a bit different- maybe even, for some, somewhat better and holier than lay people. That is certainly not the case.

For me, the greatest cause of anger and bitterness over this on-going scandal is the betrayal of trust. Parents entrust to us the most precious aspect of their lives- their children. It is a sacred responsibility to help parents shape and form these children as Christ would. That trust has been broken and violated by many people who have answered the call to serve in the Church. Fortunately, these predators are finally being recognized and removed from active ministry. Our bishops, archbishops and even cardinals are not exempt from guilt in this regard. Perhaps the greatest failing of the leadership is that they put protecting the name of the Church ahead of protecting the flock placed in their charge. This code of silence, this passing along of a predator from one flock to another only destroys. It destroys trust and it destroys credibility. In scripture, we see Jesus portrayed as the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd protects the flock not the wolves. Sadly, this has not been the case. I believe that those who have credible allegations or convictions of these horrible crimes should be removed from active ministry. Those who cover it up and knowingly pass the wolf along to another flock should be called upon to resign. If they do not, they too should be removed.

I have heard that many people have lost faith in the Church and are leaving. I find that sad because the Church belongs to the laity. It is your Church. It does not belong to the hierarchy nor the clergy it belongs to you. To leave it and the sacraments that Christ left us to inspire and sustain us should not be abandoned because of the actions of some.

An important thing to remember, as horrible as this scandal is, that the vast majority of clergy and religious are doing exactly what we were ordained to do and are living our vows daily.

Prayer is a powerful thing. It can move mountains and change stone-like hearts. I urge you, especially now, to pray for the victims of abuse, pray for the Church in this time of crisis. Pray too for the sinner. Pray for those working in the Church who are living the life we are called to live. Pray that Christ's Spirit touch the Church again with tongues of fire to purify and sanctify it once more.

May God continue to bless you, and may you pass that blessing on to others.

Rev. Daniel R. Hall, CSV
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