

THOUGHTS FROM YOUR PASTOR: Some Positive Progress on a Sensitive Issue

As the Body of Christ and as a parish family, all of us (myself included) were extremely shocked and angered a year ago when revelations came to light regarding the longtime immoral behavior of a particular former Archbishop of Washington. Also extremely concerning was the lack of controls and procedures in place that would hold bishops accountable, along with the complexities of a bureaucracy which prevented the attempts of those who tried to report their concerns from being sufficiently acted upon.

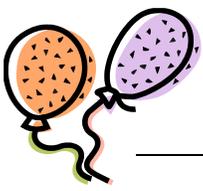
I can share with you that as a pastor who takes seriously our common mission to spread the Gospel and to bring souls to Jesus Christ, I couldn't help but shake my head in disbelief that we would have to go through yet more turmoil from the evil of abuse that we had, in fact, been making important strides to combat since its first iteration of 2002. In the intervening years, so much progress had been made at raising awareness, preventing abuse, and creating safe environments (through the "Protecting God's Children" program) that the Catholic Church actually became a leader in this area, and a model for other organizations to follow, many of which are still light-years behind us in preventing abuse. All priests, deacons, employees, and volunteers working with children have had to adhere to the 2002 measures. As a result, new cases of abuse have since plummeted to nearly zero. However, for whatever reason, those 2002 procedures apparently did not adequately include the situations that involve bishops, such as the now-laicized former Archbishop of Washington. It was a lacuna that has caused an immense amount of suffering for all of us committed to the Gospel and the safety of children.

Fortunately, the Vatican and the "U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops" ("USCCB") (the American bishops acting as one body) have recently finally taken some concrete steps to rectify this serious situation. I want to briefly explain what those steps are and where we currently stand in our quest to hold everyone accountable.

In May, Pope Francis issued a special document (a "motu proprio") titled "*Vos Estis Lux Mundi*" ("You Are the Light of the World") which addresses the concerns about bishops that came to light in last summer's crisis. Specifically, Pope Francis expanded the definition of "vulnerable person" such that not just minors under 18 are protected, but anyone over 18 who may not be able to resist coercive, immoral actions. Also, the Pope established a clear system for reporting accusations against bishops. This system is now clearly delineated, requires clear communication with the Vatican by investigators, and includes the assistance of qualified lay experts. The Pope's directives also make universal "required reporting" by clerics who become aware of instances of abuse, a practice already in place in the United States.

In order to implement Pope Francis' expectations, the United States' bishops (the USCCB) met in Baltimore the following month (in June) to hammer out the practical steps needed. Most notable is their document "*Directives for the Implementation of Vos Estis Lux Mundi Concerning Bishops and Their Equivalents*". This document creates clear guidelines on how to investigate accusations against bishops. Most notable are two features: 1) a strong emphasis on the use of lay experts in the process of receiving claims and investigating accusations, and 2) a strong desire to publish information widely on how victims can easily make a claim and obtain the help, healing, and assistance they need. The USCCB at its June meeting also generated two other documents. One is a "code of conduct" for bishops, and the other gives guidance on how more easily to restrict the actions of bishops who are removed from office due to abuse.

It seems that our U.S. Bishops (and the Vatican) are (finally!) taking some concrete steps to address the lacunae of the 2002 provisions against abuse and to respond to the crisis of last summer. As you recall, earlier this year, I asked us here in Hardin County to share our reactions to the crisis and our hopes for action by our Pope and our bishops. I appreciate all who responded to the "questionnaire" that I put together. I wanted to see what "next steps" our bishops would implement to give us a better idea of "where we stand" with this issue. Now that some sign of hope has come out of our hierarchy, and that we have a better idea of what solutions are being implemented, I hope in the coming weeks to share and discuss our local reactions (we are all suffering!) from the questionnaire, and to plan resources and ways on how we might heal from the attempts of the evil one to undermine the mission of the Church of Jesus Christ. I hope this "update" is helpful; please "stay tuned" for upcoming information and resources, and let's continue to hold each other in prayer as fellow disciples who, as so many saints have told us, must persevere in the "spiritual battle" against evil as we proclaim the light and the truth of the love of Jesus Christ and the salvation offered by God to all the world – including our children!



ICC SUMMER FESTIVAL

Sunday, August 11, 2019 – 10:00am - 9:00pm

St. Anthony Center Parking Lot
220 East North Street – Kenton, Ohio

Vic's Country Cooking
Chicken Dinners
11:30am – 7:00pm

Beer & Brats, Home Cooked Foods,
Snowcones, Cotton Candy,
Dietsch Brothers Ice Cream



ENTERTAINMENT

Noteworthy 3:00pm
Spittin' Image 5:00pm & 7:00pm
Bingo 12:00 – 5:00pm

Romick Railway Express

Enter for a chance to Win:
\$1500, \$500, \$250, \$100, \$50

Book Sale – Country Store – Theme Basket Raffle
Cake Wheel – Balloon Making – Bounce House
Games for all ages



◆ ◆ Lots of things to do – *Lots of ways to help!* ◆ ◆



- Sign up for a shift! Work at your favorite booth
- Sell Raffle Tickets!
- Bake cakes and pies!
- Help set up and tear down for the festival!
- Donate Books – Give to Country Store!
- Invite friends and family to come and enjoy our festival
- Pray for good weather and a successful festival.

Contact Festival Chair Kate Johnson or email Immaculate Conception Parish Office* by email to offer to help!

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