



*Voice of the Faithful
of Long Island*



Voice of the Faithful Once Again Calls on Bishop Murphy to Resign

The following statement is from a press release issued by Voice of the Faithful's National Office on January 13, 2009:

ON THE SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 2002 SEXUAL ABUSE DISCLOSURES IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL CALLS ON ALL BISHOPS TO EXAMINE THEIR CONSCIENCES, AND WHERE FAULT EXISTS, TO RESIGN THEIR OFFICES.

The Catholic Church now stands seven years after the latest wave of public revelations of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in the U.S. appeared in the pages of the *Boston Globe*. By general consensus, the scandal caused by thousands of predator priests and compounded by bishops who secretly aided and abetted their repeated abuse has become the greatest scandal to confront the Church since the Reformation. To date, only one member of the U.S. hierarchy, Bernard Cardinal Law of Boston, has stepped down from office. Rather than being punished by the Vatican for clear crimes of omission and commission, Cardinal Law was rewarded with a sinecure in Rome, exposing our Church to ridicule and charges of hypocrisy.

Many predator priests have been removed from their positions or are under investigation. Much more work remains to be done in this regard. But no one believes that Cardinal Law was the only member of the American hierarchy responsible for the transfers and protection of predator priests. Why, seven years later, have others not resigned, especially in light of the call by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI that "those responsible for these evils must be brought to justice." Many concerned Catholics ask how we are expected to have confidence in our bishops, and how our Church can stand as a moral beacon to the world, when so many bishops who repeatedly and secretly transferred known predators have not been held accountable? Without justice for the abused and accountability from the bishops, this crisis will continue to plague our Church.

We the Voice of the Faithful, speaking on behalf of our 30,000 members in the U.S. and around the world, have come to recognize that the Church can never recover from this scandal until those priests and religious who abused children are identified and removed from their positions of trust and authority, and until those bishops and religious superiors who secretly protected or enabled abusers

to hurt children resign their offices. We do not make such a statement lightly, for we understand the turmoil such actions will entail. We nevertheless are convinced that until we undergo this painful process of purification, confidence in the leadership of our Church will not be restored, and the moral authority of the Catholic Church will remain fundamentally compromised.

A General Call for Examination of Conscience And Resignation Where Culpability Exists

We therefore call openly and explicitly upon all Catholic bishops and superiors of religious orders of men or women who do hold or have held positions of authority to examine their consciences in light of Canon Law 1389 which states that “A person who, through culpable negligence, unlawfully and with harm to another, performs or omits an act of ecclesiastical power or ministry or office, is to be punished with a just penalty.”

(over)

(2)

After an honest and candid examination of their culpability, whether through actions or failures to act, **we ask those authorities that failed to protect the well-being of our children by knowingly and secretly transferring predator priests from parish to parish without informing the laity of the reasons for such transfers to resign their current office before June 30, 2009.**

In our view, any secret transfer constitutes prima facie evidence that, regardless of the professional advice or counsel they may have received, such bishops and other religious authorities, by acting in secret, put the interests of the institutional Church before the safety of its people and their children.

In addition to requesting all such resignations, we call on these bishops to acknowledge personally and publicly their involvement in the sexual abuse crisis, and to ask for forgiveness from the survivors and their families who were so badly wounded by their decisions.

In cases where bishops, despite the weight of the evidence against them, refuse to resign their office, we call on the Holy Father to request their resignations. At the same time, we ask the laity of the Catholic Church, whether the people of the diocese(s) where the abuses occurred, or laity in those jurisdictions where these bishops now hold authority, to petition the Holy Father on or before December 31, 2009 for their resignation as just punishment for violation of Canon 1389 S 2.

Selected Instances

Who can sit in just judgment on the actions or inactions of so many, particularly when so many church records have been kept secret from public view? At the same time, who can ignore those specific cases where the public record is available to all the world? In several instances, the record is clear, whether in public documents, court testimony, or multiple accounts of survivors. In such cases, the bishop in question has a clear obligation to the Body of Christ to resign.

Bishop William F. Murphy, presently head of the Diocese of Rockville Centre in Garden City, New York, previously served under Cardinal Law in the Archdiocese of Boston, and was directly involved in the assignment and transfer of priests there. A Report by the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, dated July 23, 2003, on the sexual abuse of children in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, concluded that "There is overwhelming evidence that for many years Cardinal Law and his senior managers had direct, actual knowledge that substantial numbers of children in the Archdiocese had been sexually abused by substantial numbers of priests. Any claim by the Cardinal or the Archdiocese's senior managers that they did not know about the abuse suffered by, or the continuing threat to, children in the Archdiocese is simply not credible." (P. 25) The report further concludes that: "Top Archdiocese officials regularly addressed and supported the perceived needs of offending priests more than the needs of children who had been, or were at risk of being, abused." The report further states that "...even with undeniable information available to him on the risk of recidivism, Bishop Murphy continued to place a higher priority on preventing scandal and providing support to alleged abusers than on protecting children from sexual abuse."

In light of these findings, we call on Bishop Murphy in good conscience to resign his current position.

votf-li.org