

# “A Bishop Goes to Confession”

By

**Tom Lloyd**

Member of the Long Island Voice of the Faithful Compliance Committee

March 29, 2010

## **Bishop:**

Bless me Father for I have sinned, it is a month since my last confession. I have no serious sins to confess but I would like to do penance for the grievous sins of my past life. As you know, all Bishops have been involved in covering up pedophiles. I covered up pedophiles because that was standard operating procedure in the church. I thought I was doing right, protecting the church. But it is now obvious that I was completely wrong. I violated the law of God and of Man. I am indirectly responsible for ruining the lives of countless children. Rome does not hold me guilty but I hold myself guilty. Worse than that, God holds me guilty. Since I have confessed these sins before, I know that God has forgiven me. But the victims of abuse have not forgiven me. Their parents haven't forgiven me. Even though God, in perfect mercy has forgiven me, I know I will stand outside the gates of Heaven for a very long time before I am allowed in and I am afraid of that punishment that awaits me.

## **Confessor:**

What do you think God is calling you to do? What would Jesus do?

## **Bishop:**

I don't know. Should I resign my position as Bishop? Should I go off to some monastery and do penance? Or should I just forget my sins and move on because the Church can use my talents. Should I open my secret files and risk excommunication for violation of the secrecy of the Pope? If I do what is right, the Pope and Canon Law will condemn me. If I don't do what is right I will be condemned by the people and by God. What should I do?

## **Confessor:**

Who is more important, God or the Pope? God's law or Canon law? What would Jesus do? What does Scripture call you to do?

## **Bishop:**

I don't know. For me the Pope is God on Earth. For me Canon Law is more important than any other law, it is the law I live by. I never thought that Canon Law violated God's law. I just automatically did what Canon law called for. Obviously, in hindsight that is wrong. I should have known that the teachings of Jesus come before Canon law and of course over-ride it. But by violating Canon Law I risk all in the church, my standing as a Bishop, my career, and my ability to become a Cardinal. It would be career suicide to confront Rome and violate the code of secrecy and Canon Law.

**Confessor:**

No question, if you violate Canon Law, you will be crucified, just as Jesus was crucified for crossing the Pharisees and the Sadducees. But Jesus did bring on his own crucifixion. Are you afraid of the crucifixion in your life?

**Bishop:**

Father, I am in a different position than Jesus Christ. He had no position or power in the Temple. He was nothing. I am a Bishop appointed by Rome. I am a CEO administering billions of dollars in assets, hospitals, property, cemeteries, Catholic Charities; this is big business, very big business. Jesus was just an itinerant preacher. I am more like the High priest of the Temple. The High Priest crucified Christ to maintain his power. The High Priest did not volunteer to take Christ's place and be crucified. No, I don't think it is possible for me to volunteer for crucifixion.

**Confessor:**

I think your comparison is valid. Obviously in your position of power and prestige, it is not possible for you to step down. What then do you think you should do to make amends for your transgressions against these children who were abused? As you implied, you will have to make amends in this life or the next, even though God has forgiven you your sins. What do you plan to do for penance?

**Bishop:**

I think I have already gone through hell. I am constantly attacked by SNAP and the Voice of the Faithful. They picket my Cathedral. They call the newspapers with any story to embarrass me. They have made my life on earth a hell. Isn't that penance enough? Further I have lost all chance of ever becoming a Cardinal. When I retire, I will probably have to go to Rome and hang out with Cardinal Law. I hope I die in office because there is nothing for me once I lose my position of authority and power. Isn't this penance enough?

**Confessor:**

I don't know. I don't know the hell that abused children are living each day because they were not protected. Instead the priests were protected. How do you intend to make reparations to the children who suffered abuse because of your decisions to move priests from parish to parish?

**Bishop:**

You have to understand that one of those priests was a family friend. My father asked me as a special favor to help that notorious pedophile. How could I refuse my own father? God forgives everyone and gives him or her another chance. How could I do less for this family friend?

**Confessor:**

Yes, God forgives every sin, even the most grievous. But God's mercy also has another side and it is God's justice. You will be forgiven for your sins just as you forgave your family friend. But in justice, you will have to make amends for your transgressions either in this life or the next. It was good of you to forgive your friend, but God's justice demanded that you do something to have this abusing priest pay for his sins. Justice demanded that, but you imposed no such

punishment as required by Canon law and civil law against this priest. In justice, before you face God and his justice, what do you think you have to do before you meet your Maker?

**Bishop:**

Father, I have devoted my life to the church. I work for relatively nothing. A CEO with my responsibilities would be paid in the millions. I have some perks like a mansion, a good supply of cigars and wine, a limo, and unlimited expense account, but I am not paid the millions I deserve. I have given this all up to serve God. In justice, I think I have more on the plus side of the justice scale than on the negative side. When I face God, I believe God will say "Thank you good and faithful servant" and that will outweigh any sins that I have committed.

**Confessor:**

Let's presume that each child's life you helped to ruin is worth \$10 million. If your actions helped some priests to abuse 100 children, we are talking about a billion dollars worth of lives. Have you given God a billion dollars worth of service?

**Bishop:**

Of course not, maybe \$20 or \$30 million in unpaid salary. But not a billion. You may have a point that the ledger is not in my favor. It is possible that when I face God there will be a big, unpaid debt due because of my sins of omission. But certainly God will reward me for protecting the Church from scandal. That counts for something, doesn't it?

**Confessor:**

I don't know. Only God knows how the ledger will be squared when you come face to face. What do you think the victims of abuse will have to say at your judgment, for certainly they will be called to give testimony before your sentencing? Will they show you any mercy in their remarks? Will they be convinced that your unpaid millions in salary and your protection of the Church far outweigh the misery and destruction you helped to bring into their lives?

**Bishop:**

I can't be responsible for all of that. I didn't abuse the kids. I made an administrative mistake in hindsight. But under Canon law I made no mistake. I did what every other Bishop was doing. Certainly I am not as guilty as the priests abusing the kids. Am I?

**Confessor:**

Some will testify at your judgment before God that you are more guilty. They will say the abusing priest was guilty for all the cases before he was discovered and the Bishop was guilty of all the cases that followed after the discovery. If that is true, what do you think you should do for all the cases of abuse you were responsible for?

**Bishop:**

I don't know. What can I do in my position as Bishop? I don't even know the names of the victims? Even if I did, what could I do for them? The lawyers for the church would let me do nothing, because in admitting guilt we could be sued for even more money. The Church would go broke. Rome would remove me. There is nothing I can do for the victims. Rome and the

lawyers have tied my hands. I like being Bishop and I am not going to do anything to jeopardize my position.

**Confessor:**

For your penance, you must do everything possible for every abused person. You must avoid going to court at all costs. You must come to a settlement with each victim. You must perform public penance. Each Holy Thursday you are to wash the feet of the abused, representatives of the abused, the representatives of SNAP and the Voice of the Faithful. You will do this as a public penance each year until you are no longer Bishop. May God forgive you and have mercy on your soul. I would not want to be in your shoes when I meet my God.

**Bishop:**

Oh my God I am heartily sorry for having offended thee...