

Throughout the world all Catholic
parishes are asked to celebrate Mass to pray for victims
& survivors of sexual abuse by people in authority in the
Church & to ask ^{for} forgiveness in the name of the Church
for our failures toward children & families. I know
this subject can be very controversial and so I realize
some may choose to leave it necessary & I respect
that choice.

I know there are parishioners who believe this is
not the place for such a discussion & they may believe
it is talked about too much and yet there are other
parishioners who would say it's about time we addressed
it at Mass.

I remember when this rampant abuse was first
made public in the 1990s and exploded in the Arch-
diocese of Boston in the early 2000s. I was at St.
Brendan Donohue & St. Vincent in Longmeadow & I remember
preaching often about the sin & crime of sexual abuse
within the Church. People needed & wanted it to be
addressed by their parish & their priests.

I believe then & now that we are not just talking
about an individual ^{severely} ~~seriously~~ harming a child

or teenager but also the covering up of the ²
crime by the institution itself. In other words
the ^{covering up} ~~concealing~~ of the crime was & is systemic. It
became part of the system & was acceptable to ^{many} ~~those~~
in authority, including bishops.

Some will say that even that short time ago,
we had no idea about the extent of damage done
to abuse victims & that the abuser ^{intended} ~~substantiated~~ could be cured
by counselling or therapy. Some ^{wanted} ~~wanted~~ to believe over
the years that ~~transference~~ would solve the problem.
But we now know how criminal those attitudes
were and are.

Confrontation with the Church had become so powerful
that it was allowed to handle its problems internally
& not be held accountable by the greater society!
Think about it, in those days everyone was Catholic -
the courts system, the police department, the newspapers -
nobody wanted to believe that a priest or the Church
itself could be sinful.

Think about this - if you believed that the
Church represented God on earth & that Jesus

was perfect, then in your mind the Church
had to be perfect - so anything that indicated
that wasn't true had to be hidden, covered up or
denied. That was allowed to happen +
encouraged by many in authority ^{including} ~~perhaps~~.

I am very aware that there ~~are~~ ^{may be} victims +
survivors in our congregation ^{today} ~~there~~ + I
personally thank you for your presence in the Church
+ your determination to challenge this institution
and all others to openly admit what was taken place
+ how we have failed to live up to the Gospel.
We are aware this morning of the many vicararies who
did not survive because of the impact of trauma
that led to substance abuse, living with emotional
pain + suicide. This Mass is in their memory.

I've come to the conclusion that when I haven't
experienced something in ^{my own} life, I need to listen
to those who have. The Catholic Church is called
to listen to ^{our people} ~~the~~ stories + respect them.

So in keeping with the recent death of Cardinal
^{in Rome}
Lawson the remarks made by Pope Francis in 9
Chile, there are survivors here in the U.S. +
throughout the world who are devastated once
again by their abuse + its coverup.

I realize there are many Catholic people
who feel betrayed and abandoned by the Church
because of the abuse itself + how it was handled.
Many of our strongest families have left the
Church as a result + have no desire to return.
I understand and respect their decision.
^{we have lost their trust + may never regain it.}
Many of these families continue to have a strong
faith in God but celebrate it apart from the
Church. It is a huge loss to us and we
are less because of their absence. But these
are the consequences + repercussions of being
held accountable by our people.

Most people believe the Church has now
removed those responsible for the abuse itself
but have not held those ^{in authority} responsible for

their decisions - making ~~accountable~~.
There is now a website called bishops
accountability.org dedicated to holding men
in ~~positions~~ ^{positions} of authority in the Church accountable
for their decisions + actions.

I have a great friend of mine who is a survivor.
She left the Church for many years & has recently
returned to celebrate her faith as a Catholic.

Her journey has been + continues to be painful
for her + those who love her. She is now advising
the Archdiocese + consulting with those ^{overseeing} ~~on the~~
our process of ~~protecting~~ ^{protecting} God's Children. I believe
she was involved in the planning for this
weekends Liturgies of Prayer + Penance.

I applaud her + thank her for her courageous
witness + the trust she has placed in me ^{personally}.

As one of the parishes of the Blue Hills Colla-
boration ^{agreement} ~~agreement~~ ^{support for}
to all victims + survivors of
child sexual abuse + as we pray for continued
healing in our Church we pay tribute

to all those harmed by our sin with
the following song written ^{for them} by Brother Michael
Henry in Australia.

* Timothy Shriver put it very clearly -

"If you can't trust the mes-
sengers, why trust the message?"

It is not too much to say that
the crisis in the Church is con-
tributing to a crisis of faith in
the gospel itself. This is not a
crisis of management or theology.
It is a crisis of the Spirit."