

Along with many others, I am heartbroken.

You have probably heard about the latest scandal in the sexual abuse crisis, which came to light in the United States involving former Washington Archbishop Theodore McCarrick. At eighty-eight years of age, he resigned as a Cardinal. The Pope removed him from ministry and imposed a sentence of seclusion in penance and prayer until a canonical trial takes place.

The alleged victims included young people, seminarians, and newly ordained priests. There is clear evidence of an abuse of power and trust as well as sexual crimes. Even more disconcerting are the reports that other churchmen knew of the archbishop's proclivities. Yet they did nothing to deal with the danger to young people's lives.

Learning about this high profile case of abuse in the Church, along with similar situations in Australia, Chile, and Honduras, causes me great distress. Many bishops, priests, and lay Catholics in the U.S. and in Canada are rightly angry, chagrined, and bewildered. This has been

particularly hard news on the great majority of faithful Catholic priests who live lives of virtue. How could a leader abuse his position and violate those who, in trust, looked up to him?

The scandal affects us all—in the Catholic Church and beyond. How can this not upset us? It involves a betrayal of trust and it wounds the hearts of Christians everywhere who hear the pain of the victims and question the integrity of the enablers who did not intervene.

Going forward, for the sake of the victims, it is important to seek the truth no matter how painful or shameful it is for us Church leaders. We have a responsibility to mobilise to prevent a recurrence. We must have the courage to see that the Church, in its humanity, continues to need purifying. Human beings make sinful choices and we must acknowledge this and do our best to prevent repeating the same behaviours.

We have an obligation to investigate allegations of abuse with transparency and integrity, to encourage victims to come forward to seek justice from the courts and from the Church, and to improve our structures and governance to the highest standards of accountability. This is happening across the Catholic world, even as we speak, but it

takes much work and our willingness to confront the ugliness without flinching or becoming defensive. We must walk in the light.

Civil and Church authorities are duty-bound to promptly address any abuse situation. There is no justification for hiding or covering up abuse. We must listen to victims and support them.

At my annual summer gathering of seminarians earlier this week, I spoke frankly on this matter. I reminded them that they have a right to live and study for priestly ministry in a safe environment and that they can and should report any approach of an unwanted sexual nature from anyone in the Church, including seminary formation staff all the way up to the archbishop's office.

Institutionally, we are adopting best practices from experts in the field. Nonetheless, we can all be part of the solution by praying for clarity to live the gospel in an authentic fashion, by encouraging victims who come forward, by participating in our parish's and diocese's safe environment protocols for ministry, and by acknowledging painful truths rather than ignoring or hiding them.

The Church's mission, which is Christ's, continues even when we contend with the brokenness of our humanity. Especially because of our woundedness, we have to witness to those who struggle, who suffer, and who search for life's true meaning and purpose.