

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

This week I begin my annual retreat with my brother bishops from Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. This is usually a welcome event for us to simply “come aside and rest a while” with Our Blessed Lord. I doubt, however, that we will be finding quiet rest and prayer as much as we will be sharing our deepest and profoundly sad feelings concerning the events that once again plunge the Church into a dark hour of shame and disappointment—especially in Her leadership.

The first news about Archbishop McCarrick was indeed shocking and upsetting. That sad news was followed by the revelations concerning the unraveling of the incredible and disgusting stories of sexual molestations that took place over the decades in so many parts of the Church in Pennsylvania. Of course, I am personally touched and deeply grieved by these events—not only because I am a bishop, but because so many of the faithful are being struck with the tragedy of having their faith assaulted once again.

I don’t know how many bishops and/or priests should or will be affected by the darkness of this new wave of scandal. I do believe that all of us need to try to remember that the devil never sleeps. He works some of his most diabolical evil on those who are weak and have lost their recognition of God’s Grace and care in human life. Never forget, the devil works in little things—he tells half-truths and lures us with tantalizing manipulations. Be aware of the deceiver’s work in this horror. St. Peter reminds us as he reminded our ancestors: “Be sober, be watchful; your adversary the devil prowls about the world seeking someone to devour: resist him, steadfast in the faith!” (1 Peter 5:8-10)

My brothers and sisters, be strong in your faith in these difficult days. Yes, there is sin and evil action abounding around us. Sadly, that evil has come about from some of the very shepherds who were supposed to protect us.

Yes, there still is sin in the world, even though the devil has been defeated by the power of the Cross of Christ. More than ever, we must cling to the cross, pray with the Scriptures, and receive the Sacraments. Continue to pray for good and holy priests. They need your prayers to remain courageous in these days. If we want good priests (and bishops) we must pray for them! Jesus told His First Priests that they were the salt of the earth—the light of the world. He called them to courage and virtue in living and preaching the Gospel.

I pray for you, dear brothers and sisters, especially for all who have been sadly touched—once again—by the sin and sadness of abuse in the Church and in the world at large. Remain faithful and strong—Jesus Christ has conquered evil. His is the Power. His is the Glory!

by Bishop William Callahan