Opinion



by Joshua J. McElwee

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Updated Aug. 15 at 10 p.m. central time to include additional information from Ed McFadden, communications cirector for the Archdiocese of Washington, concerning the website thewuerlrecord.com.

Today's focus is on the Aug. 14 release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, which looked into how six dioceses handled clergy sexual abuse over decades.

NCR's initial report: **Pennsylvania grand jury accuses over 300 priests of abuse, bishops of cover-up**

The U.S. bishops' response: 'We are shamed ... and sorry'

Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik: 'There was no cover up'

Erie Bishop Lawrence Persico: 'I want to express my sorrow and apologize'

Washington Cardinal Donald Wuerl, who served as bishop of Pittsburgh from 1988-2006, says the report"confirms that I acted with diligence, with concern for the victims and to prevent future acts of abuse."

The Washington Post reports: Cardinal Wuerl’s actions in Pittsburgh scrutinized by Catholic sexual abuse investigation

The Washington archdiocese has created a new website to present Wuerl's record on handling sexual abuse claims: thewuerlrecord.com UPDATE: Later Aug. 15, the archdiocese deleted this website. See below for details:

> Late Wednesday, Ed McFadden, Communications Director for the Archdiocese of Washington, put out the following statement on Facebook:
>
> So a few days ago, I had the bright idea to build a webpage that would provide reporters and others with information about Cardinal Wuerl's record in Pittsburgh.
>
> Despite the horrific details in the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report, child sex abuse at the hands of priests was a scourge he took on the best way he could in a time when, as the report makes clear, few other bishops were willing to do. We knew there would be criticism after the report was released, and rightly so, but we also wanted fair coverage, So the Archdiocese of Washington put up the page "Wuerl Record" so that reporters – who have not covered the Cardinal or the Church before – would have the full picture.
>
> In hindsight, it was a mistake, and the criticism leveled at me (though most folks didn't know it was me) was fair. The page was a distraction and there are far bigger issues to be addressed than a webpage. So we took the page down, and posted some of the material on our media page on the ADW website. As communicators we try to be transparent. The webpage was an effort to be transparent, and my taking it down and acknowledging that it is down is shared in the same spirit.
>
> Let's please pray for all those affected by this horror, the reopening of old wounds and the creation new ones, and that we may move forward toward healing.

The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) calls on Catholicsto "wake up and hold church officials accountable. Believe victims when they come forward."

The Washington Post's editorial: The scale of the Catholic Church's criminality still shocks

In other clergy abuse news:

- Boston, Lincoln open inquiries into misconduct among seminarians, priests
- The Chilean government has asked the Vatican for documents related to abuse cases in the country, in a request that came as prosecutors raided another church office in the Chilean capital.

And in non-sexual abuse tragedy news, a bridge in the northern Italian city of Genoa collapsed Aug. 14, killing at least 37 people

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