News



Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the Vatican nuncio to the United States, speaks Aug. 19 during the Rimini Meeting, an annual event sponsored by the Communion and Liberation movement. The U.S. bishops are "deeply committed" to facing the reality of clerical sexual abuse and the history of covering it up, said Pierre. (CNS /courtesy Rimini Meeting)

Cindy Wooden

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Vatican City — August 20, 2018
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The U.S. bishops are "deeply committed" to facing the reality of clerical sexual abuse and the history of covering it up, said the Vatican nuncio to the United States.

"All of us bishops, priests and members of the church must find a real response to the problem. Just a juridical or organizational response will not be enough to avoid evil," said the nuncio, Archbishop Christophe Pierre.

The archbishop made the comments at a news conference Aug. 19 in Rimini, Italy, before giving the opening address at the annual weeklong conference of the Communion and Liberation movement.

Responding to reporters, Pierre said he would have to be "very discreet" in talking about the crisis that began unfolding in June with the news that a church investigation found credible allegations that now-Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick abused a minor. That was followed by a series of revelations about sexual harassment and misconduct in some seminaries and, especially, with the release in August of a Pennsylvania grand jury report about decades of abuse and cover-ups in six dioceses.

In his formal talk to the "Rimini Meeting," the archbishop focused on the human search for happiness and how every Christian has an obligation to be a credible witness to the truth that happiness is found in experiencing God's love and striving to live according to God's will.

The "encounter with Christ happens in and through the church," the archbishop said. "There is an ecclesial dimension to the encounter. The pope calls the whole church to accept its responsibility for facilitating this personal experience of Jesus, who fills life with joy."

Advertisement

Departing from his prepared text, Pierre told the Communion and Liberation members: "We must never stand outside the church to judge her; we are the church. We all are responsible for the church, including when there are problems in the church."

A longtime Vatican diplomat who served in Haiti, Uganda and Mexico before being named nuncio to the United States, Pierre said that "no matter the country or nationality, no matter the wealth or poverty, many people are searching for happiness -- for that which corresponds to the deepest longings of the human heart. They are on a quest to discover the forces that move history, for these are the same that make man happy."

People try "to cope with our sin, weaknesses and inadequacies by filling our lives with things we think will satisfy us," he said. "For some people it is alcohol, drugs and pornography; for others it is wealth, power and the desire for human respect. We will take anything we can to help us feel better, but in the end, it doesn't satisfy."

The responsibility of the church and of each of its members, he said, is to find a way to offer people the possibility of encountering Christ so that their sins can be forgiven, and they can know true joy.

"Pope Francis calls us to move from a pastoral plan of self-preservation to one of intense missionary activity, capable of meeting the deepest needs of the human heart," the archbishop said. "His election at this point in history is truly providential because, with it, the church received a pastor who will push her to be a church of encounter, of mercy and witness, engaged in reality."