Opinion



by Heidi Schlumpf

View Author Profile

Follow on Twitter at @heidischlumpf

Join the Conversation

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

August 22, 2018
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

In what's being called President Trump's "Watergate moment," his former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, implicated the president in a federal crime, and his former campaign manager, Paul Manafort, was found guilty of bank and tax fraud yesterday.

Just days before Pope Francis is scheduled to arrive in Ireland for the World Meeting of Families, Irish abuse survivor Marie Collins told NCR Vatican correspondent Joshua McElwee that "history will judge Pope Francis on his actions, not his intentions" on the issue of sex abuse.

We kick off our "pre" coverage of the #WMOF2018 with coverage of a pre-event meant to highlight "Voices Pope Francis Won't Hear" (including NCR's own Jamie Manson).

Meanwhile, back in the U.S., some conservative bishops and Catholic groups are pinning the problems of clerical sex abuse on gay priests or sexual immorality, including a rejection of church teaching against artificial birth control. One bishop is even asking Catholics to alert him to any "unchaste behavior" on the part of priests.

In Milwaukee, conservative Catholic media are trying to stop a retreat for gay priests, brothers and deacons, and now the archbishop there is questioning it. But the retreat's facilitator, Fr. Bryan Massingale, says that such discrimination is precisely why the retreat is needed.

Columnist Michael Sean Winters warns Catholics not to be naïve about those who never before cared about victims of clergy sex abuse but are now calling for "episcopal scalps"—but only for those of bishops who support Pope Francis and his agenda.

Interested Catholics have until midnight tonight to sign this statement calling for the mass resignation of all U.S. bishops. Another appeal—which Catholics can also sign—has 12 more demands for bishops in addition to resignation, including working to lift statutes of limitations, publishing the cost of settlements and legal fees, supporting gay priests and including lay people in the selection of bishops.

The Jesuit University of Scranton is removing bishops' names from buildings and rescinding their honorary degrees, while Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubick will decide whether to permanently remove Cardinal Donald Wuerl's name from a local high school, after vandals spray painted over it on the school's sign. (A Change.org petition to remove Wuerl's name from the school has more than 7,000 signers, while another petition asking the pope to remove Wuerl has some 46,000 signatures.)

Some of the more powerful statements about the clergy sex abuse crisis this week include:

- The Leadership Conference of Women Religious, saying the grand jury report left it "sickened and ashamed of the church we love, trusted, and have committed our lives to serve."
- Pax Christi USA's statement, which asks "Can a church betrayed become a church redeemed?" and encourages local chapters to facilitate conversations in small and large groups.
- Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr, who calls for "reform of our very immature teaching in regard to sexuality in general, male power issues in particular, and our 'enforced' understanding of celibacy, which will predictably product this kind of result."

A clerical structure that separates clergy from laity is the root of the abuse of power we're seeing in the church, says feminist theologian Mary E. Hunt.

And, finally, when a solemnity and a scandal fall on the same day.

Yoga practitioners and Baptists are working together to oppose a natural gas compression station, while other faith communities are helping immigrants safely leave sanctuary in churches: all in this week's Justice Action Bulletin.

The body of a missing Iowa college student has been found, and an undocumented immigrant has been arrested for her murder. Already, politicians are using the sad story to whip up anti-immigrant fervor, but it turns out the suspect worked on a farm owned by a prominent Republican politician.

Advertisement