Opinion



by NCR Staff

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We are continuing to dive into the in-depth Vatican report on disgraced former cardinal Theodore McCarrick, which was finally released Nov. 10. All of NCR's coverage of the report can be found here. Following are letters to the editor about the report that have been edited for length and clarity. To join the conversation, follow the guidelines at the end of this post.

The physical abuse scandal in the Catholic Church is in the forefront as well it should remain. As one who prayed through this debacle in Philadelphia and who knew some of these men, it is imperative that we not let this fade away.

However, what about the other abuses? What about the abuse of women who are relegated to the servant role? What about the abuse of people of color when our "clerics" remain silent? What about the abuse of LGBT people who are considered beneath us?

This organizational church has a selective concept of abuse and that had to be forced on them. When we stand with the sheep and the goats, I know where the abused will be.

JANE FRANCISCO

Charlotte, North Carolina



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Evidently Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò has been acting against the papacy itself as well as Pope Francis specifically. I didn't know about his actions vis-a-vis Theodore McCarrick until I read your article.

When Francis came to America, he depended on the papal nuncio to vet the people who were invited to receptions and make sure there were no scandals. The visit was almost perfect and Francis earned the kudos he earned. He was applauded by Catholics, Protestants, Jews and everyone else. My friend and I were almost giddy.

Francis did everything right and Viganò torpedoed him. He invited Kim Davis to meet the pope. Davis had served jail time for dereliction of duty, for refusing to grant marriage licenses to LGBT couples in defiance of the law. Viganò's own homophobia was allowed to slop over on Francis. It was the only down moment and it's on Viganò, not on Francis. Fortunately, it cost him his job. It was lousy "staff work."

Good staff work involves smoothing the way for the executive who makes the decisions, researching alternatives and presenting options with back-up. It does not involve making clown faces during the executive's presentations, which the invitation to Davis seemed to parallel. Francis was right to remove him and his subsequent behavior, the dubia, indicates how off-the-reservation he is. He should admit he's damaged and retire.

KAREN SILVER

New Rochelle, New York

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The report proves that sacred bureaucracies are just as susceptible to corruption as secular ones.

But the tragedy here was that the Theodore McCarricks of the world hide behind the memory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Much damage can be done by those with the best of intentions.

GENE ROMAN

Bronx, New York

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In light of the fact that Pope John Paul II appointed Theodore McCarrick an archbishop and a cardinal despite being warned of his sexual misconduct, is it blasphemous, courageous or even possible that John Paul II be unsainted? Just asking.

PHIL AND LINDA MARCIN

Akron, Ohio

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In the article, "Vatican's explosive McCarrick report largely places blame on John Paul II," Theodore McCarrick's Vatican investigation went the way of so many others. The church claims a long history of great thinkers who developed a wealth of moral theology minutia yet little seems to have been applied to church hierarchy even until today. That in itself is enough to sink the excuses used to paper over the decisions of Pope John Paul II and others. Was "due diligence" done? The article content says "No." Were decisions made based on the "reasonable man" principle? Again, "No." What of an "arms length" transaction? Once again, "No." Rather, one can argue "willful ignorance."

No one was duped. Lies and half-truths based on "good ol' boy" clericalism was hard at work. The "gossip" network Pope Francis condemns was as hard at worth then as it is now — possibly more so. All one must do is follow the money. This is repeated time and again when favors are bought and sold throughout the church's history.

MICHAEL J. McDERMOTT

Tyler, Texas

Advertisement

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I enjoyed reading Michael Sean Winters' article on "What the McCarrick report tells us about the culture of the hierarchy," especially from the place where I sit — a non-practicing priest, tortured by his bishop for more than four years, and forced into a premature retirement after a forced removal as pastor in the middle of the night.

As a victim of abuse that continues to haunt me. There has been no abuse worse than the organizational abuse I have suffered for more than four years at the hands of the church I gave my life to.

Organizational abuse will no doubt be unable to find the near universal repulsion that the mere phrase "sexual abuse" has, but I assure you I speak for many when I

say that the organizational abuse suffered by priest's whose bishops reign as kings in their own little kingdom is very much in need of the church's attention, something the U.S. bishops' conference surely has no appetite for. Until bishops have some accountability to others, this problem will never change.

I echo the words of Cardinal Pietro Parolin quoted by Michael Sean Winters, for after four-plus years of torture, the church continues to be "not where it should have been," and it surely has "not acted in a timely manner, realizing the magnitude and the gravity of the damage done to so many lives." What has happened to me and to others is, as Winters states, is the result of "a hierarchic culture that [is] deeply, profoundly flawed," and I am not sure the church will ever really have the courage change for the better.

(Fr.) CHRISTOPHER SENK

Fort Myers, Florida

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In Michael Sean Winters column, the author states "Nor should anyone be surprised that such a limited investigation failed to yield very much evidence, and the Vatican had not received a credible allegation directly from a minor or an adult."

The author would do well to remember that in 1988 James Grein, one of Theodore McCarrick's "nephews," told Pope John Paul II that he had been sexually abused by McCarrick beginning in the late 1960s when he was age 11. He told the pontiff this in the presence of other Vatican officials. I would call this a credible allegation.

This was not an anonymous letter. This was no a letter at all. This was an adult who was in the pope's presence because McCarrick had brought him along on his trip to Rome. And Grein waited until McCarrick had left the room. To me, this is the most damning fact of the whole McCarrick affair. Grein was just ignored, by the pope and by curial officials. That was when an investigation should have been initiated.

In addition, to categorize the written responses of Bishops James McHugh and John M. Smith as "inaccurate" is to be kind both to the bishops and to the language. The bishops lied when they were asked if they had ever witnessed inappropriate

behavior by McCarrick. I don't think anyone would disagree that witnessing McCarrick with his hands on another man's crotch during dinner would be the very definition of "inappropriate."

PAUL KILEY

High Point, North Carolina

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