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Candor About Sex Abuse

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

According to news reports, one of the apostolic visitors to the Church in Ireland, Boston's Cardinal Sean O'Malley, has grasped the enormity of the challenge facing the Church in Ireland, reeling from charges of child abuse both physical and sexual, and is prepared to tell the Vatican that serious changes must be made if the Church in Ireland is to survive as a central part of Irish society and culture. The reports indicate that O'malley will specifically call for greater lay involvement in church decision-making, helping to end the culture of clericalism that took a sin and turned it into a scandal.

Regular readers will know that I have long been a fan of O'Malley. When he was named as the apostolic visitor to Dublin, I felt sorry for the man himself but hopeful for the Church in Ireland. The crisis there, like the crisis here, cannot be met with evasions, half-truths, willing naivete, or the kind of clinical denial we have seen so often. How refreshing to find a prelate who is forthright and clear in analyzing the problems.

As Mark Silk points out, however, one wonders how the American bishops would respond if an apostolic visitor made the same points about the Church in the U.S.

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Links:

[1] <https://www.ncronline.org/forward/join?clickSource=end-article>

[2] <https://www.ncronline.org/node/160616>