

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

February 19, 2013 at 1:15pm

LA's Mahony: Lenten journey involves 'suffering,' 'false accusations'

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NCR Today

LA abuse cases

Cardinal Roger Mahony, who was been publicly disgraced for his handling of priests accused of sex abuse in the 1980s, has written that his personal Lenten journey involves suffering and "never protesting misunderstandings, and never getting angry because of false accusations."

Reflecting on the prophet Isaiah's passage on the suffering servant, Mahony writes that the passage is "important for all of us who are disciples of Jesus Christ since we are called to imitate his words, actions, and life."

"Part of that journey will always entail suffering from time to time," wrote Mahony on his personal blog Monday. "But what makes Jesus' suffering so different, and so important for us, is that he lived out Isaiah's prophecy fully: '...he did not open his mouth...'"

"That means never rationalizing what is happening in our lives, never protesting misunderstandings, and never getting angry because of false accusations," Mahony continues. "And that is so difficult for us human beings. It is certainly difficult for me on my journey."

Mahony, who retired as archbishop of Los Angeles in 2011, is expected to travel to Rome in coming days to attend the meeting of cardinals that will elect the next head of the Roman Catholic church.

The cardinal, who is 76 years of age, has faced sustained criticism since January, when the Los Angeles archdiocese released some 12,000 church files detailing its handling of sex abuse cases as part of a court order.

Some of the documents detail Mahony and other church officials' shielding of priests accused of sex abuse in the 1980s.

The current archbishop of Los Angeles, Jose Gomez, announced Jan. 31 Mahony would "no longer have any administrative or public duties" in the Los Angeles archdiocese.

Mahony responded to that announcement Feb. 1, saying Gomez had "not once" raised the issue with him and that under his leadership the Los Angeles archdiocese eventually became one of the most strict in the nation regarding sex abuse.

In a previous posting on his blog Feb. 15, Mahony said he was "not ready" for the outcry of criticism he has faced since the documents' release.

"Ash Wednesday changed all of that, and I see Lent 2013 as a special time to reflect deeply upon this special call by Jesus," Mahony wrote then.

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"To be honest with you, I have not reached the point where I can actually pray for more humiliation," Mahony writes. "I'm only at the stage of asking for the grace to endure the level of humiliation at the moment."

In his blog Monday, Mahony continues:

Not opening our mouth in repudiation or backlash goes against our human nature, and against our pride. But remaining silent after the example of Jesus leaves each accusation in the hands of our loving and forgiving God, not in the hands of other humans with varied agendas.

May I encourage all of us to reflect upon the four Suffering Servant poems in Isaiah during Lent. The first three are used during Holy Week at our Masses on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday; the fourth on Good Friday.

May the silent Jesus become a new petition for each of us this year during Lent.

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