

Fr. Dwight Longenecker

THE SEX ABUSE CRISIS: GET REAL

I've been as furious as most Catholics about our "summer of shame" and I've spouted off on Twitter and elsewhere. I've also read lots of other people's comments of fury and frustration.

We have to be honest and admit that much of the fury is not only about the sex abuse and cover ups, but it is pent up rage and frustration among conservative Catholics who feel marginalized by progressives at this stage. In other words, some of the rage is about the Catholic civil war—not just about sex abuse.

However, eventually one has to cut through all that and face some truths:

- 1 Pope Francis is not going to resign. You may not like Pope Francis. You may think he is the anti-Christ or the last pope before the return of the Lord. You might think he is the best pope ever—the great reformer and all that. It really doesn't matter. He's the pope. He is not accountable to anyone. He likes being pope and he's not going anywhere. You can bet on that.
- 2 The Cardinals are not going to resign. With very few exceptions, one doesn't get to be a cardinal in the Catholic Church for lowly humility. Many of these men exhibit all the traits of Narcissistic Personality

Disorder and believe me, those folks *never* admit they are wrong and they never resign.

- 3 The bishops aren't going to resign. See number two above.
- 4 In Pope will remain silent about Vigano's testimony. It will be put in the bottom drawer along with the dubia from the four cardinals. It will be dismissed with an eye roll and an indulgent smile therefore treating the whole matter in the same way you treat the ravings of your crazy uncle who gets all wild eyed about conspiracy theories...Bush Sr killed JFK, 9/11 was an inside job and did they fake the moon landings...
- 5 Everybody can thunder and protest all they want about Vigano's big revelation, but they'll be stonewalled. It will be the silent treatment.
- 6 In the Fall the American bishops will come up with a new "charter" which will be short on personal responsibility of the bishops (no one will take the blame) but it will be full of crocodile tears, lots of concern for the victims and pledges about how this will never happen again.
- 7 The charter will ignore the problem of homosexuality in the priesthood.
- 8 Various Attorney Generals will probably launch their own investigations and there will be a long, slow, humiliating display of other crimes and misdemeanors by Catholic priests over the last seven decades.
- 9 The mainstream media will give the news little attention because it will seem to implicate gay men in

crimes, and that's not allowed and also because, quite frankly, people will get bored with it all. They'll be more interested in some celebrity's face lift.

10 The real problem of sex abuse by priests will continue to go away because the new rules really will be working, and the bishops (most of whom are doing the best they can) will enforce the new policies and seminary rectors will be more careful in who they approve.

11 Homosexuality in the priesthood will continue, but the driving force for "gay rights" in the church will dwindle. Despite their best PR attempts to separate the abuse from homosexuality, everybody with a lick of common sense knows that over 80% of the abuse is homosexual in nature. Yes. everyone knows that doesn't mean all people with same sex attraction are abusers, but we do know that breaking the celibacy vow creates an atmosphere of sexual permissiveness which makes abuse more likely to occur.

So what's to do?

I'll bounce you back to [yesterday's post](#) which gives some encouragement to "in the pew" Catholics about what can be done.

I'm not saying, "Well now that we've all had a big family shouting match, let's just go home and get on with life as it has always been now and forever Amen." I'm not advocating passivity. If your vocation and calling is to keep pushing for reform in the church and holding bishops, cardinals and the pope accountable please go for it, and may God bless you in battle.

However, if that is not your calling, roll up your sleeves, get on your knees and do what you can with what you have where you are.

Reality is always local. Get real.

What you can do during this crisis

DISCOURAGED CATHOLICS – MAN UP!

I know the church news at the moment is pretty grim. Its the summer of shame and all that, but Catholics should buckle up their swords and polish their shields.

It has always been a spiritual battle, and warfare is messy and there are casualties and there are innocent victims—collateral damage—as its called.

Disappointments are rooted in wrong expectations. When was the last time you read the Old Testament? The whole saga of God’s encounter with mankind is riddled with sin, corruption, immorality, unfaithfulness, betrayal and wickedness.

It is interesting to me that I felt called to produce my twenty part podcast series on the history of the Catholic Church last Spring before all this blew up.

I wanted to do so because I felt that Catholics needed to know that in every age there have been Triumphs and Tragedies in the church. The corruption, immorality and heresy—right to the top of the church’s structures—is nothing new, and the Holy Spirit has always triumphed in the end.

Whenever there has been corruption and heresy, immorality, greed and graft there has also been—at the grass roots level—movement of reform and renewal. God has always raised up the Benedicts and Bonifaces, the Francis of Assisi and the Francis Xavier, Ignatius and Augustine, the Cure d’Ars and Padre Pio.

God has also raised up a multitude of ordinary lay people who have kept the faith and moved forward on their knees, rolled up their sleeves and did what they could with what they had where they are.

Do I feel discouraged at this point? Not me. I feel encouraged. The rot is being rooted out. The gangrene is being burnt out. The dead branches are being pruned and will be thrown on the fire.

So be it.

So what am I going to do about it and what can you do about it? It seems frustrating and pointless because bishops are not elected. You can’t vote the corrupt bishop or archbishop out at the end of his four year term.

I know it is frustrating, but renewal and reform in the church never starts from the top. It always starts small with individuals who are dedicated to God. It always starts at the grass roots level, not at the top of the tree.

When popes and bishops have moved to reform the church it has invariably been the result of a long process in which the impetus for reform has moved from the bottom to the top.

Therefore, if you are at the bottom of the ecclesial pyramid you are exactly the person who can do something about it. St Benedict did what he could with what he had

where he was. St Francis did the same. So did all the great saints. They did what they could with what they had where they were and they did not know that their labors would one day bear great and history changing movements.

So do not be discouraged. Man up (ladies too by the way. I'm thinking of Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila etc)

Here are twelve things ordinary Catholics can do.

- 1 Support your good priests and bishops. Most of the priests and bishops are good men who are *not* corrupted. If your priest and bishops are good, faithful men write and thank them for their ministry and re-assure them of your prayers and support.
- 2 Criticize the unfaithful shepherds. If your priests and bishops are lazy, heterodox, financially corrupt and part of the problem, write them a respectful letter and say why you disagree with them and why you are withholding your funds from their diocese or parish.
- 3 Support worthy Catholic causes. If you do withhold your giving to the diocese or parish make sure you support other worthy Catholic causes with your donations, your prayer and your time. Don't give up on God's work just because you can't support your diocese. If you want to support your parish, but not your bishop set up a charity so funds can go directly and 100% to the worthy Catholic causes in your locality.
- 4 Learn the Catholic faith in its fullness. If your bishop or priest are heretical or heterodox, immoral or corrupt, don't rage and rebel and become bitter.

Simply learn the Catholic faith better yourself. Avoid the big establishment “Catholic” colleges and universities. There are loads of excellent resources available from faithful Catholic publishers, smaller Catholic colleges and online sources.

- 5 Promote the fullness of the Catholic faith. Start a parish study and prayer group. Start a parish men’s or women’s group. Get together with others and start a Marian conference or a Eucharistic Conference. Get some good speakers in. Make it a joyful and positive event.
- 6 Nurture strong Catholic boys and men. Part of the crisis in society and in the church is a crisis in masculinity. Don’t rage and fret and fume and blame homosexuals. Instead respond by starting a men’s group, a men’s conference, Fraternus, That Man is You or Troops of St George.
- 7 Evangelize. Put your support into one of the many apostolates that are sound, solid and doing fantastic work in the area of online evangelization, publication of good materials, training a new generation of religious, educators and apologists. My blog-website, for instance, relies on Donor Subscribers to remain ad free and to pay for hosting, promotion, maintenance and development. There are many others who rely on your support. If you need to, shift your giving to these causes you believe in.
- 8 Minister to the needy. The corporal works of mercy are one of the ways Jesus is alive in the world today. Get involved in your local pro life group, the soup

kitchen or the food pantry. Get involved in helping immigrant brothers and sisters or working to raise awareness and funds for persecuted Christians.

9 Don't worry and don't be bitter. Rage if you must about the abuse and the cover ups, but realize what you can do and what you have no power to do. God is in charge. He is always renewing his church. Find where that is happening and join in. Let those who have responsibility for disciplining and exposing the wrong doers get on with their work and do what you can do where you are.

10 Do not neglect the liturgy. A beautiful, robust and traditional celebration of the liturgy is not just a pretty museum piece or a performance. It is the prayer of the church, thunder reversed, heaven in ordinary, the power of the cross in the present moment and the surge of resurrection in the world today. Celebrate the liturgy with reverence, beauty and the fire of love. This is what will save the church and save the world.

11 Pray more. Read the Bible every day.

12 Pause to enjoy life. God is good and life is good. Decide that you will not be overwhelmed by fear and despair. Ask for a greater gift of faith.

Finally, remember that evil always eventually collapses in on itself. This is because evil is a lie and a lie has no internal support structure. Evil is always something beautiful, good and true that is either distorted or being destroyed. It may seem substantial, but it is a fleeting shadow. It is an dissonant tune and an empty song. Evil

and lies will always, always, always fall flat. It is a house build on shifting sand.

This is how Satan works: Because his lies have no real substance and have not inner energy or life he must keep promoting his lies and making them bigger and bigger.

That is the only way he can keep them going—by exaggerating them more and more. His lies are like a corpse into which an insane undertaker keeps pumping formaldehyde and keeps caking more make up on the greenish decaying face. Eventually the lie is exposed. He overplays his hand. We see the evil for what it is, and when that happens the wicked ones roar with rage for the battle has begun.

We are at that stage now. So do not be afraid. He has overplayed his hand.

Let us get on with the task at hand!

Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition!

Fr. Dwight Longenecker