

Fr. Perozich comments —

At a priest dinner one evening, a long ordained priest told his brother priests, “I wish I were back in the seminary.”

They replied, “For goodness sake, why?”

He responded, “So I could quit!”

Once ordained, always ordained.

I would not trade my priesthood for anything. Priesthood these days under the bishops is not always delightful. Rather than being treated as brothers or sons, many are treated as cogs in a wheel to do the bidding of bishops whose administrative tones are beyond the gospel for political, synodal, or modernist goals.

Here is a tale of just one of the many for whom I pray daily, and a lament and petition of another priest in the following article to bishops to act like fathers.

Tow the line or get sidelined.

MARCH 3, 2022

The Sad Tale of Spiritual Father vs. Spiritual Son

JANET E. SMITH



Imagine how you would feel if you were a priest nearly 70 years old and, out of the blue, you learn that a very disturbed adult male has accused you of an act of sexual abuse some forty years ago, an act that you know you did not commit. Suddenly, you are removed from ministry and your name is placed on the archdiocesan website because a review board has judged that there is a “semblance of truth” to the accusation.

Few know that “semblance of truth” means that it is not *impossible* that the act has taken place, though no one has provided a *shred* of evidence beyond the person’s accusation. Indeed, you have an impeccable record of service and of indubitable fidelity to Church teaching.

This isn’t a case like that of McCarrick, where “everyone” knew and “everyone” ignored or covered up his long track record of abuse. Seventy-five altar boys come forward to say they never experienced, saw, or heard of you abusing anyone, and in fact were present at the event—a

swimming party at your parent's home with many persons in attendance—where the abuse allegedly took place. Your parish even took out a lawsuit that accuses the diocese of abusing the parish!

Nor were any other credible accusations forthcoming, which usually follows upon “credible accusations” having been made public.

Wouldn't you expect an invitation to visit with the bishop or at least a phone call from him, your spiritual father, assuring you that you are absolutely believed innocent until proven guilty, that he believes you to be innocent and that everything will be done to clear up this matter as quickly as possible?

But that invitation, that phone call, those assurances never came.

What did happen was that the [detective](#) who deposed the “victim” falsified his testimony. Indeed, one of your former altar boys, now an adult, gave a sworn deposition that the same detective attributed statements to him about you that he had never made—the detective claimed the former altar boy had said you had young men sleep in your bedroom, a statement he said he never made. Indeed, he said he testified he had never seen anything inappropriate.

The deposition with fabricated testimony led to you filing a defamation suit against the detective and winning a \$125,000 settlement. No admission of guilt was made by the detective but, combined with the “victim's” denial he had ever made those charges, all minimally rational persons would be led to conclude that you were falsely accused.

Indeed, the Michigan State Police dropped their investigation since the “victim’s” testimony was so contradictory.

You also voluntarily took two polygraph tests and passed. Wouldn’t you expect the diocese to issue a press release joyfully announcing your vindication and to restore you to the pastorate of your beloved parish? Perhaps even the archbishop would concelebrate a return Mass with you. And surely the diocese would immediately remove your name from the list on the diocesan website of those credibly accused.

You would also expect the diocese to fire—or at least suspend and demand a public apology to you—the canon lawyer of the diocese in charge of sex abuse cases, since he was present at the deposition that produced fabricated testimony (taken by a detective who was his parishioner). People would reasonably conclude he knew that the charges were fabricated. If he was unaware that the charges were false, something should have been done to explain how he could have been unaware of the falsity of the charges.

None of that happened.

So people wondered why.

People were told that it was because a canon law procedure against you had been filed with the CDF and it could not be stopped; it had to be completed before any consideration of restoration could take place. You thought common decency would lead the archdiocese to make a public announcement that since there was no evidence of abuse on your part, a fact they surely would have conveyed to the CDF, that they expected the CDF to drop the case.

That didn’t happen.

But the Vatican did close the case and dismissed any future possibility of prosecuting the sex abuse allegations.

So *now* restoration and apologies take place, right?

No, no, no, because in the meantime—since clearly the diocese was in no hurry to clear your reputation—you filed a defamation lawsuit against the canon lawyer.

What could be the reason for not clearing your reputation? A continued conviction that you were guilty of sex abuse? On the basis of what evidence? An inability to admit that your case was poorly handled; that the diocese had relied on fabricated testimony? Really? The diocese would *ruin your* reputation (you who were innocent) for the sake of *protecting their* reputation (they who had done something wrong)?

Because of the way you were being treated, you might come to suspect that there was a vendetta against you and that justice would never come through the archdiocese. Was this paranoia on your part? Those who knew of your history spoke of you having had a target on your back from the start of your priesthood—decades ago you had blown the whistle on the homosexual culture of the seminary (see the book *Goodbye, Good Men* by Michael Rose), a culture that produced a presbyterate widely considered to be dominated and controlled by a lavender mafia.

You also were instrumental in starting the wholly orthodox and popular “Call to Holiness” conferences to combat the wildly heterodox and pernicious “Call to Action” conferences. How had you managed to escape persecution up to this point? Was it that you built a thriving parish of devout Catholics in a remote inner-city church that provided exquisitely reverential and beautiful liturgies, a kind of refuge for Catholics who felt abandoned and ill served by the heterodox teaching and sloppy liturgies that permeated the

archdiocese? You were the way the archdiocese appeased them.

You would begin to think you would never be restored and that the best service you could do for fellow vulnerable priests and the Church at large was to expose how the archdiocese was capable of treating a faithful priest—clearly falsely accused—and thereby you might prevent the archdiocese from doing the same to others.

You believed you were perfectly within your rights to file a lawsuit against the canon lawyer who submitted false testimony, since canon law asserts the right of a priest to defend his reputation. The archbishop invoked the promise of obedience you had made and demanded that you drop the suit. It is hard to believe that the bishop has the authority to make a demand that you not exercise a fundamental right any more than that he has the right to demand that you donate a kidney.

The archdiocese, however, (although there was no credible accusation against you and credible evidence that you had been framed, and although the Vatican would not allow the archdiocese to proceed with its case), decided to file a canon law procedure against you for having refused to obey his command that you drop a lawsuit defending your reputation.

You were puzzled that, again, the archbishop never spoke with you personally. He never invited you to sit down and talk through the whole situation. You would have been ready to drop the suit had the archdiocese said they would restore your faculties and your pastorship—which, actually, shouldn't they be really eager to do? In truth, you were not being treated as a falsely accused son but as an enemy. You wondered why

another “son,” the priest canon lawyer who plausibly engaged in defamation of you, deserved protection.

Can your sense that you were being persecuted really be attributed to paranoia?

In fact, [the press release](#) issued by the archdiocese to announce the findings of the canon law process that investigated three charges against you (not identified in the press release) was clearly designed to continue to humiliate you. How could they have the audacity to mention that there had been accusations of sex abuse against you and not mention that they had been falsified!? Moreover, the press release didn't identify what the charges were against you and didn't state that you were acquitted of two of three charges. The press release made reference to “confidentiality” as preventing them from saying more but allowed you in your “apology” to reveal that the one charge of which you had been found guilty was that of disobedience—of not obeying the command that you not avail yourself of your right to defend your reputation.

Given the diocese's desire to continue to discredit you, it did not surprise you that purview of the judges was limited: their directive was to establish only that you had disobeyed an order, *not* to determine whether it was legitimate for the archbishop to have given such an order. The question most germane to this situation was not addressed.

You could have petitioned the proper office of the curia to determine the limits of authority of a bishop—and what a necessary task it is to determine those limits!—but in the end you decided to drop all civil suits and not to have recourse to any ecclesial options.

Having your faculties restored required you to issue an [apology](#). You did so. The “apology” saddened and even

infuriated some of your followers. They thought you should appeal the decision to firmly establish how unfairly you had been treated. But now you were 72 and wanting to serve your flock as a priest as much as possible in the years left to you. Those who had eyes to see did not need you to win an appeal to see the unfairness of it all. You believe your apology was worded in such a way that it was clear you were simply cooperating with the archdiocese and bowing to their perception that your suit against the canon lawyer (somehow) was impeding their investigation (which fell apart on its own). You never wanted to be wrongly disobedient; you only wanted to defend your reputation and help prevent others from being treated as you were.

One of those goals was met (your reputation was restored) and as much good as could be done toward the other was done (making public what despicable measures the diocese will take against one of its own priests).

So, who won this “battle”—a battle that should never have taken place? The bishop/father or the priest/son? Well, the priest cannot say Mass at his former parish, must ask for permission to say Mass at other parishes, and was made to issue a groveling pseudo apology.

Do those punishments serve to humiliate him or the archdiocese?

Most will see the final act of the archdiocese as petty and vindictive and no longer will doubt that the archdiocese engaged in persecution of this particular priest. They will likely find the press release and the punishments in themselves to be a solid piece of evidence for this conclusion. (And do note that the archdiocesan internet page that gives lists of priests who are “credibly accused” does not have a list of those who have been vindicated of any accusation.)

As for the priest, he is more loved than ever; he proved to be a model of obedience by being obedient where likely obedience is not legitimately required. That he is a true pastor was exhibited not only in his “apology” but in the beautiful spiritual reflection on his experience he sent to his flock:

February 19, 2022

Commemoratio Beatæ Mariæ Virginis

At my Mass today I looked up to the crucifix above the tabernacle and had a passing thought about that INRI over our Lord’s head. How strange is this kind of King who publicly displays His shamefully disgraced, dying Body...

There are some who are going to be disappointed in me for having withdrawn my civil lawsuit and for having apologized, even though I myself had been wronged. People had offered countless prayers, offered many Masses, given exceptional financial support, and expressed to me their compassionate sorrow over what transpired these past 1,150 days. I owe them all a huge debt of gratitude. I hope that what they have done out of charity for me will become for them a rich and eternal spiritual treasure, and that the prayers and Masses I in turn said for them during this time will be a partial “repayment” to them.

How to make sense of all that has happened and the great human and supernatural efforts that were expended these two-and-a-half years? There is an answer to this, but one that makes sense only to a mind that’s been formed by the Gospel of Christ, apart from which one cannot accept phrases such as, “Do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6:27) and “This also my heavenly Father will do to every one of

you [i.e. punish], if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” (Matthew 18:35).

I quote these passages to you not in a cunning way, secretly hoping to justify myself. That would make my published apology bitterly ironical, and—I should think—highly offensive to God. Christianity knows a higher form of justice than the merely human—one that fights hard against our impulse for vindication and vengeance. Our Lord taught us another, most difficult way, contrary to our inclinations: charity unfeigned (2 Corinthians 6:6).

I want it to be known that this long ordeal has done me a great deal of spiritual good that I may not have acquired otherwise. This is a lesson I’d like to impart to everybody who will listen: accepting hardships for Christ’s sake is a benefit beyond what words can tell. I’d also like to repeat what I have said publicly elsewhere: I may have done more spiritual good for others by enduring what I did (though, I admit, not always willingly) than if I had been exercising my priesthood in a public way.

Thank you immensely for supporting me in this time. I often felt a strength which surely came from you, fellow members of the mystical body of the Church.

Do pray for the pope, the archbishop, and for all priests. Overlook human weaknesses and see in them men who have the priestly “character” indelibly imprinted on their souls and given a divine mission—however unworthy they may be.

Those who want to see a real-life example of the above scenario need only to follow the links in the “tale” above. Or search the internet for Fr. Perrone, Archbishop Vigneron, Monsignor Bugarin, Nancy LePage.

For a systemic explanation of the dismal relationship between bishops and their priests since the Dallas Charter, please see this article: “[An Open to Letter to My Bishop and All U.S. Bishops.](#)”



By [Janet E. Smith](#)

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An Open Letter to My Bishop and to All U.S. Bishops

FEBRUARY 26, 2022 BY [MSGR. PAUL L. BOCHICCHIO](#)



I write this letter after much prayer and reflection and with the utmost respect for the complex issue of leadership in the church.

I am not naïve regarding the challenges that bishops and church leaders face in the light of many crises and difficult issues that confront our church today. But I write — as a priest with 50 years of service to the church and a great love for the church — regarding an issue that deeply affects all of us, but especially brother priests.

The issue of sexual abuse on the part of clergy has had profoundly devastating effects on all members of the church — bishops, priests, religious and laity alike. The Dallas Charter, soon to be in effect for 20 years, has created an attitude of distrust resulting in injustices toward priests. The intention of the Charter was to address in a meaningful and credible way the issue of sexual abuse among the clergy. That intention was a necessary response to a terrible crisis that caused incredible pain and trauma to thousands of victims and greatly scandalized the church and society as a whole. In an attempt to address that crisis, the “zero tolerance” policy enacted by the bishops created more of an atmosphere of injustice than it intended. It was a reaction, not a response. Children’s safety and justice for priests are not mutually exclusive ideas.

Priests’ rights as American citizens were violated when there appeared to be a presumption of guilt rather than a man being innocent until proven guilty. Even when priests were exonerated, their reputations as priests and credible ministers of the gospel were compromised. This situation has caused a profound dilemma for the church on many levels:

- The relationship between priests and their spiritual fathers, the bishops, was ruptured.
- Bishops became more accountable to lawyers and law enforcement than they were to their own priests.
- Review boards and law enforcement, along with lawyers, seem to have no sense of urgency to resolve serious issues. Justice delayed is justice denied.
- Priests feel abandoned by their bishops and bishops seem unable to have any contact or concern for brothers accused.
- The perception among many of us is that chancery officials contact priests on administrative leave not to encourage or be supportive, but only to monitor their brothers.
- Even when priests are encouraged by formal or informal programs to reach out to their brothers, they are sternly warned to avoid any discussion of the issues involved. In what way does that help a brother who is hurting and feels abandoned?

We show a great deal of concern for the victims of sexual abuse, and we should. The church has an absolute obligation to reach out and help to heal those who have been victimized by our clergy or other church officials. It should not, however, be an “either–or” approach but rather a “both–and” approach. Priests, even if guilty, need to be treated with respect; but that respect seems to be lacking, even in the cases of priests falsely accused.

Pope Francis continually reminds us that the heart of the Gospel message is “mercy.” It appears to me and many other priests that we have not only paid homage to the legal system and law enforcement, but we have imitated the worst

characteristics of our society by isolating and, at times, demonizing those who have been accused. Some priests have waited for years to have a case resolved and then, at times, feel as if they will always live under suspicion. But there is no such thing as an unforgivable sin. The mercy of God is made present to all of us. The church is the bearer of that mercy. It seems, however, that we instead imitate the attitude of a very unforgiving society. Our priority in outreach to victims seems, at times, to far outweigh our concern for priests.

Every priest lives with the fear of being accused, and with the consequences that result from that accusation even if there is no credible evidence to support it. The attitude of the institutional church, as with all institutions, is to protect itself — even at the cost of sacrificing, in an unjust way, those who have given their lives to its service.

I believe that there is a real morale problem among priests created by the hierarchy. I have often felt that priests too easily claimed that there is a morale problem, and I have often challenged that claim. But in the present situation, I believe that there really is a morale problem. The Dallas Charter, on one level, may have successfully addressed the clerical abuse issue but, at the same time, it has created scandal by causing a great mistrust of priests and by rupturing their relationship to their bishops.

The Charter has responded to a serious issue, but without thought of the consequences that are wounding the church and the credibility of priests. Further, because of the sins of a small minority of priests, we have created an unhealthy distancing of priests from youth. It appears that we are using means greatly disproportionate to the crisis to solve it, something like attempting to “kill a flea with a cannonball.”

Many vocations to the priesthood and religious life were fostered by a healthy and genuine interaction between priests and youth. Five young men who were involved with me and youth ministry, in a wholesome interaction, are now priests. I wonder whether, if the Dallas Charter had been in effect at the time of my encounter with them, they would have responded to their call. Even though a vocation comes from God through his church, it needs to be nourished because “grace builds on nature.”

I know many fine priests who been accused of something that I firmly believe they never did. They are hurting because of a lack of support from church leadership. I am not bitter, but I am angry and greatly disappointed. I accept the humanness of the church and believe that the Holy Spirit will guide us even when we fail to respond. I have also examined my own conscience to see if as a pastor, or leader in the church, I have been guilty of doing the same in my relationship and attitude to the people I serve. I do not believe I have done so.

Recently, I spoke to a very fine priest who is faithful and fruitful in his ministry. He expressed deep anger with the hierarchy. At the time of ordination, he said, he promised obedience and respect to his bishop. But he believes that such respect is not mutual, a fact which greatly saddens him. I look at a church that often proclaims the need to be transparent. But when it comes to dealing with priests, I do not see that transparency — and that deeply hurts me. As I stated in the beginning, I have great respect for leadership of the church, and as disappointed as I am that our leadership is living in fear, a fear that goes counter to the gospel, I humbly acknowledge that I may not be seeing the whole picture. Having served as a pastor and in many other leadership

positions, I know that matters are complex. I do not pretend to know all the levels of complexity, but I do know that I need to make my convictions heard. I am convinced that I speak for many priests.

Each day I pray for our church and its leadership but in a special way I pray for all brothers who been accused justly or unjustly. I often try to find ways to contact and encourage them. I also pray for and have ministered to victims, the majority of whom were not abused by priests.

I pray that my concerns, which, I believe, are also the concerns of my brother priests, do not fall on deaf ears. Every time I have expressed my concerns to our leadership, there has been no response; for this, I am very disappointed and feel that there is a lack of respect for us “in the trenches.”

Kindly allow me to conclude this letter with a reflection written by Carlo Carretto, the Italian spiritual writer, who speaks of the paradox that now faces us in the wake of the Dallas Charter:

How much I must criticize you, my church, and yet how much I love you!

You have made me suffer more than anyone and yet I owe more to you than to anyone.

I should like to see you destroyed and yet I need your presence.

You have given me much scandal and yet you alone have made me understand holiness.

Never in this world have I seen anything more compromised, more false, yet never have I touched anything more pure, more generous or more beautiful.

Countless times I have felt like slamming the door of my soul in your face—and yet, every night, I have prayed that I might die in your sure arms!

No, I cannot be free of you, for I am one with you, even if not completely you.

Then too — where would I go?

To build another church?

But I could not build one without the same defects, for they are my defects. And again, if I were to build another church, it would be my church, not Christ's church.

No. I am old enough. I know better!

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