

At yesterday's Masses (*The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*), I spoke briefly about the recent news of sex abuse scandals within the American Church. As I mentioned, I'm like many of you, I imagine, in that I am saddened, embarrassed and even angered by it. I also want to be careful not to be reactionary, as we are often inclined.

The news comes from a grand jury report regarding the Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania, though that's not the only such bad news. Again, wanting to not be reactionary, I understand how it appears—that there's been cover-up or at the very least, horrible decisions made on re-assignments of accused abusers. It all feels a little slimy.

I can also understand that the Church's officials are to be held to a higher standard than others; that while there are such abuses that go on in other realms of society (statistically, sexual abuse is more likely to occur in the family home), it feels worse when it happens at the hands of those who represent the Church, who are to be a sign of God's love and goodness, who are a voice of distinguishing what is right and what is wrong, who are to be people we can trust. Maybe it's fair to say that it simply offends our sensibilities more when a priest or bishop is entangled in all this.

I've mentioned to you all on several occasions that I was in seminary when the first big wave of sex scandal news was before us. I'm glad that it didn't discourage me from pursuing my vocation. I've only personally known one priest who has had accusations made against him, and thankfully, it was proved to not be a credible accusation.

I don't know what the fallout will be, locally or nationally, from this recent wave of reports. It does no good to overreact. There will be more to come, I'm confident, and so some temperance in our response would be prudent. But for now, it's left a bad taste. As your pastor, I'm sorry for any sadness, embarrassment and anger it's left you with. Regardless of where we are in the spectrum of Roman Catholics—traditionalists or progressives, young or old, highly engaged to minimally engaged—it hurts us all.

There's more to be said on this and I intend to soon. To be clear, I still love the Church and absolutely believe in it—its mission, its purpose, its founder. And I still love my priesthood and remain grateful for it. The solution to these current problems does not lie in doing away with these things, but instead redeeming them, reforming them. They need that for sure. Please pray for it, persistently and patiently.