



# Call to Change

## Rebuilding the Church

# What is Call to Change?

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- Straw-man proposal to restructure the Church
- “Think out of the box – stay orthodox”
- Seek long term solution, not temporary fix
- Seek to understand why things have happened the way they happened
- Avoid knee-jerk reactions
- Seek transparency and accountability in all Church matters – sexual and financial
- See the abuse crisis as an opportunity for the Lord to perform miraculous reform within His Church
- Enable the Church to become a shining light of good governance, a role model in handling difficult issues, and a witness to Christ rather than an embarrassment

# Why should the laity get involved?

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- Historically, significant policy decisions have primarily been driven by the ordained
- The laity have felt they had no authority or responsibility to confront issues
- Vatican II highlighted the important role of the laity
- The development of lay communities has been an example of the laity having a prophetic role while respecting the offices of priest, bishop, and pope
- We live in historic times where the two roles have matured:
  - Charism of leadership
  - Charism of prophet
- This means we as laity share responsibility for ensuring issues are addressed

# Problem Already Fixed?

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- Number of abuse cases clearly has dropped
- John Jay and similar reports focused on why priests abused and policies to prevent abuse
- Did not focus on why bishops behaved as they did
- Did not put in place accountability for bishops
- Did not address vulnerable adults, including sexual harassment of seminarians
- Did not confront chastity issues for straight and gay seminarians
- Did not address accountability regarding finances
  - Large sums of money are spent defending priests with legal counsel
  - Large sums of money are spent settling out of court

# What is the fundamental flaw?

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- Bishops, Cardinals, and the Holy Father have combined roles of leader, spiritual father, advocate for priesthood, as well as judge and jury in matters of wrongdoing
- By contrast, judges in a judicial system recuse themselves if they have any personal involvement in a case in order to ensure objectivity
- We have canon law and bits and pieces of a judicial process, but we do not appear to have a systematic, independent, objective judicial system
- As a result, bishops can make poor decisions
- Wrongdoing by bishops and by cardinals can either be ignored as pure rumor or suddenly pounced on in response to public outcry
- Temptation is to publicize wrongdoing by those with those who differ from our theological point of view, either conservative or progressive

# How does the role of spiritual father and advocate for priesthood affect the role of judge?

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- Refusing to believe allegations
- Believing a priest is cured and will no longer offend
- Fear of public scandal
- Fear of losing priests
- Misplaced mercy
- Fraternal or sexual attachment

# What does this imply?

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- Need a functional, independent, objective, and transparent judicial system
- Need transparent oversight of finances
- A thousand years ago, the Church was similar to existing monarchies with regard to transparency and accountability
- Now we have governments with separation of powers to ensure accountability and non-profits that are evaluated by outside agencies to ensure good use of funds
- We as a Church organization are no longer a role model or leader with regard to handling wrongdoing or with regard to accountability for finances

# Controversy Surrounding Role of Sexual Orientation

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- Conservatives (e.g. Fr. Altier of EWTN) claim that homosexual priests were strategically placed by Communist groups for decades
- He claims that the John Jay report documented a direct correlation between homosexual priests and the abuse of young males but was censored by the bishops
- Many conservatives claim the lavender mafia is real and is the primary cause of abuse
- Progressives are dismissing these claims as purely homophobic
- The laity is being torn from both sides resulting in tremendous distrust of many or most in leadership and resulting in loss of faith
- Strongly urge a follow-up study to present hard evidence and data regarding the validity or non-validity of these claims with no censorship as confirmed by a supervising group

# Controversy Surrounding Role of Sexual Orientation

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- The ordination of homosexual men is a theological and pastoral issue and is outside the scope of this proposal
- The focus of this proposal is to establish accountability for priests and bishops regardless of sexual orientation
- If the hierarchy decides a homosexual man is eligible for priesthood, my strong recommendation is that his orientation should not be hidden
- Hiding ones sexuality makes celibacy more difficult not easier
- Seminarians and priests who are straight need to be held accountable in their relationships with women religious with whom they serve as well as lay women to whom they minister
- Seminarians and priests who are gay need to be held accountable in their relationships with one another as well as with men to whom they minister

# Learn from Aquinas

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- Aquinas did not shun the insights of Aristotelean philosophy
- He allowed human wisdom of Aristotelean philosophy to be the handmaid of theology
- This allowed theology to flourish due to the structure and intellectual discipline provided by philosophy
- In the same way, the Church should not shun the wisdom of political science
- We should take the best parts of good secular governance and apply them to Church governance
- We should humbly observe the best practices of non-profits with regard to oversight of finances and apply them to serving Christ to the best of our abilities

# Current Structure required by dogma?

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- Consider Jethro advising Moses to select wise men to be judges in order to allow Moses to focus on leading God's people
- Consider the Apostles creating the proto-deacons to focus on tasks like food distribution so that the Apostles could focus on God's Word rather than "waiting on tables" (applies to administration, finances, etc.)
- Consider Paul asking the Corinthians to find a wise man in the community to judge between two brothers rather than going to court (he did not say go to the presbyter or bishop)
- Consider that Paul respected the authoritative role of Peter, James, and John but shortly thereafter publicly criticized Peter for avoiding Gentiles when visited by Jewish representatives (Petrine authority regarding faith vs. Petrine fallibility regarding policy)

# Advice from a Doctor

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- As Catholics, we are tempted to say, “but how can we possibly change any structure without a sign from God?”
- Saint John of the Cross (Doctor of the Church) has profound, relevant comments in “The Ascent of Mount Carmel”
- He explicitly says that with regard to obvious responsibilities, God may be silent
- We have the teaching of the Church, the example of Christ, and intelligent human brains – we have no excuse for not attending to glaring issues
- If the current structure has obvious failings, we are obligated to fix the root cause
- It is not acceptable to postpone taking my sick child to the doctor because I am waiting for God to tell me to do so

# What are some options?

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- The Holy Father, cardinals, and bishops inherit the executive, legislative, and judicial powers of the Apostles
- All the above can agree to delegate judicial authority to a separate, objective branch of Church government
- That branch can either receive direct judicial authority or can be commissioned to determine guilt or innocence with the understanding that the ordinary (bishop, etc.) will apply the appropriate consequence based on their decision
- Likewise a legislative branch can be commissioned to define the policies, nuances, and measured consequences with regard to sexual wrongdoing, misconduct, or poor judgement
- The remaining question is what model to follow – government, corporation, or non-profit?
- Perhaps a new model can be developed to meet the needs of God's people
- Opportunity for both religious and laity to participate in the healthy functioning of the Church

# Support from Canon Law and Changes to be considered

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- Canon law supports the involvement of expert lay people to counsel bishops in these matters
- Synods should include knowledgeable laity
- Financial oversight should leverage expert lay experience
- Pastoral Council should include competent laity
- Canon law also describes secrecy on sensitive matters, hidden archives, and “safe with lock and key” to contain documents detailing crimes, to be destroyed after the perpetrator’s death
- The above stipulation and the tone of secrecy it implies needs to be strongly reconsidered in light of the dysfunctional patterns of administration that have come to light in the abuse crisis

# Let us work together to put in place a long term solution

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- Changes to the Church of this magnitude are no small matter – in light of all the challenges facing the Church today, consider a Vatican III?
- Historic opportunity to work together to find an effective and acceptable structural improvement – leadership and laity, men and women, theologians and educated laymen, the whole Body of Christ
- Result can be a more whole Church with broader wisdom and perspective while maintaining faithfulness to Church tradition
- The laity is no longer off the hook – we are just as responsible to persist in finding a solution as the Church hierarchy