

Humble King

I sent out a series of questions to my favorite priests and Rev. Msgr William J King who runs a Living Waters group in his parish responded. Excellent priests exist and deserve our prayers.

“Dear Andrew, your email is a source of grace. Thank you. It is a blessing for me to be spiritual director for a few priests and to work with the accountability group that you have met. These inform my responses, below...

1. How has the ongoing exposure of your fellow priests impacted you?

I grieve for them, for many priests are disillusioned especially by a perceived absence of concern and fraternal encouragement from their bishops. Personally, I share that disillusionment and I am, frankly, angered by the dearth of leadership shown by our bishops. I am different, I suppose, than most priests, since I spent 28 years in diocesan administration, with 24 of those years directly involved in these cases.

2. How can we the laity pray for you in this season?

Pray that we never lose confidence in a loving Father who called us to priesthood and sustains us in the likeness of His Son. Pray that we never withdraw from being Christ to others, with confidence and hope and love instead of fear.

3. What for you is the worst aspect of this exposure? the best?

The worst aspect by far is the unrelenting, unremitting, unrepentant single-minded focus of the secular media on decades-old abuse within the Catholic Church, while turning a blind eye to current abuse in schools and other churches. The obvious bias is ignored. I wonder, where are the Catholic leaders who ought to be standing up publicly and pointing out this obvious and unjust focus? Can anyone really and truly believe that abuse of minors, or inept handling of reports of abuse, occurred only in the Catholic Church and nowhere else? Yet, this laser-like focus continues, without distinction between cases 40 and 50 years old, and cases today which are handled totally differently. The unremitting reportage in this vein is having a clear impact on our people, even our most loyal parishioners, whose loyalty and confidence in the leadership of the Church is eroded by the constant reporting and repeating of stories involving old cases.

The best? I am completely confident that our loving Father will raise up saints in the midst of this crisis — saints to lead us into a new era of holiness and purity. This crisis is also purging the Church of toxic clericalism, which starts with the implicit notion that priests and only priests should perform certain functions, and leads to a desire to focus on the institution of the Church rather than the people. This was one of the principal mistakes we made who were involved in handling these cases -- we looked to the safety of the institution instead of feeling, truly feeling, the hurt and

vulnerability of the survivors of abuse.

4. Might you give us keys you employ to stay present to Jesus and others amid what may be a new temptation to discouragement?

I beg the Father for the grace to see others as He sees them, not as I do. When I offer the Mass, especially in holding the sacred body of Christ and His most precious Blood, I consciously call to mind the victims or survivors of abuse and pray that Our Lord unite their pain to His.

5. How have the rumors of a 'gay'-infested curia impacted you? Is there a homosexual problem in the priesthood or do you perceive this to be a smear campaign?

The rumors are based on fact. My experience in diocesan administration has brought me into contact with this reality. I am angered by this objectively, and yet I have seen the loneliness and isolation of priests in curial positions and other positions within the Church. At times I have given in to discouragement, to the point of entertaining (only briefly) the idea of pursuing a profession or career other than priesthood. The Father's faithfulness calls me home as soon as discouragement enters my feelings, and I am grateful for that. I find myself refocusing my priestly ministry away from diocesan and Church matters and more toward individuals, and so I am extremely grateful for the spiritual direction in which I am engaged, and for ministries such as Living Waters in which grace is evidently overpowering the negativity.

6. As men not immune to temptation, has this crisis prompted you into finding new or renewed ways of ensuring clarity and accountability in your own commitment to chastity? Might you describe how you go about this?

I hear a renewed invitation to personal prayer and to prayer on behalf of brother clergy and for survivors of abuse. I find myself more ready to turn feelings and thoughts of impurity into intercessory prayers for victims of sexual abuse and pornography — a prayer for those whose purity was injured involuntarily..

7. Explain any risk you see in this season of priests fearing exposure for moral weakness and thus being more likely to hide from authority.

Priests are in fact reluctant to seek help from their bishops, fearing that self-disclosure will lead to removal from ministry. This fear, sadly, is based on actual action against priests who have self-disclosed and sought assistance in recovery.

8. How can priests best facilitate a culture of accountability and healing that will prevent sexual immoralities?

Priests must find other priests, and trusted laity, with whom they can be themselves: socialize, find

enjoyment in healthy relationships, as well as discuss their own vulnerabilities. Priests are, almost universally, lonely and overwhelmed by their inability to do everything they believe they must do in order to be "good" and effective priests. This is a result of a misguided metric of what "success" means in priesthood: home visits made, classrooms visited, parish income, Mass attendance, hospital rounds, filling the obligation of the Liturgy of the Hours -- when any of these fall, priests too often judge themselves to be failures and "self-medicate" their feelings of inadequacy through impurity, unhealthy relationships, pornography, or alcohol. This culture of equating overwork with success can be undone only by cultivating healthy and mature friendships within the priesthood and among laypeople. A healthy and life-giving prayer life follows, but I believe that it is the fruit of healthy and life-giving personal friendships, which can them model and promote a healthy friendship with God, and the embrace of a loving Father.

9. What good do you pray will result from this season of exposure?

A better-focused leadership in the Church, less concerned with the size and health of the institution than with the holiness of the people and faithfulness to the Father in abject dependence on His Providence."

Please take time to watch our new video and become '[Chaste Together](#).'