

Muddy Mercy

Things just got a whole lot messier for the Church. Archbishop Carlo Mario Vigano—the papal ambassador to the US from 2011-2016--alleges that he made Pope Francis aware of Cardinal McCarrick's homosexual abuses in 2013; further, Vigano claims that the Pope failed to discipline McCarrick until five years later (he was forced to resign in June) in part due to their strong political alliance: McCarrick advocated for Francis' election to the papacy and the pope relied upon him significantly to oversee the American Church. If these allegations are true, Pope Francis should step down immediately. This could be the defining moment for a Church that repents in action.

There's much I love about Pope Francis, especially his action toward the poor and displaced. But his unclear pastoral directives toward persons facing same-sex attraction have always unsettled me. I perceive him as a man who has been evangelized by winsome practicing homosexuals and won over. His legacy to 'not judge' persons with same-sex attraction paired with his counsel 'to accompany' them on their journey appears to be to a road going nowhere. Mercy without truth ceases to be mercy at all; it merely confirms people in their fractured, fruitless lives. And it leads to tolerating absolutely vile and inexcusable behavior in leaders. Francis judged McCarrick way too late.

Vigano's report broke the morning I preached to a beautiful congregation in the San Fernando Valley. Given how the Church of Los Angeles lives in the face of the LBGT+ dragon, I emphasized the Cross: Jesus' self-giving which commands repentance of any sexual expression that raises itself above His Lordship. Mercy flowed as many came forward to weep before the Crucified, including Kim, a 13-year-old girl wrestling with same-sex attraction who wondered whether or not she was a 'lesbian.' We prayed for her as with all others, confident of Jesus' capacity to reconcile her to His best for her.

That church is a clear and cohesive witness of how mercy and truth meet. In contrast, my Roman Catholic Church is a house divided, if Vigano's letter has any merit. He points out how homosexuality figures large into the current scandal, as most cases of clerical abuse involve male teens, not tots. Vigano also describes how Pope Francis with McCarrick's help appointed American bishops with a 'gay-leaning' sensibility.

All this in a Church that has at its center a robust, life-giving vision of human sexuality: St. John Paul II's 'Theology of the Body' and the extraordinary role that Pope played in the Catechism in which he defines chastity as integration—reconciliation to our bodies, our genders, and our freedom when surrendered to Christ to offer ourselves purely and well to one another.

Where chastity is mocked by divided churchmen who lead the sheep in darkness, we must reclaim this dynamic vision of human sexuality and seek to live it with all His strength. We can assume responsibility and act upon what our gracious God has taught us, in spite of dodgy shepherds.

As for the shepherds, may Jesus Himself raise His sword over all priests, bishops, cardinals and popes who desecrate God's children through abuse, its cover-up, and the promotion of pagan LGBT+ liberties that enslave little ones. I am praying for many to submit to Christ and to resign in the wake of this recent shakedown, including Cardinal Wuerl who allegedly knew of McCarrick's wickedness for years and did nothing.

Unfaithful shepherds have brought us low. They must go. For too long shepherds have waved the rainbow flag over the sheep rather than teaching them to raise the Cross—Christ Crucified and lifted high--as the only means through which we can be reconciled to God's good will for our sexuality.

Kim deserves better. I shudder to think of her in the hands of a McCarrick or even the confusing counsel of Pope Francis. She needs pure mercy, free from the muddy waters flowing from the Vatican. So do all the Catholic faithful whose trust has been undermined by secrets and LGBT+ lies.