

## THE INDEPENDENT NEWS SOURCE

[ACCOUNTABILITY](#)[ART & MEDIA](#)[FAITH & PARISH](#)[GLOBAL](#)[PEACE & JUSTICE](#)[POLITICS](#)[SPIRITUALITY](#)[THEOLOGY](#)[VATICAN](#)[SISTERS' STORIES](#)

# Editorial: It's time to end pattern of deceit and denial on clergy sex abuse cases

by [NCR Editorial Staff](#) | *Jul. 10, 2015*

30 years later

## EDITORIAL

56

It is inconceivable that any bishop would stand before a congregation and give them the following instructions:

If you commit a serious sin against the community, your first obligation is to conceal it.

If an accuser comes forward, deny the offense and condemn the accuser as someone who simply wants to besmirch your name.

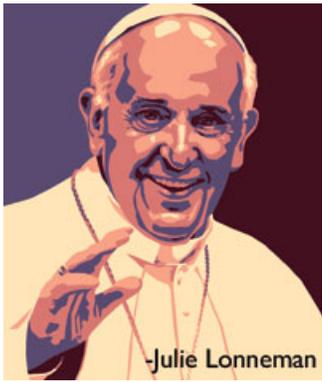
If that doesn't quiet the accuser, offer payment for the person's silence.

If that fails, hire the best lawyers in town.

And if, finally, you have no escape, go to settlement and apologize to anyone who may have been hurt by your "mistakes."

The scenario is unthinkable, but it is also descriptive of the very behavior that Catholics have witnessed among their leaders, with slight variations, for the past 30 years.

Those of us who have reported on the scandal for the past three decades, who have read through endless pages of horrific accounts and unfathomably slippery depositions, understand



Follow *NCR's* coverage of Pope Francis through our blog, [The Francis Chronicles](#). [Sign up for the email alerts](#) so you won't miss a thing!

the descriptive exhaustion that [Dominican Fr. Tom Doyle displays in his essay](#). There are no words left to adequately describe the level of deceit and corruption that existed in bishops' residences and chancery offices across this land as thousands of priests, hidden and protected by bishops, abused tens of thousands of our children.

[Barbara Blaine writes powerfully](#) of how such abuse and utterly callous treatment by church officials can derail a life. She got hers back on track and became a leading advocate for victims. It is impossible to overstate the significance of the work of abuse survivors in bringing the church to some degree of accountability. Whatever progress occurred came about only because of pressure from outside the clergy culture.

*NCR* was the first publication that was both national and Catholic to deal with this ugly story at a time when few, including the editors here, could imagine the dimensions of the scandal.

Over the decades, the church has made progress in addressing the issue, most notably under Pope Francis with his tribunal for bishops and the forced resignations of bishops who have failed in their handling of sex abuse cases. But all of that still must be accompanied by a serious qualification: None of it happened voluntarily. All of it was forced by public pressure.

What remains is a void little spoken about but perhaps the longest-lasting and least-attended-to effect of the scandal. The failure of the bishops was not merely strategic or an example of extreme incompetence, though that all was certainly part of the case. The deeper failure was their betrayal, at a sacramental level, of the community they were charged to serve.

In their deceptions and rationales, they put aside the God of love and justice and mercy. They put aside the God who summoned the little children. They put aside, for venal reasons, the God of life they so ardently preached.

If we believe that God infuses every aspect of our lives, that that sacramental reality is a distinctive element of Catholic life, we are left wondering how our bishops, in their worst hour, could time and again turn their backs on that reality.

Peter, we know, made no excuses, didn't try to spin his denial. He "wept bitterly." The community today waits, wondering what sacramental act might restore trust so deeply broken.

---

[Tom Doyle](#) [Barbara Blaine](#) [Francis](#)

Catholic sex abuse cases

This story appeared in the July 3-16, 2015 print issue under the headline: *Time to end pattern of deceit, denial.*



Enjoy this article?  
Help support more like it by **donating today!**

**DONATE NOW** →

print

email

pdf

Like { 992 }

Tweet { 32 }

56

Show comments

SEARCH



**CATHOLIC PILGRIMAGES**  
**\$200 DISCOUNT**  
 USE PROMO CODE: **NCR**



WWW.206TOURS.COM





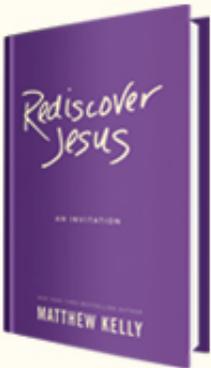
THE LEADER IN CATHOLIC PILGRIMAGES

### NCR EMAIL ALERTS

Sign up to get *NCR* updates by email. Existing users: change your preferences here. Enter your email address in the box below and click "Go."

GO

Privacy by SafeSubscribe<sup>SM</sup>



Order **Matthew Kelly's** new book today

**DynamicCatholic.com**  
Be Bold. Be Catholic.™

IN THIS ISSUE

[JULY 17-30, 2015](#)



**NCR**  
THE INDEPENDENT NEWS SOURCE

**A LATIN AMERICA HOMECOMING**

**Chilean locals resist bishop's appointment**

**Francis highlights themes of environment, family**

**After marriage ruling, bishops need new priorities**

This issue was published on July 30.

Catholic investing in changing times

Editorial: Go beyond a foot-stomping 'no'

NCR earns 'General Excellence' honor for 14th time in 15 years

Special Section: Spirituality [Print only]

Some articles are only available in the print newspaper and Kindle edition.

**SUBSCRIBE!**

## CHAPLAIN – Bon Secours Maria Manor

Bon Secours Maria Manor is focused on providing exceptional individualized care to seniors throughout the Tampa Bay region. The Mission of Bon Secours is to bring compassion to health care and to be Good Help to Those in Need®, especially those who are poor and dying. We are seeking a Chaplain to join our team and provide pastoral and spiritual care to assist residents and families in coping with illness and end of life care and providing support in times of stress and/or crisis.



For more information or to apply  
please **CLICK HERE.**

[careers.bonsecours.com](http://careers.bonsecours.com)

**BON SECOURS HEALTH SYSTEM**

## LATEST POSTS >

### Francis: Mining industry in need of 'a radical paradigm change'

by Brian Roewe [Eco Catholic](#)

### Links for 07/17/15

by Michael Sean Winters [Distinctly Catholic](#)

### Pope's quotes: Path of consecrated life

by NCR Staff [The Francis Chronicles](#)

### Morning Briefing

by Dennis Coday [NCR Today](#)

### Moody's reaffirms Chicago archdiocese's A1 rating, outlook remains negative

by Tom Gallagher [NCR Today](#)

### The Planned Parenthood Undercover Video

by Michael Sean Winters [Distinctly Catholic](#)

### Bishops' strategy endangering religious freedom

by Thomas Reese [Faith and Justice](#)

### The Iran nuclear agreement is a good deal

by Pat Perriello [NCR Today](#)

### 'The Look of Silence' exposes Indonesia's present-day legacy of genocide

by Sr. Rose Pacatte [NCR Today](#)

## Beyond the church's wage gap

by Nicole Sotelo Young Voices

[More posts >](#)



ACCOUNTABILITY

ART & MEDIA

FAITH & PARISH

GLOBAL

PEACE & JUSTICE

POLITICS

SPIRITUALITY

THEOLOGY

VATICAN

SISTERS' STORIES

[CONTACT](#) [ABOUT NCR](#) [ADVERTISE](#) [DONATE](#) [SUBSCRIBE](#)

National Catholic Reporter publications: [NCRonline.org](#) | [CelebrationPublications.org](#) | [GlobalSistersReport.org](#)

Copyright © The National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company | 115 E. Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111 | 1-800-444-8910