

Dear Brothers and Sisters



As a child he was, in his own words, disobedient to his parents, not because he had chosen a better way, but from a sheer love of doing so.

As a youth, his mother deplored and, as he remembered, warned him privately with great solicitude, "not to commit fornication." These appeared to him but womanish counsels, which he would have blushed to obey. Rather, he experienced the mists of passion steaming up out of the concupiscence of the flesh, and they so obscured and overcast his heart that he was unable to distinguish pure affection from unholy desire. Both boiled confusedly within him, and dragged his unstable youth down over the cliffs of unchaste desires and plunged him into a gulf of infamy.

He was tossed to and fro, and wasted, and poured out, and boiled over in his fornications. He followed the rushing of his own tide, and burst out of all bounds. The madness of lust held full sway in him - that madness which grants indulgence to human shamelessness, even though it is forbidden, and he gave himself entirely to it; wandering still farther into more and yet more barren fields of sorrow, in proud dejection and restless lassitude.

These may seem rather strong words, but they are his own, the words of St. Augustine, whose feast we celebrate this Tuesday August 28th.

What did all these experiences do to him? They led him to seek God and become one of the greatest saints in the history of the church. As he puts it: *I fell away from thee, O my God, and wandered too far from thee, my support. And became to myself a wasteland. Such was my heart, O God, such was my heart-- which thou didst pity even in that bottomless pit.*

While the writings and life of St. Augustine are usually uplifting, they are hard to read in the light of the recent Church scandals involving Cardinal Mc Carrick and the more than 300 priests involved in child abuse in Pennsylvania.

Augustine repented of his wayward life, and entered the Ministry having experienced a true and deep conversion.

Unlike him we are reading in the news about priests and bishops who have not only done unspeakable things to children and youth, but who have systematically covered up their abhorrent crimes for decades.

As a priest, and as your Pastor, this shakes me to the core, and leaves me deeply disturbed, to think that the Ministry I cherish has been so flagrantly abused by the heinous acts of so many who wear the collar.

In my mind there should be no statute of limitations for such criminals to hide behind.

The rot which has been exposed by the courageous report of the State Attorney General Josh Shapiro and the grand jury report of Pennsylvania, needs to be cut out.

I cannot fathom the depth of the suffering which the innocent victims have endured. Instead of being a place to meet the love of God, the Church was hiding in plain sight as an institution which protected pedophile criminal activity.

I applaud all those who have so bravely spoken out, and hold the criminals accountable. In my mind the abusers should be stripped of the clerical state and thrown into the worst dungeon.

I would like to suggest an open Forum to speak about these things, which we could do after the 10:30am Mass this Sunday Aug 26, in the McCarthy Center. I invite all to come, that we may have an open dialogue about these events. All are welcome, parishioners and non-parishioners.

Fr. Sean