

## **A Letter to the American Members of the College of Cardinals:**

We, the undersigned members of the Christian faithful, mindful of the exhortation of the Second Vatican Council that the laity “should openly reveal ... their needs and desires” to the spiritual shepherds of the Church, and that the laity are “sometimes even obliged to express their opinions on those things which concern the good of the Church” (LG 37, Canon 212.2&3) in faithful discharge of our responsibilities as members of the Body of Christ, submit to you, the American members of the College of Cardinals, the following:

We profess our love for Christ’s Church, its clergy and laity. We take seriously our mission to bring the Gospel to our world. We are not unmindful of the frailties of human nature and the forgiveness of God both for laity and clergy. However, we cannot tolerate the intolerable. The scandals associated with former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick reveal predatory and abusive behavior which has been known for years even as he rose to the highest ranks of the Church’s hierarchy. While he wounded and harmed the innocent, he continued to be promoted in the life of the Church. No community, even secular, can accept these egregious offenses against human dignity and common decency. Much less, can the Body of Christ or its leaders simply remove an offender of this type and move forward without a meaningful reform of systemic evil, collusion, and denial.

This corruption reaches the highest levels of the Church. We turn, therefore, to those who constitute the highest level of Church authority, to those who are called to serve the Bishop of Rome as his collaborators and advisers. We know neither the depth of this evil nor all its remedies. We do know this:

1. Beginning with the Roman Curia, there must be a cleansing of those who by action or silence were complicit in the rise of a known sexual predator in the ranks of the Church.
2. Pope Francis must effectively pursue the thorough reform of the Roman Curia and its finances to which he was called by his election.
3. Those who are called to advise Pope Francis must make clear to him that the accustomed secrecy and denials cannot exist in today’s world. He cannot at the same time accuse the Chilean people of calumny when they present their legitimate complaints against Bishop Juan Barros and

claim to be interested in reform. He can no longer wait to be forced to remove offenders.

4. Pope Francis must be challenged regarding the role of Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga as a nominal reformer coordinating C9, the Council of nine Cardinals, supposedly overseeing reform. The complaints from Maradiaga's seminarians regarding moral turpitude in his seminary cannot be answered by calling these forthright men "gossipers."

5. If Pope Francis is unable or unwilling to effect the necessary reforms, we hereby petition you to exercise your office and invite him to step aside, after the example of Pope Benedict, to allow for the election of a Pontiff who can and will effect true reform starting with the Roman Curia.

We recognize the great works of goodness in the Church and within the Roman Curia. We love the Church and we wish to bring our children, all youth and all people of good will to the joy of being Catholic. We cannot tolerate this breach of trust and respect. We will not accept bureaucratic nostrums about convening panels for discussion or the creation of policies. The Gospels suffice. Regardless of its effect on ecclesiastical careers or personal popularity in Rome, we exhort you to do what must be done. We assure you of our prayers for the success of your mission.

Signed,