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# Oakland Tribune Viewpoint: Crisis in Catholic Church apparent in

By Tim Stier

Contra Costa Times

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AS A Catholic priest in voluntary exile from the Diocese of Oakland since March 15, 2005, I decided a year ago to stand in public solidarity with those being excluded outside Christ the Light Cathedral in Oakland with a sign that reads: "Structural reform now! Include the Excluded: Women, Abuse Survivors, Gay Persons"

One recent Sunday a young man approached, read my sign and said to me: "I have a better wording for your sign: (expletive) the pope." Another passerby asked me not just shut it down?"

It's hard to hear such extreme criticism of the church I love, but in light of what I know, it is justified. The recent grand jury report out of Philadelphia revealing 24 more makes clear that the unspeakable crimes against children and youth and their cover-up by bishops continue unabated.

Philadelphia is not atypical; it just happens to have a courageous district attorney (a practicing Catholic no less). The Catholic Church is in a state of collapse, elitism and denial.

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When I listen to Catholic bishops of late, I find myself wondering what planet these men inhabit. The current Pope, Benedict XVI, is obsessed with saving California from what he sees as the grave threat of gay marriage. He says that cathedrals should not throw stones. For Bishop Cordileone or any bishop to pontificate on any topic remote from the faith is a disservice to the faith.

- The Oakland Diocese has lawsuits pending against at least two of its former priests for sexual abuse of minors.
- Within the last five years, the Diocese/people in the pews have paid out more than \$60 million to abuse survivors.
- Research shows that half of Catholic bishops and priests are not practicing celibacy at any given time.
- A high percentage of priests in the Oakland Diocese are closeted gay men while the Diocese publicly endorses the concept of "discreet" called Courage.

- Not one of the 66 percent of U.S. bishops who covered up and secretly reassigned known abuser priests has yet to be held accountable either by the church or by civil society.
- The rush to canonize Pope John Paul II as a saint without taking time to evaluate his handling of the clergy sex abuse crisis and cover-up makes a mockery of the papacy.
- Were it not for immigrants, the Diocese would be in a state of complete collapse for lack of interest.
- The Diocese broke its promise to not ask parishioners to help pay the huge bill on the Cathedral.

Bishop Cordileone would be better off listening to abuse survivors and others decimated by a structure of authority that is secretive, autocratic and dangerous.

The arrest last month of Msgr. William J. Lynn, secretary for clergy from 1992 to 2004 in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, who, according to grand jury findings, was a watershed moment in efforts to hold Catholic officials accountable for their crimes against children and youth.

Please join me and others on Sunday, April 10 outside the Cathedral in Oakland from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. for the first anniversary of this weekly protest against the leadership's denial and criminality.

Tim Stier is a Catholic priest in voluntary exile and is a resident of Oakland.

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