

Letters to the editor

http://www.stltoday.com/news/opinion/mailbag/catholic-church-must-encourage-openness-without-retaliation/article_5136639b-197c-5dc5-a78c-545af5caec1a.html

Catholic Church must encourage openness without retaliation

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Great to see the new pope taking a bold stand against priest sex abuse (April 12) , but his and his new committee have more work ahead than merely issuing apologies, however sincere. The church, like other large institutions, has existed for many a year amidst a culture of abuse. Thus, the cancer connected with clergy abuse has metastasized and affects far more than just victims and their families.

Up to now, the church's totalitarian-style leadership has discouraged the openness, honesty and transparency needed for real wholeness in the Body of Christ. When Catholics, particularly those practicing the faith in parishes and communal settings, can discuss the issue and bring up concerns without subtle retaliation (both from their lay and clergy fellows), then we may see the transformation talked about by this tremendous visionary in the Vatican.

As it stands, any principal, church employee or concerned Catholic who blows the whistle on foul play by clergy or religious receives treatment ranging from unfair to inexcusable. Their requests for consequences may be heeded but not without paying a price. Usually, that means some kind of ostracism, shaming treatment and or psychological manipulation, as part of the trend to "shoot the messenger" rather than corner the criminal.

The Catholic Church is a bottle under pressure: Sooner or later, the cap will blow.

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 Vatican must confront sex abuse