



September 14, 2018
Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross

Dear Voluntas sisters and brothers,

At our council meeting on September 4th, it was suggested that I write to the membership as a follow up to the email I sent about the current church crisis. At the root of the 2018 crisis is that the bishops excluded themselves from the discipline of the Dallas Charter of 2002 and that some have not been transparent in reporting clerical sex abuse cases and the subsequent financial payouts. Just a few days after the council meeting Attorney Generals in several states, including New Jersey and New York, have announced a review of church files following the template of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury investigation.

This is a painful moment in our history as we witness the collapse of church structures that have been operative for many years. The American government is now intervening because of the abuse of power by many of the American bishops. The challenge for us is to be rooted in faith while embracing with Christian hope the demand for transparency and much needed reform. The Church in the United States has reached a serious low point that calls us back to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Having said this, I can testify that our Voluntas priests who are in active ministry are doing an outstanding job. I take pride when I hear positive comments from other priests, laity and even some bishops about the good work that our priests are doing. I want to affirm our Voluntas priests and thank them for all that they do for the Lord and the Church. I ask that all of our lay members be sensitive to the added burden that has been placed on their shoulders as they minister to others joyfully and generously day in and day out. At the same time, it pains me to think of our lay members who are on the ground who have to absorb criticisms about the church at the watercoolers in the marketplace. You are our hope because you have credibility by your Christian witness in the arena of everyday life. Thank you for your membership in our Institute and all that you do for us.

As the Attorney Generals begin to subpoena church files, I want to assure you that the USA District has done its due diligence and have our home in order. Please rest assured that the following measures have been taken in recent years:

1. All Voluntas files are regularly updated and are saved on an electronic data base. These files have all been reviewed and all is in order.
2. All of our priest members have completed the criminal background checks and are Virtus certified. In addition our priest members participate in the monthly Virtus ongoing training program.
3. All of our Safe Environment policies and reporting systems for violations are on the Voluntasdeiusa.org website. Our Safe Environment Committee keeps meticulous records of

their meetings, deliberations, background checks and certifications as well as files of pending abuse cases.

4. In instances where there have been allegations against any of our priests, these have been carefully vetted by our Safe Environment committee and passed on to the Council for final review. We have dealt on a timely basis with local bishops in these cases and have been fully cooperative.

I want to share something that I think is very important for us as a community. I believe that this is a "Voluntas Moment" for the Church. The demand that is being made by so many people is for an end of clericalism. The laity must assume their rightful place in the Church as commissioned by their baptism. This is who we are as Voluntas Dei, cleric and lay together as one community loving and working in harmony. Fr. Parent was prophetic in his ecclesial vision for Voluntas Dei. In this respect, our Institute is more relevant than ever before given the current crisis in the Church. Our gift to the Church is for us to be faithful to who we are by living the spirituality of the three 5's.

I was recently at a meeting of religious superiors. Several of the provincials of men's orders were joking about the "perks" that come with their office. They asked me, "Tony, what perks do leaders get in Voluntas Dei." I proudly answered, "None." I wanted to continue but did not by saying that Voluntas Dei is about washing feet, as the Lord taught us and not about power, perks, and prestige.

The Risen Christ's first word to his apostles was "Shalom", the Hebrew word that means, "To fix what is broken." For Voluntas Dei "Shalom" is more than a wish; it is a way of life. We are committed to do our best to bring "Shalom" to a broken Church. We can only begin to imagine the pain of the abused and the pain of our Holy Father, Pope Francis as he leads the Church during this time of crisis throughout the world. As a Secular Institute of Pontifical Right, we affirm our loyalty and love for Pope Francis and are committed by our spirituality of peacemaking to do all that we can to "fix what is broken" by living our Voluntas Dei charism.

It is at times like this that I am deeply grateful for each of you in my life. Please know that I love you, support you and am always here for you. Let's all recommit ourselves to be that for one another. After all, isn't that what Voluntas Dei is all about?

Fraternally,



Anthony J. Ciorra, IV Dei
Director, United States District

