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[All emphases are from the Boston Catholic Journal Editor]

LETTER TO POPE FRANCIS FROM CATHOLIC WOMEN

August 30, 2018

His Holiness, Pope Francis
Vatican City

Your Holiness:

You have said that you seek “a more incisive female presence in the Church,” and that “women are capable of seeing things with a different angle from [men], with a different eye. Women are able to pose questions that we men are not able to understand.”

We write to you, Holy Father, to pose questions that need answers.

We are Catholic women deeply committed to our faith and profoundly grateful for Church teachings, the Sacraments, and the many good bishops and priests who have blessed our lives.

Our hearts are broken, our faith tested, by the escalating crisis engulfing our beloved Church. We are angry, betrayed and disillusioned. The pain and suffering of the victims never ends, as each news cycle brings more horrific revelations of sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, cover-ups, and deceit—even at the Church’s highest levels.

Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò’s recent statement impels us to reach out to you directly for answers. His testimony **accuses you, Holy Father, and highly placed cardinals of turning a blind eye** to former Cardinal McCarrick’s egregious behavior, and promoting this predator as a global spokesman and spiritual leader. Is this true?

These are devastating allegations. As USCCB President Cardinal Daniel D. DiNardo recently stated, “The questions raised deserve answers that are conclusive and based on evidence.” We agree.

Several crucial questions raised by Archbishop Viganò’s statement, however, require neither lengthy investigations nor physical evidence. They **require only your direct response, Holy Father**. When reporters questioned you recently about Archbishop Viganò’s charges, **you replied, “I will not say a single word on this.”** You told reporters to “read the statement carefully and make your own judgment.”

To your hurting flock, Pope Francis, your words are inadequate. They sting, reminiscent of the clericalism you so recently condemned. We need leadership, truth, and transparency. **We, your flock, deserve your answers now.**

Specifically, we humbly implore you to answer the following questions, as the answers are surely known to you. Archbishop Viganò says that in June 2013 he conveyed to you this message (in essence) about then-Cardinal McCarrick:

“He corrupted generations of seminarians and priests and Pope Benedict ordered him to withdraw to a life of prayer and penance.”

Is this true? What did Archbishop Viganò convey to you in June 2013 about then-Cardinal McCarrick?

When did you learn of any allegations of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct with adults by then-Cardinal McCarrick?

When did you learn of Pope Benedict’s restrictions on then-Cardinal McCarrick? And did you release then-Cardinal McCarrick from any of Pope Benedict’s restrictions?

Holy Father, in your letter to the People of God on the scandals, you wrote: “An awareness of sin helps us to acknowledge the errors, the crimes and the wounds caused in the past and allows us, in the present, to be more open and committed along a journey of renewed conversion.” That’s why **we expect you, our Holy Father, to be honest with us.**

Please do not turn from us. You’ve committed yourself to changing clerical ways in the Church. That a cardinal would prey on seminarians is abhorrent. **We need to know we can trust you to be honest with us about what happened. The victims who have suffered so greatly need to know they can trust you. Families, who will be the source of the Church’s renewal, need to know we can trust you, and thus trust the Church.**

Please do not keep us at arm's length on these questions. **We are faithful daughters of the Church who need the truth** so we can help rebuild. We are not second-class Catholics to be brushed off while bishops and cardinals handle matters privately. We have a right to know. **We have a *right* to your answers.**

We are wives, mothers, single women, consecrated women, and religious sisters.

We are the **mothers** and **sisters** of your priests, seminarians, future priests and religious. We are the Church's **lay leaders**, and the mothers of the next generation.

We are **professors** in your seminaries, and **leaders in Catholic chanceries and institutions.**

We are **theologians, evangelists, missionaries and founders of Catholic apostolates.**

We are the people who sacrifice to fund the Church's good work.

We are **the backbone of Catholic parishes, schools, and dioceses.**

We are the hands, the feet, and the heart of the Church.

In short, **we are the Church, every bit as much as the cardinals and bishops around you.**

Holy Father, we are the "incisive presence" the Church needs, and we need your answers.

With love for Christ and the Church,

47,256 signatures

as of May 14, 2019

<https://catholicwomensforum.org/letter-to-pope-francis/>

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