



***Comments Following the Spiritual Retreat
Made by the Bishops of the United States
at Mundelein Seminary***

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*Monday in the First Week in Ordinary Time***

Last week nearly 300 bishops of the United States completed a week at Mundelein Seminary near Chicago on a spiritual retreat suggested by Pope Francis. The purpose was to pray for victims of clergy child abuse, to seek forgiveness for those times we have not properly dealt with allegations or treated victims with respect, and to seek healing for all, including all in the Church who are scandalized by our sins and failings.

The retreat was mostly in silence with opportunity for daily adoration and confession. No business was conducted.

The retreat director was Father Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., Preacher to the Papal Household, a Capuchin Franciscan. He was appointed by Saint John Paul II and has ministered to three popes and their curia officials. He is 84 years and most impressive in energy, in knowledge, in spirituality, and in candor. Over those days he preached 11 one-hour presentations and seven homilies including one at a moving penitential prayer service.

For me his powerful presentations can be summarized by a call to return to the basics, with Jesus Christ at our center and openness to the Holy Spirit to guide our actions and to restrain our sinful promptings. When we lose Jesus as the center of our lives we in a way become gods ourselves, which results in self-centered sin. The Holy Spirit can protect us from ourselves if we open our hearts to Him. The retreat ended with the bishops praying the Litany to the Holy Spirit and robustly singing *Veni Sancte Spiritus*.

Given these difficult times, his message was also one of Hope because Christ remains with us through all storms, including the hurricane we are experiencing in the Church today.

He movingly recalled the scripture passage when the disciples were in the midst of a storm on the sea in Galilee. They were panicking while Jesus was on the boat sleeping. It was as if they had forgotten He was there. When He awoke, He calmed the storm and asked “(w)hy are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?”(Mk 40). That is a good question for us to ponder.

We bishops anxiously await the meeting next month when the leaders of bishops conferences from around the world will gather with the Holy Father to consider responding as the universal church to the horror of clergy sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults. We remain resolute in adopting and enforcing policies for the Church in America to better reach out to victims with respect, to restore trust among the faithful who are shaken by recent revelations, to assure accountability of bishops, and to discover the facts concerning former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick.

Please pray for Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, our USCCB President, and the Holy Father during this sensitive and fateful meeting.

May Our Lady, untier of knots, pray for us.