

LA's Mahony: Humiliation involves 'being scapegoated'

Joshua J. McElwee | Feb. 20, 2013 NCR Today
LA abuse cases

For the third time in the past week, Cardinal Roger Mahony has written of the humiliation he has experienced since being publicly disgraced for his handling of priests accused of sex abuse in the 1980s.

Reflecting on the matter on his personal blog Wednesday, Mahony obliquely refers to his experience as a "painful and public humiliation, which is spiritually a grace-opportunity."

Mahony writes that he has "tried to live out -- poorly and inadequately far too often" two "implications of humiliation:"

1. "The acceptance of being scapegoated, pointing out the necessary connection between humiliation and redemption;"
2. That the Catholic church's continuing sexual abuse scandals are "putting us, the clergy and the church, where we belong -- with the excluded ones."

"Jesus was painted with the same brush as the two thieves crucified with him," Mahony [continues](#) [1], referencing the book *On Carrying A Scandal Biblically* by Canadian Oblate Fr. Ronald Rolheiser.

"[Rolheiser's] example of Mary at the foot of the cross pondering all that is happening has meant so much for me, and I turn to her daily seeking her help to carry this scandal as she carried the scandal of Jesus' cross with such inner strength," Mahony writes.

Mahony, who retired as archbishop of Los Angeles in 2011, is expected to travel to Rome in coming days to attend the meeting of cardinals that will elect the next head of the Roman Catholic church.

The cardinal, who is 76 years of age, has faced sustained criticism since January, when the Los Angeles archdiocese released some 12,000 church files detailing its handling of sex abuse cases as part of a court order.

Some of the documents detail Mahony and other church officials' shielding of priests accused of sex abuse in the 1980s.

The current archbishop of Los Angeles, Jose Gomez, [announced](#) [2] Jan. 31 Mahony would "no longer have any administrative or public duties" in the Los Angeles archdiocese.

Mahony responded to that announcement Feb. 1, saying Gomez had "not once" raised the issue with him and that under Mahony's leadership the Los Angeles archdiocese eventually became one of the most strict in the nation regarding sex abuse.

In a posting to his blog Monday, Mahony [wrote](#) [3] that his personal Lenten journey involves suffering and "never protesting misunderstandings, and never getting angry because of false accusations."

On Feb. 15, Mahony said he was "not ready" for the outcry of criticism he has faced since the documents' release.

"To be honest with you, I have not reached the point where I can actually pray for more humiliation," Mahony [wrote then](#) [4]. "I'm only at the stage of asking for the grace to endure the level of humiliation at the moment."

In today's blog, Mahony [continues](#) [1] (emphases his):

Rolheiser gives us the golden rule for our own thoughts and conducts as we are being humiliated: "*To ponder in the biblical sense means to hold, carry, and transform tension so as not to give it back in kind.*"

"Jesus models this for us. He took in hatred, held it, transformed it, and gave back love; he took in bitterness, held it, transformed it, and gave back graciousness; he took in curses, held them, transformed them, and gave back blessing; he took in betrayal, held it, transformed it, and gave back forgiveness." That's what it means to ponder biblically.

I surely need your prayers and your encouragement in my own life to handle all of my mistakes, omissions, and commissions as God asks, and as Jesus and Mary lived out: to take in what swirls around me, to hold it, to carry it, to transform it and to give it back as grace, blessing, and gift.

Jesus and Mary, walk with us and show us how to follow you!

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Links:

[1] <http://cardinalrogermahonyblogs1a.blogspot.com/2013/02/carrying-scandal-biblically.html>

[2] <http://ncronline.org/node/44051>

[3] <http://ncronline.org/node/45571>

[4] <http://cardinalrogermahonyblogs1a.blogspot.com/2013/02/called-to-humiliation.html>