

Michael W. Ryan  
[street address]  
Milton, MA 02186  
www.ChurchSecurity.info  
[telephone]

[Unanswered as of 4-3-2020 ergo assumed never to be answered]

November 27, 2019

PERSONAL ATTENTION

Most Reverend José H. Gómez, President  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 Fourth Street NE  
Washington, DC 20017-1104

Dear Archbishop Gómez:

Congratulations on your election to the Presidency of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. As you know as well or better than anyone, you're taking the helm at an especially troubled time in the Church's 2000-year history and will need all of the help and good fortune you can muster. I sincerely hope both of those elements are forthcoming when and where needed.

The purpose of this letter, Archbishop Gómez, is to bring to your attention a matter I have been importuning your predecessors to act upon for the past 30 years. As you will see from my most recent (unacknowledged) letter to Archbishop DiNardo, I have been singularly unsuccessful in my efforts to convince any of the last ten USCCB (formerly NCCB/USCC) Presidents that the Conference is morally as well as administratively and fiscally obligated to implement genuinely secure procedures for protecting the weekly collections Conference-wide.

Assuming you are even afforded an opportunity to read this letter, Archbishop Gómez, your first reaction might be to refer it to a member of your staff with the request they evaluate it and decide upon a course of action. Indeed, that is likely how Archbishop DiNardo and Archbishop Kurtz, his predecessor, handled my prior correspondence. If you do that, however, I know I won't hear back from you in spite of the fact we're talking about protecting the Church's primary source of income as well as the souls of the tens of thousands of clergy and lay persons who, 52 weeks a year, have direct access to unprocessed collections within the Conference's 17,000 parishes.

As I believe you're aware, Archbishop Gómez, the lay group *Voice of the Faithful* has, for the past three years, conducted reviews of the websites of each of the Conference's 177 territorial arch/dioceses to determine how transparent each one is with respect to the amount of financial information they make available at their respective websites. Of the ten multi-part questions covered by the reviews is one dealing with the weekly collections. That question asks whether detailed collection and counting procedures are posted at the website and, if so, whether the two most important elements of a genuinely secure system (recommended by the Nat'l Leadership Roundtable on Church Management) are present: mandatory use of serially-numbered, tamper-evident collection containers, and counting teams consisting of three or more unrelated persons.

In each of VOTF's three annual reviews, Archbishop Gómez, the arch/diocese scored most poorly on that question. On the most recent review, only 100 of the 177 arch/diocese posted their collection and counting guidelines. Of the 100 that did, only 19 require the two elements needed to establish and maintain a genuinely secure Sunday collection system. I regret to advise you that your own archdiocese still does not require the use of serially-numbered, tamper-evident collection containers, or counting teams consisting of three or more unrelated persons. In failing to do so - and certainly assuming that is not your intention - you are abiding a very real occasion of serious sin for the hundreds of clergy and lay people within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles who have any access to their parishes' collections prior to their documentation and deposit.

If only 19% of the 100 arch/diocese that made their Sunday collection guidelines available can possibly be deemed to have genuinely secure procedures in place, Archbishop Gómez, it seems reasonable, even generous, to assume that only 15 or the 77 who did not post their guidelines have genuinely secure procedures in place. That comes to only 34 of 177 arch/diocese that are possibly affording their primary source of income an adequate level of protection and shielding their clergy and laity from the temptation to steal. Bear in mind, this is after three consecutive years of reviews, the results of which were each shared in a timely manner with every bishop.

If you review my unanswered letter to Archbishop DiNardo, Archbishop Gómez, you'll see that the topic of what the USCCB is and is not empowered to impose upon its membership has been turned every way but loose. Canon 455 empowers a bishops' conference to enact legislation that, if approved by 2/3 of the member bishops, becomes applicable throughout that conference. I'm sure you would agree the affected Vatican dicastery would most certainly not withhold its approval in a matter as vital as this is to the fiscal and moral wellbeing of an entire conference.

Finally, Archbishop Gómez, it has long been abundantly clear to me that an unknown but likely significant number of those clergy who were found to have abused vulnerable children entrusted to their care financed their heinous activities by stealing from inadequately protected collections. Those predators are of course morally responsible for the crimes they commit, but I believe you would agree that a level of responsibility also attaches to those who, knowing the collections are inadequately protected, nevertheless make a conscious decision not to protect them.

For at least the past quarter century, the USCCB has been well aware of the average collection's great vulnerability but has intentionally chosen to ignore it. My question to the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops membership, therefore, is this: Notwithstanding the good things each of you have no doubt done in your lives, how will you explain that deliberate omission when standing before our Lord on the day of judgement in which I can only assume each bishop still believes? As the 11<sup>th</sup> USCCB President with whom I have corresponded, Archbishop Gómez, I pray you will be the one who finally recognizes this evil within our Church and acts to eradicate it.

Most sincerely,

[signed] M. W. Ryan

Michael W. Ryan

Enclosure (1)

## FOLLOWUP NOTE SENT TO ARCHBISHOP'S RESIDENCE

January 6, 2020

Dear Archbishop Gomez;

I'm taking this means of contacting you to cover the possibility that my more formal correspondence of Nov. 27 was intercepted by one or another no doubt well-meaning minions at both USCCB headquarters and your own offices in Los Angeles. While I realize the likelihood of that happening to three (3) separate mailing pieces is minuscule, I'm a great believer in Murphy's Law and endeavor to cover all eventualities.

The decision by your predecessors, Archbishop Kurtz and Cardinal DiNardo, to completely ignore my communications is, to me and other concerned laity, clear and convincing proof of the existence and role of hierarchicalism which BC Jesuit Fr. James F. Keenan has labeled "the father and promoter" of clericalism. My so far unsuccessful 30-year mission to convince the USCCB leadership of their moral and fiduciary obligation to secure the Church's primary source of income appears to confirm Fr. Keenan's hypotheses.

I look forward to your reply.

[signed] M. W. Ryan

