

Michael W. Ryan  
[street address]  
Milton, MA 02186  
[www.ChurchSecurity.info](http://www.ChurchSecurity.info)

March 12, 2017

PERSONAL ATTENTION

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, President  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops  
3211 Fourth Street NE  
Washington, DC 20017-1104

Dear Cardinal DiNardo:

I am writing to you today to bring to your attention a matter I have been pursuing for the past 30 years, beginning within the Archdiocese of Boston in 1987 during Cardinal Law's tenure and progressing to the NCCB (now USCCB) in 1990 during Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk's tenure as its President. You are the 10th President with whom I have corresponded.

The matter in question, Your Eminence, is the Church's primary source of income - the weekly collections - and the USCCB's failure to mandate that they be afforded an adequate level of protection Conference-wide. I would spare you the litany of reasons why the implementation of genuinely secure procedures is both a moral and fiduciary obligation but, in all candor, none of your predecessors seem to have fully comprehended that; if they had, they would have acted to fulfill it.

In this matter, the USCCB's moral obligation is the easiest of the two to establish, involving (as it most assuredly does) serious sin - theft - that is wholly within the USCCB's authority to prevent. How can the USCCB accomplish that? It's really quite simple: develop procedures that prevent theft, and then implement those procedures Conference-wide via [Canon 455](#) which the USCCB has availed itself of in [many other far less important matters](#). Further simplifying the solution is the fact that [comprehensive collection theft prevention procedures already exist](#); they were codified and implemented by the Archdiocese of Chicago in 2005 and were later adopted by the [National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management](#) as their one-and-only recommended *Best Practice* for handling collections.

The USCCB's fiduciary obligation is a little trickier to establish due to the USCCB's past use of arch/diocesan sovereignty or autonomy as a justification for its repeated refusal to mandate genuinely secure procedures. That said, however, the fact that (with at least a two thirds vote of the prelates who belong to the USCCB) many other norms have been enacted Conference-wide contradicts the claim that individual prelates' autonomy precludes the use of Canon 455 in this matter. I have no way of knowing whether the proposal has ever been informally considered, Your Eminence, but I feel strongly that the need and obligation are of such great importance to the fiscal viability and moral integrity of the Church that the leadership as represented by the USCCB can never justify failing to fulfill its obligation in this matter.

Why is it so important that genuinely secure procedures be imposed by the USCCB as opposed to individual prelates? Well, for one thing, [there are nearly 200 arch/dioceses nationwide](#), but essentially only one way to effectively secure the collections. This then begs the question of whether it makes any sense whatsoever for each of nearly 200 arch/dioceses to flounder around struggling to come up with the right combination of equipment and procedures required to effectively secure their arch/diocese's collections. In a word, the obvious answer to that is "no."

Another equally if not more important reason for Conference-wide procedures, however, is the fact that were an individual prelate to implement genuinely secure collection procedures within his arch/diocese, upon that prelate's departure his successor could - without consultation and for any or no reason whatsoever - rescind those procedures and thereby re-expose that arch/diocese's primary source of income to repetitive (weekly) theft. The only way to avoid the possibility of that outcome is through the issuance of USCCB mandated guidelines.

In my opinion, Your Eminence, and in the opinion of many of my fellow Catholics and others with whom I have spoken over the past 25+ years, the USCCB's failure to take corrective action in this matter renders it unqualified to speak with moral authority on major issues of our time. Scripture is replete with lessons relevant to this situation, not the least of which is found in Matthew 7:3-4: *Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove that splinter from your eye,' while the wooden beam is in your eye? And perhaps even more relevant is Luke 17:1: He said to his disciples, "Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the person through whom they occur."* I'm sure you would agree that inadequately protected collections are a great temptation to sin, and the USCCB's knowing refusal to exercise its authority to correct that condition constitutes tacit approval of a known cause of serious sin.

Finally, Your Eminence, it is likely you do not recall receiving a copy of [my 2011 self-published book, NONFEASANCE](#), which was mailed to you along with a personal letter in April of 2012, but I would be happy to forward an e-copy of the book to you or to your designee for use as a reference in connection with the USCCB's reexamination of this important matter. Thirty years is a long time for anyone to focus upon a single issue, but it will have been worth all of the time and expense I have invested in this matter if the USCCB finally acknowledges and acts upon its clear-cut obligation to permanently remove this moral blight from the Church in America.

Most sincerely,

[signed] M. W. Ryan

Michael W. Ryan

[street address]

Milton, MA 02186

[www.ChurchSecurity.info](http://www.ChurchSecurity.info)