



OF JUDGES AND JUSTICE. Far left: Brett Kavanaugh (l) is sworn in as associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court by retired Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy (r) before wife Ashley Estes Kavanaugh (2nd l), daughters Margaret (2nd l) and Elizabeth (c), and U.S. President Donald Trump Oct. 8 at the White House. Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images Near left: EWTN CEO and Chairman of the Board Michael Warsaw welcomed the Nov. 29 victory awarded EWTN against the contraceptive mandate. CNA photo

Turbulent Year Further Scarred by Scandal

2018 IN REVIEW

BY MATTHEW E. BUNSON
SENIOR EDITOR

The Church in the United States endured the worst year of news regarding the clergy sex-abuse crisis since the dark days of the 2002 scandal.

On June 20, Catholics learned that the Vatican had launched an investigation into allegations that Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, retired archbishop of Washington, had sexually abused a minor starting in the 1970s and had engaged in the sexual abuse of seminarians and other sexual improprieties. This was followed Aug. 14 by a report from a Pennsylvania grand jury that detailed in graphic and horrifying fashion the abuse of at least 1,000 children by more than 300 priests across Pennsylvania over seven decades and the cover-up of their activities by Church leaders. The greater number of cases detailed took place before 2002.

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, promised action to deal with the McCarrick scandal and to hold bishops accountable, but in his Sept. 13 meeting with Pope Francis, his request for an apostolic visitation by the Holy See went unfulfilled. The situation deteriorated further at the annual fall meeting of the U.S. bishops in Baltimore, with the news that the Vatican had instructed the bishops not to vote on several proposals to hold themselves accountable. In addition, at the same meeting, a symbolic resolution asking Pope Francis to release all relevant documents in the possession of the Holy See was defeated. This news failed to satisfy many Catholics who felt that 2018 had brought the greatest crisis in the history of the Church in the United States.

Domestic politics proved just as rancorous to many Americans, as the country witnessed the nasty Senate confirmation fight over Judge Brett Kavanaugh to replace U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy, who announced his retirement June 27. Kavanaugh faced an accusation that he had sexually assaulted Christine Blasey Ford when they were in high school 35 years ago. Kavanaugh gave an aggressive response to Ford's charge — and sev-

eral others — before the Senate Judiciary Committee. He was eventually confirmed Oct. 6 by a 50-48 Senate vote.

That battle set the stage for the midterm elections, in which the Democrats won some 40 seats and took control of the House of Representatives and seven governorships. Republicans strengthened their control of the U.S. Senate with three pickups.

In January, President Donald Trump kept his promise to support the pro-life movement at the annual March for Life. He told the marchers on the National Mall, while speaking before an audience in the White House Rose Garden, "You love every child, born and unborn, because you believe that every life is sacred, that every child is a precious gift from God." In May, the U.S. State Department removed the term "reproductive rights" from its annual human-rights reports, a term described by the pro-life movement as a euphemism for abortion.

On May 18, the Trump administration declared new Health and Human Services' regulations on Title X: Organizations receiving funding are now required to have separation from organizations providing abortions. That was followed by the decision to proceed with religious and moral exemptions to the HHS contraceptive mandate, a move that brought reprieve to Catholic and other religious employers who had waged a legal battle all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. On Nov. 29, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the



ATONEMENT AND FIRE'S FURY. Bishop Barry Knestout lies in front of the cross during the 'Mass of Atonement' at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Sept. 14 in Richmond, Virginia, in light of the clerical crisis. Shelby Lum/Richmond Times-Dispatch via AP A car dealership burns as the Camp Fire moves through Paradise, California, Nov. 8. The huge fire claimed more than 80 lives. Justin Sullivan/Getty Image



11th Circuit vacated a 2014 district court decision against the Eternal Word Television Network, bringing to a successful end the network's lawsuit against the contraceptive mandate.

Finally, the year ended with a federal judge in Texas declaring the Affordable Care Act to be unconstitutional, setting off what will likely be a new legal fight destined to end once more at the U.S. Supreme Court.



BELOVED SONG. Irving Berlin's iconic *God Bless America* turned 100 in 2018. 2018 | AP photo/J. Scott Applewhite

CHURCH IN CRISIS. Top right: Those affected by clergy sexual abuse comfort each other as Attorney General Josh Shapiro speaks at an Aug. 14 press conference for the release of the grand jury report on seven decades of sexual abuse and cover-up in six Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania. Steve Mellon/Post-Gazette via AP



Below right: Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, shown celebrating Mass at St. Mary's Church Oct. 5, 2002, in Rockville, Maryland, resigned in disgrace this summer, following the revelation of credible abuse allegations. Stefan Zaklin/Getty Images



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2018 IN REVIEW

BY MATTHEW E. BUNSON
SENIOR EDITOR

In May, in the once-great bastion of Catholic culture in Ireland, a solid majority of Irish voters repealed the Irish Constitution's Eighth Amendment that had recognized the equal right to life of the unborn and mothers. The decision and the subsequent legislation that was approved by the Irish Parliament unleashed abortion for any reason up to 12 weeks and, on the grounds of "a risk" of serious harm to the physical or mental health of the mother, up to "viability," meaning, in effect, late-term abortion.

On June 14, Argentina's Chamber of Deputies approved abortion for the country, but the proposal was narrowly defeated on Aug. 9 by the Argentine Senate. Pro-abortion groups continue to push for abortion across Latin America and Africa.

On Nov. 11, world leaders gathered in Paris to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I. Days after French President Emmanuel Macron delivered a blistering speech against nationalism at the commemoration, Paris was rocked by massive riots by the so-called *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) against his government's economic policies, especially Macron's fossil-fuel tax

increases. Meanwhile, Great Britain sank into political chaos as Prime Minister Theresa May tried to negotiate a deal with the European Union over "Brexit," her country's departure from the European Union. She barely survived a no-confidence vote by Parliament in December and was forced to delay a vote on her Brexit plan.

In Italy, voters turned to conservative political parties in a rejection of the EU's bitterly divisive immigration policies and economic regulations that have been taking place elsewhere in Europe. Italy's far-right coalition government of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte was especially criticized by the Italian bishops for its anti-migrant decrees in September.

On Dec. 11, President Donald Trump signed the Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act (H.R. 390) that authorizes and directs the federal government to fund organizations — including faith-based groups — providing needed resources to Christian, Yazidi and other survivors targeted by ISIS. This was welcome relief for Christian victims of genocide in the Near East, but across the globe Christians continued to suffer severe persecutions.

The Pakistani Christian Asia Bibi was acquitted of blasphemy charges by Pakistan's Supreme Court but had to live in hiding for fear of her life and that of her family,

as Islamists called for her death. Italy offered her asylum, but the United Kingdom — to the anger of many English voters — refused to extend the same offer, for fear of offending Muslims in the country.

The Christians in the Holy Land continued to struggle, as well.

In February, the Christian leaders in Jerusalem of the Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian Churches briefly closed the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem to protest the contentious tax plan and property legislation proposed by Israeli government officials. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat agreed to create a committee to find a solution to the crisis, but it was a reminder of the tenuous existence of the ancient churches in the region. In Nigeria, more than 6,000 Christians were killed in 2018 by the Islamist group Boko Haram. In China, the Communist government continues its crackdown on all religions, especially Catholicism, despite its signed agreement with the Vatican in September.

One major breakthrough for peace did come in June, when President Trump and North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un held a summit for peace in Singapore. The first meeting ever between the leaders of the United States and North Korea, the summit began a process of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.



REMEMBRANCE. People dressed as Romanian army forces from World War I take part in a military parade Dec. 1 marking the country's unification in 1918. 2018 also marked the centenary of the end of the First World War. Daniel Mihailescu/AFP/Getty Images

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OF IRELAND AND ISRAEL. Pro-life activists take part in the 'Rally for Life' demonstration at Stormont on July 7 in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Its neighbor voted in May to overturn the Eighth Amendment in the Irish Constitution, which equally protected the unborn and their mothers. Charles McQuillan/Getty Images People pray May 8 in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, which began hosting the U.S. Embassy to Israel May 14. The embassy was formerly in Tel Aviv. Spencer Platt/Getty Images



HANDOUTS, HAVENS AND HEROES. Clockwise from above: Members of a pro-family group hand out leaflets Nov. 18 in Taipei ahead of a landmark vote on 'LGBT' rights. Although Taiwan's top court in May 2017 legalized same-sex 'marriage,' voters on Nov. 24 overwhelmingly affirmed traditional marriage and voted to remove content reflecting gender ideology from school curricula. Chris Stowers/AFP/Getty Images A Chinese national flag flies in front of a church near the city of Pingdingshan in Henan province. The Holy See and China signed an agreement on bishops' appointments in September, but religious crackdowns continue. AP photo/Ng Han Guan French President Emmanuel Macron attends a March 28 national tribute to slain Col. Arnaud Beltrame, the police officer who swapped his place with a woman during a terrorist hostage situation. Christophe Morin/FP3/Getty Images



HELP FOR VICTIMS. U.S. President Donald Trump signs H.R. 390, the Iraq and Syria Genocide Relief and Accountability Act of 2018, in the Oval Office at the White House Dec. 11 in Washington. Archbishop Bashar Warda of the Chaldean Catholic Diocese of Erbil and Carl Anderson of the Knights of Columbus are among those witnessing the historic signing. Mark Wilson/Getty Images



A Pope and His Encyclical Shine Amid Crisis

NEW SAINTS. Special banners with the official portraits of Pope Paul VI (r) and Archbishop Óscar Romero hang on the facade of St. Peter's Basilica before the Oct. 14 canonization Mass in which they were officially declared saints along with five other holy men and women.



Daniel Ibáñez/CNA



CHINA-VATICAN AGREEMENT. Worshippers receive Communion at the Mother of Fatima Church in Taipei Sept. 23. Worshippers at Masses in Hong Kong and Taiwan were largely positive about a new deal regarding bishops' appointments between China and the Vatican, despite fears Beijing is trying to up its control of the Church. Daniel Shih/AFP/Getty Images



SHARING A MEAL. Pope Francis arrives at the Paul VI audience hall to have lunch with people in need Nov. 18, marking the World Day of the Poor. Vincenzo Pinta/AF//Getty Images

2018 IN REVIEW

BY MATTHEW E. BUNSON
SENIOR EDITOR

Pope Francis struggled throughout much of 2018 in the fight against clergy sexual abuse. In January, he traveled to Peru and Chile and was subsequently forced to apologize for what he described as "errors in perception and judgment" over the grotesque situation of abuse in Chile. In May, he met with several Chilean abuse survivors, reportedly told them, "I was part of the problem," and apologized for dismissing accusations of cover-up by Chilean bishops. He summoned all of the bishops of Chile to the Vatican in May and accepted the resignations of several Chilean bishops for their failures in dealing with the crisis. The Vatican was also confronted with a homosexual scandal involving Honduras' major seminary and accusations of homosexual impropriety and financial misconduct by the auxiliary bishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

On Aug. 20, the Pope issued a letter addressing the shocking Pennsylvania grand jury report that acknowledged "once more the suffering endured by many minors due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons."

Days later, Pope Francis was blindsided during his trip to Ireland by the shocking accusations made against him by the former nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Viganò, regarding the sexual misconduct of now-Archbishop Theodore McCarrick. The Holy Father refused to speak about the issue. Archbishop McCarrick resigned from the College of Cardinals on July 28 and was ordered by the Pope to serve a life of prayer and penance. The Holy See later promised an investigation into the McCarrick scandal.

The crisis also struck the Pope's council of cardinal-advisers, the so-called "C9," including Cardinal Francisco Javier Errázuriz Ossa of Chile and Cardinal George Pell of Australia, who were caught up in legal troubles over sexual abuse or its cover-up.

By year's end, three members of the C9 had departed, even as the group

worked to complete an apostolic constitution to formalize the reform of the Roman Curia, one of the main tasks for which Pope Francis was elected.

The Holy Father also issued a new apostolic exhortation on holiness, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, in March, added 14 new members to the College of Cardinals in May, and attended the World Meeting of Families in Dublin in August. The Pope also canonized seven new saints Oct. 14, including Pope St. Paul VI and Archbishop Óscar Romero. The canonizations were a reminder of the universal call to holiness that was such a feature of Pope Paul's teachings. The courage of the late pontiff was also honored on the 50th anniversary of his 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, which reaffirmed Church teaching on contraception.

In October, bishops from around the world gathered in Rome for the Synod of Bishops on the theme of "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment." The gathering was notable — and controversial — for its embrace of the concept of "synodality," described as a process of listening and accompanying in the Church. Some synod fathers apparently warned in discussion that synodality brings the risk of democratizing and ultimately destroying Church governance and authority. Others said it hinged on "the functioning of the Church." The synod's final approved report paragraph similarly described synodality as nothing less than "the 'walking together' of God's flock on the paths of history meeting Christ the Lord," quoting Pope Francis' 2015 "Address for the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Synod of Bishops."

The Pope continued his customary schedule of travels in 2018. In addition to traveling to Chile, Peru and Ireland, he visited Switzerland in June and Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in September. On March 17, he also journeyed to the Italian towns of Pietrelcina and San Giovanni Rotondo to mark the 50th anniversary of the death of the beloved St. Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio). In September, the Holy See announced that it had reached a highly contentious agreement with the People's Republic of China on the appointment of bishops in the country.

The year ended with the shocking verdict in the trial of Cardinal George Pell of Australia on historic sex-abuse charges and with no end in sight for the controversies confronting the Church.



PAPAL CONCERNS. From top to bottom: In August, Archbishop Carlo Viganò published a hotly discussed testimony that accused the Holy See of covering up for disgraced U.S. ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who was credibly accused of multiple cases of sexual abuse. Photo by Edward Pentin Pope Francis poses with his advisory committee of cardinals during a 2013 meeting at the Vatican. In 2018, the Vatican treasurer and Australia's most senior Catholic figure, Cardinal George Pell, and Cardinal Francisco Errázuriz were both removed from the Holy Father's advisers. Sipa via AP Images The Vatican's top abuse investigator, Maltese Archbishop Charles Scicluna (l), and fellow papal envoy Jordi Bertomeu, shown June 13, arrived in Santiago, Chile, to take witness statements from victims of sexual abuse in the Chilean Church. Claudio Reyes/AFP/Getty Images

Scandal, Loss of Confidence Contribute to a Heavy Spirit

2018 IN REVIEW

It is unlikely that Pope Francis will publicly describe 2018 as an *annus horribilis*, as Queen Elizabeth II did in 1992, when a year of scandals in the royal family was crowned by a terrible fire at Windsor Castle.

Scandals there have been aplenty in the Church, but thus far no fire at the Vatican.

The Catholic Church ends 2018 with a heavy spirit. It is not the series of scandals alone, but the loss of confidence in the traditional solution in times of crisis, namely recourse to Rome, as adequate to the task.

The year began with the most catastrophic papal trip in history. The aftermath of the disaster in Chile tainted everything that followed and seriously weakened the capacity of Pope Francis to take effective action.

The papal trip to Chile in January had to deal with the "Barros affair," the decision in January 2015 of Pope Francis to transfer Bishop Juan Barros from the military diocese to that of Osorno.

The appointment was met with widespread opposition — including physical disruption of the installation ceremony — because Bishop Barros was widely believed to have covered up sexual abuse by his mentor, Chile's most notorious priest-predator, Father Fernando Karadima. (Karadima was subject to canonical penalties in 2010 and laicized in 2018.) From 2015 onward, the Holy Father rejected the objections to Bishop Barros in increasingly intemperate language,

accusing critics of being "stupid" and politically manipulated.

The plan was to definitively slap down the Barros criticism once and for all in Chile. The papal biographer Austen Ivereigh was on hand in Santiago as the Pope arrived and spent the day with both Bishop Barros and another



FATHER RAYMOND J. DE SOUZA

"Karadima" bishop.

A story explained why Pope Francis was courageously standing by an innocent man in the face of a mob screaming for a scapegoat.

"Francis' dogged determination to support Barros against this tide from both Church and society must be counted as one of the boldest — or, perhaps, foolhardiest — decisions of his pontificate," wrote Ivereigh.

It was soon revealed to be more than foolhardy. It was dishonest.

On the eve of the trip, leaked letters revealed that the leading bishops of Chile had begged Pope Francis not to transfer Bishop Barros. The Pope had even agreed that it would be better if Bishop Barros and the other "Karadima bishops" resigned. Bishop Barros himself offered to resign twice. Yet, in the end, the Holy Father made the appointment and then accused his critics of "calumny," even when they were making the same objections which he had privately received from the bishops of Chile.

It all proved too much for Cardinal Seán O'Malley, the Vatican's head of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors,

who publicly rebuked Pope Francis for doubling down on Bishop Barros when in Chile.

It was an unmistakable sign that the Holy Father, on this issue, had lost the confidence even of those close to him. Never in living memory had a close cardinalial collaborator of a pope — Cardinal O'Malley sits on the "council of cardinals" — publicly criticized him.

It was a turning point. Pope Francis realized that if he was losing Cardinal O'Malley, he was in danger of losing the flock. He humbly accepted the criticism of the Boston cardinal and, upon return to Rome, reversed course entirely. He sent Maltese Archbishop Charles Scicluna to Chile to investigate, even though much of what the Holy Father needed to know had already been provided to him in Rome.

When Archbishop Scicluna submitted his report, Pope Francis announced that he had been "badly informed" about what was going on in Chile. That was another, near fatal, blow to confidence in the capacity of the Holy Father to provide the necessary leadership.

It was clear by now to all that, even if Pope Francis had not been fully informed, he had long since been adequately informed. The problem was manifestly not the information given, but the decisions taken. Guilty of not taking proper action, Pope Francis vigorously moved in the opposite direction. The entire Chilean episcopate was summoned to Rome for a severe and public tongue-lashing, after which all of them submitted their resignations. To date, eight out of some 30 have been accepted,

including that of Bishop Barros. No permanent replacements have been appointed.

Pope Francis is obviously not responsible for generations of clerical corruption in Chile, but the complete calamity that followed his decisions has eroded confidence that Rome can be the solution to a local crisis.

For the past four years, decisions in Rome have made matters worse, to the extent that the Church in Chile has now been decapitated and left in temporary limbo; its credibility has been compromised for at least a generation. No other local Church in a time of crisis is eager for the Chilean model to be replicated for them.

Meanwhile, earlier in the year, another crisis was resolved with another blow to papal credibility.

In the Diocese of Ahiara, Nigeria, the appointment of a new bishop, Peter Okpaleke, in 2012 (by Benedict XVI) had been opposed by the local clergy, on the grounds that Bishop Okpaleke was not a local candidate, either of that place or ethnicity. The new bishop was not able even to enter his diocese, and the matter dragged on for years.

In June 2017, Pope Francis decided to resolve it by a fearless application of raw papal power. All the priests of Ahiara were given 30 days to write a personal letter to Pope Francis, begging his forgiveness and promising to accept Bishop Okpaleke. If they did not do so, they would be suspended.

Faced with an ultimatum, most of them did so. But by early 2018, the wrath of the Pope did not seem sufficient to persuade the

Diocese of Ahiara to make its bishop welcome. In February 2018 the Holy Father accepted Bishop Okpaleke's resignation. The rebellion prevailed, and Ahiara still does not have a bishop.

The Chilean bishops were sacked in May. In June came the revelations of sexual abuse and harassment of minors and seminarians by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. In July he resigned from the College of Cardinals. In August came the "testimony" of Archbishop Carlo Viganò, accusing the Holy Father of knowing that now-Archbishop McCarrick had "restrictions" placed upon him and nevertheless "rehabilitated" him.

Leaving aside the contested allegations of Archbishop Viganò, the fact that a former nuncio — and a former supervisor of nuncios for the Holy See's diplomatic service — would so publicly criticize the Pope, even going so far as to recklessly call for his resignation, was an earthquake in Rome.

Equally remarkable, not a single senior voice in Rome came unambiguously to the Pope's defense. Only Cardinal Marc Ouellet, the prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, gave a full-throated defense of Pope Francis — but only after his own conduct was questioned by a subsequent intervention from Archbishop Viganò.

The implications of the Cardinal O'Malley intervention in January were now plain to see.

So eroded was confidence in the Holy Father that a former nuncio could unleash a near-slanderous attack and the senior figures in the Roman Curia would keep

quiet. In September, the leadership of the U.S. bishops asked Pope Francis for an apostolic visitation to thoroughly investigate the entirety of the McCarrick affair. How did he rise? Who knew about his behavior?

Pope Francis turned the Americans down flat, reportedly because if he authorized such a visitation for Archbishop McCarrick, he would have to do so for other cases. And what case might the Holy Father have had in mind?

A similar investigation into the entirety of the Barros affair would certainly reveal that Pope Francis had been repeatedly warned not to do what he did.

It is wholly implausible that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) gave its *nihil obstat* ("no objection") to the Barros transfer, given their prior investigation of Karadima.

What Archbishop Scicluna investigated in 2018 was, in substantial part, already known at the CDF in 2010, when the Karadima case was heard. And so the bungling of Bishop Barros in Chile has consequences for the McCarrick matter in the United States.

The Holy See has promised a review of the documents in its files related to Archbishop McCarrick. That review is still ongoing, and what, if anything, will be published remains to be seen.

But after 2018, confidence that the Holy See might be helpful in the McCarrick — or any other — matter is seriously in question.

Father Raymond J. de Souza is the editor in chief of *Convivium* magazine.