

In his new book, Bishop Barron urges Catholics to 'stay and fight for the Body of Christ'

Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Barron of Los Angeles said his new book addressing the church's sexual abuse crisis and urging Catholics to "stay and fight for the body of Christ" comes from his "pastor's heart."

"It is simply my statement coming out of my whole life as a Catholic – 33 years as a priest, almost four years as a bishop," he said in a podcast posted on YouTube May 13, the release date of his book *Letter to a Suffering Church: A Bishop Speaks on the Sexual Abuse Crisis*.

"It was my pastor's heart that wanted to say something to the people of God," added the bishop.

The book was published by Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, which was founded by Bishop Barron. He gave an overview of the 125-page book in the podcast with Brandon Vogt, Word on Fire's content director.



Letter
to a
Suffering
Church

A BISHOP SPEAKS ON THE
SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS

BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

the podcast and the book's preface, Bishop Barron strongly emphasized he is speaking for himself and that the new volume is not an official statement of the U.S. bishops.

It is his attempt, he explained, to respond to the pastoral needs of Catholics demoralized by the abuse crisis and who are grieving over what it is doing to the church.

He said he wants to give them encouragement and hope and show "that there is a clear path forward for us today."

Bishop Barron said that as the Los Angeles Archdiocese's regional bishop for the Santa Barbara area, he has seen firsthand the grief of many Catholics over the abuse scandal.

In the wake of the scandal over former Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick last summer and fall, as he visited parishes in his region, many people "came up to me not so much in anger but in deep grief, I would say, with tears in their eyes, in grief over the Church."

"The book, the letter is my attempt to respond to that pastoral need – so it is not more or less than that," he added.

There are five chapters titled: "The Devil's Masterpiece," "Light From Scripture," "We have Been Here Before," "Why Should we Stay" and "The Way Forward." There is a concluding section followed by a "Prayer for a Suffering Church."

In the podcast, Vogt tells viewers that Word on Fire's goal "is to get this book out to as many Catholics as possible and to do that we're trying to make it as cost effective as possible."

U.S. residents can get one copy for free by going to the website. Recipients must cover shipping and handling; the site also has instructions for a digital download for those outside of the United States.

Vogt added that parishes and Catholic groups that order 20 or more copies can get them for \$1 apiece with free shipping. Other resources include a parish "launch kit," an FAQ for priests and parish staff, and a five-part video series by Bishop Barron.

Asked his response to a recent Gallup poll revealing that 37 per cent of Catholics are considering leaving the church due to the sexual abuse crisis, Bishop Barron said in the podcast that "it broke my heart ... but there is never a good reason to leave the Church."

"I understand emotionally, I understand why people feel deep frustration. I feel it," said, "but there's never a good reason to absent oneself from the font of grace, to leave the mystical (body) of Jesus (no matter) how badly

church people behave or how grave the sin is on the part of church people.”

Bishop Barron said his *Letter to a Suffering Church* offers a theological, spiritual and biblical perspective on the crisis, and is an addition to what has already been written about the psychological, sociological, legal and various other aspects of the crisis.

“I have written this book for my fellow Catholics who feel, understandably, demoralized, scandalized, angry beyond words and ready to quit,” he said in the preface.

“What I finally urge my brothers and sisters in the church to do is to stay and fight – and to do so on behalf of themselves and their families, but especially on behalf of those who have suffered so grievously at the hands of wicked men.”

He added: “My prayer is that these reflections might encourage Catholics who are attempting to navigate today in very choppy waters.”