

FutureChurch Statement on Financial Accountability in the Catholic Church

(Regarding Jason Berry's "Render Unto Rome")

Jason Berry's recent book *Render Unto Rome: the Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church* exposes a shocking misuse of charitable donations by people who administer the finances of the Catholic Church. From the local parish to the Vatican, Berry's meticulous documentation reveals archaic financial practices deeply rooted in a secretive clerical culture.

Usually these archaic practices go unchallenged even by Catholic financial professionals who know better. Such is the power of the Church's clerical system over Catholics socialized into accepting at face value what their spiritual leaders say even when it is manifestly obvious that they are wrong.

While church authorities have recently made some positive changes, these came only under duress and only after serious financial scandals had already occurred.^{1 2}

FutureChurch believes Jason Berry's book is a call to all Catholic parishes, dioceses, Catholic organizations and the Vatican itself, to implement the same standards of financial transparency and accountability required of all other non-profit organizations.

FutureChurch believes that as faithful Catholics, we must demand that our church leaders implement these standards, or we risk being complicit in the misuse of money and a violation of trust.

The FutureChurch Board of Trustees calls on our supporters and all concerned Catholics to:

- **Commit to assuming your responsibility to encourage transparency and accountability** in the financial practices of your parish and your diocese.
- **Adopt Michael W. Ryan's guidelines for safeguarding collections in your parish.** (See www.churchsecurity.info) Ryan is a retired U.S. Postal Inspection Service manager who conducted field audits to insure the integrity of post offices' accounting systems. He wrote to bishops, cardinals and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops proposing a plan to safeguard the collection plates. His efforts were ignored. The plan advises securely counting Sunday collections, depositing them immediately in the bank with no disbursements except those documented via the bank.
- **Apply to be a member of your parish or diocesan finance councils.** If you are not able or accepted, carefully monitor reports and accounting practices.
- **Encourage your parish, diocese or Catholic non-profit organization to become a "Partner in Excellence" with the [National Leadership Roundtable](http://www.theleadershiproundtable.org).** Catholic entities commit to implementing *Standards for Excellence*, which describe how Catholic dioceses, parishes and nonprofits should act to be ethical and accountable in their program operations, governance, human resources, financial management and fundraising. The dioceses of Gary, Indiana, Anchorage, Alaska, and many parishes, and non-profit organizations have already become "Partners in Excellence. The Leadership Roundtable does not charge for these services. See www.theleadershiproundtable.org for more info.
- **Write the Vatican and request an annual public accounting of Peter's Pence disbursements.** Explain that if this is not forthcoming within a reasonable time frame, you will feel ethically bound to stop contributing to Peter's Pence. Indicate your expectation that Peter's Pence monies will not be used for operational costs. **Please send copies to FutureChurch at chris@futurechurch.org or 17307 Madison, Lakewood, OH 44107.**

Vatican Peter's Pence

EMAIL address:

obolo.sp@segstat.va

US Nuncio Address

Archbishop Pietro Sambi
Peter's Pence Collection
3339 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20008

- **Ask leaders in your diocese to support, or at least no to oppose, legislation requiring faith based organizations such as the Catholic Church to follow the same accountability and transparency regulations required of other non-profit organizations.**

¹ In January 2011, Pope Benedict published a *motu proprio* pledging reforms of Vatican internal financial practices. Unfortunately this appeared only after Italian authorities conducted criminal probes into alleged financial misconduct at the Vatican Bank and at the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. ("[Transparency, honesty and responsibility](http://www.chiesa.espresso.it/2011/01/11/trasparenza-onest%C3%A0-e-responsabilit%C3%A0/)" (Chiesa espresso)The "Motu proprio" by Benedict XVI <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/facing-financial-scandals-pope-creates-new-vatican-watchdog>)

² In 2007, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops updated recommendations for parish and diocesan financial governance, after the exposure of financial mishandling in Florida, Ohio, Illinois and New York.

FutureChurch, headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, is a U.S. coalition of 5,000 parish centered Catholics working for full participation of all Catholics in the life of the Church. FutureChurch educates fellow Catholics about the seriousness of the priest shortage, the centrality of the Eucharist (the Mass), and the systemic inequality of women in the Catholic Church. For more info contact Sr. Christine Schenk 216-228-0869, Ext 4.