

## **Review of Spotlight by Fr Michael de Stoop, Archdiocese of Sydney**

The new film *Spotlight* out in cinemas this week is a drama which follows the investigative journalists at *The Boston Globe* as they first discover the extent of sexual abuse in the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston at the turn of the century. For people uncertain as to how we should approach this film, I think anyone who is curious as to how we arrived at this point would do well to see it. I state this because before reconciliation with victims of sexual abuse can take place, opportunities for *lament* needs to be given. For without it, any efforts to reconcile hurt and restore justice feels artificial, contrived, even forced. *Spotlight* is a must see in this sense, as it led me to feel much shame and confusion. To begin with, I felt surprised by the findings of the investigative journalists on account of the stark number of priests they suspected had abused children. After their findings were substantiated, I felt shocked. Then, I felt angry and upset by the extensive cover ups, and I shed tears of exasperation as I considered how atrociously the many victims had been treated.

Such lament is important for another reason, especially for those who are looking for comfort in this terrible atrocity. As Jean-Pierre de Caussade states in *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, “The spirit which renders desolate, alone can console. These different waters flow from the same source.” In other words, unless we allow our hearts to be broken by God who stings and bites our conscience when our hearts are disoriented, the deepest centre within ourselves cannot be subject to God’s grace which converts, heals, consoles and bestows wisdom to remedy such complicity with evil.

Without ruining the story, I think the climax of the movie centres on the conversation between a lawyer and an investigative journalist, both of whom were involved in covering up the scandals in the past. The lawyer, when he was caught out in helping cover up the scandals, said: “What took you so long?” The journalist replied: “I don’t know.” Such an answer indicates that they suppressed feelings of discomfort associated with their sting of conscience. There is a lesson here well portrayed in the film. We do well to be attentive to what discomforts us, as our emotional responses to such subtle movements of the Spirit, if we try to understand them, has the power to awaken us to recongise our complicity with evil on one hand, and the integrity God desires for us on the other.