

Le vrai scandale du clergé américain : par manque d'autorité c'est la justice et la charité qui sont atteintes

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D'après nos informations, les scandales qui affectent en ce moment l'Église des États-Unis appellent les mises au point suivantes : 1/ il s'agit d'affaires d'homosexualité touchant très rarement des enfants prépubères ; 2/ 450 cas ont été recensés, soit la mise en cause d'1,5 pour cent du clergé ; 3/ les procédures volontiers proposées pour éliminer ce fléau (notamment, commissions de laïcs chargées d'instruire les dossiers et relèvement des vœux) ont manifestement pour objet de soigner l'opinion plus que les victimes.

En réalité, le droit de l'Église offre toutes les garanties de justice, de charité et de respect de la vérité pour trancher ce genre de situation, comme l'a fait remarquer en France le père Tony Anatrella (Radio Notre-Dame, 14 juin 2002) : le sacerdoce d'un prêtre, accordé pour l'éternité, ne peut pas être limité par le péché, ni être soumis à des processus judiciaires extra-canoniques. Mais pour cela, il faut avoir le courage de l'appliquer.

En vérité, il semble bien que si l'Église a manqué de charité dans ces affaires, c'est bien par manque d'autorité : une faiblesse que les États-Unis ne sont pas les seuls à devoir se repentir, comme les affaires analogues en France l'ont montré.

Jean Choisy, avec notre correspondant aux USA, Frédéric Bléhaut.

10 Myths about Priestly Pedophilia by Crisis Magazine

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1. Catholic priests are more likely to be pedophiles than other groups of men.

This is just plain false. There's absolutely no evidence that priests are more likely to abuse children than are other groups of men. The use and abuse of children as objects for the sexual gratification of adults is epidemic in all classes, professions, religions, and ethnic communities across the globe, as figures on child pornography, incest, and child prostitution make abundantly clear. Pedophilia (the sexual abuse of a prepubescent child) among priests is extremely rare, affecting only 0.3% of the entire population of clergy. This figure, cited in the book *Pedophiles and Priests* by non-Catholic scholar, Philip Jenkins, is from the most comprehensive study to date, which found that only one out of 2,252 priests considered over a thirty-year period was afflicted with pedophilia. In the recent Boston scandal, only four of the more than eighty priests labeled by the media as "pedophiles" are actually guilty of molesting young children.

Pedophilia is a particular type of compulsive sexual disorder in which an adult (man or woman) abuses prepubescent children. The vast majority of the clerical sex-abuse scandals now coming to light do not involve pedophilia. Rather, they involve ephebophilia -- homosexual attraction to adolescent boys. While the total number of sexual abusers in the priesthood is much higher than those guilty of pedophilia, it still amounts to less than 2 percent -- comparable to the rate among married men (Jenkins, *Pedophiles and Priests*).

In the wake of the current crisis in the Church, other religious denominations and non-religious institutions have admitted to having similar problems with both pedophilia and ephebophilia among the ranks of their clergy. There's no evidence that Catholic prelates are more likely to be pedophiles than Protestant ministers, Jewish leaders, physicians, or any other institution in which adults are in a position of authority and power over children.

2. The celibate state of priests leads to pedophilia.

Celibacy bears no causal relation to any type of deviant sexual addiction including pedophilia. In fact,

married men are just as likely as celibate priests to sexually abuse children (Jenkins, Priests and Pedophilia). In the general population, the majority of abusers are regressed heterosexual men who sexually abuse girls. Women are also found to be among those sexual abusers. While it's difficult to obtain accurate statistics on childhood sexual abuse, the characteristic patterns of repeat child sex offenders have been well described. The profiles of child molesters never include normal adults who become erotically attracted to children as a result of abstinence (Fred Berlin, "Compulsive Sexual Behaviors" in *Addiction and Compulsion Behaviors* [Boston: NCBC, 1998]; Patrick J. Carnes, "Sexual Compulsion: Challenge for Church Leaders" in *Addiction and Compulsion*; Dale O'Leary, "Homosexuality and Abuse").

3. Married clergy would make pedophilia and other forms of sexual misconduct go away.

Some people -- including a few vocal dissenting Catholics -- are exploiting this crisis to draw attention to their own agendas. Some are demanding a married Catholic clergy in response to the scandal, as if marriage would make men stop hurting children. This flies in the face of the aforementioned statistic that married men are just as likely to abuse children as celibate priests (Jenkins, Pedophilia and Priests).

Since neither being Catholic nor being celibate predisposes a person to develop pedophilia, a married clergy wouldn't solve the problem ("Doctors call for pedophilia research," *The Hartford Current*, March 23). One has only to look at similar crises in other denominations and professions to see this.

The plain fact is, healthy heterosexual men have never been known to develop erotic attractions to children as a result of abstinence.

4. Clerical celibacy was a medieval invention.

Wrong. In the Western Catholic Church, celibacy became universally practiced in the 4th century, beginning with St. Augustine's adoption of the monastic discipline for all of his priests. In addition to the many practical reasons for this discipline -- it was supposed to discourage nepotism -- the celibate lifestyle allowed priests to be more independent and available. This ideal also called diocesan priests to live out the same witness as their brothers in monastic life. The Church hasn't changed her directives for celibacy, because over the centuries she has realized the practical and spiritual value of the practice (Pope Paul VI, *On the Celibacy of the Priesthood*, Encyclical letter, 1967). Indeed, even in the Eastern Catholic Church -- which includes a married clergy -- the bishops are chosen only from unmarried priests.

Christ revealed the true value and meaning of celibacy. Catholic priests from St. Paul to the present have imitated Him in their total gift of self to God and others as celibates. Although Christ raised marriage to the level of a sacrament that reveals the love and life of the Trinity, He was also a living witness to the life of the world to come. The celibate priesthood is for us a living witness to this life in which the unity and joy of marriage between a man and a woman is surpassed in the perfect, loving communion with God. Celibacy properly understood and lived frees a person to love and serve others as Christ did.

Over the past forty years, celibacy has been an even more powerful witness to the loving sacrifice of men and women who offer themselves in service their communities.

5. Female clergy would help solve the problem.

There's simply no logical connection between the deviant behavior of a tiny minority of male clergy and the inclusion of women in their ranks. While it's true that most statistics on child molestation show that men are more likely to abuse children, the fact is that some women are also child molesters. In 1994, the National Opinion Research Center showed that the second most common form of child sexual abuse involved women abusing boys. For every three male abusers, there's one female abuser. Statistics on female sex offenders are more difficult to obtain because the crime is more hidden (Interview with Dr. Richard Cross, "A Question of Character," National Opinion Research Center; cf. Carnes). Also, their most frequent victims (boys) are less likely to report sexual abuse, especially when the abuser is a woman (O'Leary, "Child Sexual Abuse").

There are reasons why the Church cannot ordain women (as John Paul II has explained numerous times).

But that is beside the point. The debate about women's ordination is completely unrelated to the problem of pedophilia and other forms of sexual misconduct.

6. Homosexuality isn't connected to pedophilia.

This is plainly false. The seduction of teenage boys by homosexual men is a well-documented phenomenon. This form of deviant behavior is the most common type of clerical abuse and is directly connected to homosexual behavior.

As Michael Rose shows in his book, *Goodbye! Good Men*, there's an active homosexual sub-culture within the Church. This is due to several factors. The Church's confusion in the wake of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the tumult following the Second Vatican Council, and the greater approval of homosexual behavior in the culture at large created an environment in which active homosexual men were admitted to and tolerated in the priesthood. The Church also came to rely more on the psychiatric profession for screening candidates and for treating those priests identified as having problems. In 1973, the American Psychological Association changed its characterization of homosexuality as an objectively disordered orientation and removed it from the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual IV (Nicolosi, J., 1991, *Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality*, 1991; Diamond, E., et. al., *Homosexuality and Hope*, unpublished CMA document). The treatment of deviant sexual behaviors followed suit.

While the Church's approach to those who struggle with homosexual attractions has been compassionate, she has been consistent in maintaining the view that homosexuality is objectively disordered and that marriage between a man and woman is the proper context for sexual activity.

7. The Catholic hierarchy has done nothing to address pedophilia.

While we can all agree that the hierarchy hasn't done enough, this claim is nevertheless false. When the Church's Code of Canon Law was revised in 1983, an important passage was added: "The cleric who commits any other offense against the sixth precept of the Decalogue, if the offense was committed with violence or threats, or publicly or with a minor who is under 16 years [now extended to 18 years], must be punished with just punishments, not excluding expulsion from the clerical state" (CIC 1395:2).

But that certainly isn't the only thing the Church has done. The bishops, beginning with Pope Paul VI in 1967, issued a warning to the Catholic faithful concerning the negative consequences of the sexual revolution. The pope's encyclical letter, "On the Celibacy of the Priests," addressed the question of a celibate priesthood in the face of a culture crying out for greater sexual "freedom." The pope affirmed celibacy even as he called on bishops to take responsibility for "fellow priests troubled by difficulties which greatly endanger the divine gift they have." He advised the bishops to seek appropriate help for these priests, or, in grave cases, to seek a dispensation for priests who could not be helped. In addition, he urged them to be more prudent in judging the fitness of candidates for the priesthood.

In 1975, the Church issued another document called "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics" (written by Joseph Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) that explicitly addressed, among other issues, the problem of homosexuality among priests. Both the 1967 and 1975 documents addressed kinds of sexual deviancy, including pedophilia and ephebophilia, that are especially prevalent among homosexuals.

In 1994, the Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse issued guidelines to the nation's then 191 dioceses to help them develop policies to deal with the problem of sexual abuse of minors. Almost all dioceses responded and developed their own policies (USCCB document: *Guidelines for dealing with Child Sexual Abuse*, 1993-1994). By this time, pedophilia was recognized as a disorder that could not be cured, and a problem that was becoming more prevalent due to the increase of pornography. Before 1994, bishops took their cue from experts in the psychiatric profession who believed pedophilia could be successfully treated. Priests guilty of sexual abuse were sent to one of several treatment facilities across the United States. Bishops often relied upon the judgments of experts in determining whether priests were fit for ministry. This doesn't mitigate the negligence on the part of some in the hierarchy, but it does offer some insight.

In response to the recent scandals, some dioceses are setting up special commissions on child abuse, as well as victims' advocacy groups; and they are officially acknowledging that any legitimate allegation of abuse

must be dealt with immediately.

8. The Church's teaching on sexual morality is the real problem, not pedophilia.

The Church's teaching on sexual morality is rooted in the dignity of the human person and the goodness of human sexuality. This teaching condemns the sexual abuse of children in all its forms, just as it condemns other reprehensible sexual crimes such as rape, incest, child pornography, and child prostitution. In other words, if this teaching were lived out, there'd be no pedophilia problem at all.

The notion that this teaching somehow leads to pedophilia is based on a misunderstanding or deliberate misrepresentation of Catholic sexual morality. The Church recognizes that sexual activity without the love and commitment found uniquely in marriage undermines the dignity of the human person and is ultimately destructive. As far as celibacy is concerned, centuries of experience have proven that men and women can abstain from sexual activity while living fulfilling, healthy, and meaningful lives.

9. Catholic journalists have ignored the pedophile problem.

As any reader of CRISIS knows, this claim is patently false. Our October 2001 cover story featured "The High Price of Priestly Pederasty," an expose on the scandal that wouldn't erupt into the mainstream press for another three months. You can read our full article at:

<http://www.crisismagazine.com/october2001/index.html>.

And we weren't the only ones who have covered the pedophilia/pederasty problem. Charles Sennot, author of Broken Covenant, Rod Dreher of The National Review, CRISIS co-founder Ralph MacInerney, Maggie Gallagher, Dale O'Leary, the Catholic Medical Association, Michael Novak, Peggy Noonan, Bill Donohue, Dr. Richard Cross, Philip Lawler, Alan Keyes, and Msgr. George Kelly have all covered the issue exhaustively.

Just because the mainstream media have chosen to ignore our work doesn't mean the work hasn't been done.

10. Requiring celibacy limits the number of men as candidates for the priesthood, resulting in a high number of sexually unbalanced priests.

First of all, there isn't a "high number of sexually unbalanced priests." Again, the vast majority of priests are normal, healthy, and faithful. Every day they prove themselves worthy of the trust and confidence of those entrusted to their care.

Secondly, those who do not feel called to a life of celibacy are ipso facto not called to be Catholic priests. Indeed, most men are not meant to be celibate. However, some are -- and of those, some are called by God to the priesthood.

A priestly vocation, like a marriage, requires the mutual and free consent of both parties. Thus, the Church must discern that a candidate is indeed worthy and fit mentally, physically, and spiritually to commit to a life of priestly service. A candidate's desire for the priesthood does not constitute a vocation in and of itself. Spiritual and vocation directors are now even more attuned to the character flaws that would make an otherwise qualified man an unfit candidate.

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