

## EDITORIAL

## THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE SEX ABUSE CRISIS

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The ex-Cardinal McCarrick scandal has once again highlighted the sex abuse crisis in the Church. When the first wave hit back in 2002, there was anger both within and outside the Church. Many people who do not like the Catholic Church made use of the crisis for their own reasons and, like many others, I tried to defend the Church. My CTS booklet on sex abuse is now dated and, to a certain extent, it was a defence of Pope Benedict.<sup>[1]</sup> I still believe that he did as much as he could to rid the Church of this "filth". Most seminaries are much healthier than they used to be. Seminarians want to be priests because they want to serve the Church. It is true that most of the abuse allegations are historical.

And yet, if anything, there is more anger now than before. How did McCarrick get away with it for so long? How is it possible that none of the bishops knew about "Uncle Ted" and his predilections for young men? How many souls lost their faith due to his scandalous behaviour? Are there others like him? Admittedly, McCarrick was a media-savvy man who was much liked by the secular media. He famously felt uncomfortable denying Holy Communion to pro-abortion "Catholic" politicians.<sup>[2]</sup> We can now comprehend his 'who am I to judge' position.

In an interview with Carl Olson published in Catholic World Report<sup>[3]</sup> (August 6, 2018), the veteran conservative Catholic journalist Philip Lawler argues that the sex abuse crisis is a three-part scandal. Firstly, some priests abused young people. Second, the revelations gave ample evidence of widespread homosexuality within the clergy. Third, the scandal showed that bishops covered-up evidence of abuses. With The Dallas Charter, the American bishops addressed the first part of the scandal. The second and third parts have not been addressed to date.

Lawler goes on to say that the Vatican has not, as yet, established clear standards for holding bishops accountable for their handling of the issue.

The liberal journalist Robert Mickens appears to agree with Lawler to a certain extent. Writing in The Washington Post<sup>[4]</sup>, he states: *"There is no denying that homosexuality is a key component to the clergy sex abuse (and now sexual harassment) crisis."* He notes that almost all US victims are male, whether they are adolescents, post-pubescent teens or young men. Predictably, however, he suggests that gay clergy need to be affirmed.

McCarick has the common profile of a clergy abuser. His ultimate downfall, according to Lawler, was an encounter with an under-age boy. Lawler asks: *"Doesn't it stand to reason that someone who would chase 19-20 year olds would be a danger to 16-17 year olds? For that matter, wasn't his desire for young men-of legal age or not-enough to disqualify him from higher office?"*

Another high-profile case was that of Canadian Bishop Raymond Lahey. He was imprisoned for possessing child pornography images on his computer. He also had 155,000 other pornographic images on his computer. The psychiatrist who assessed him concluded that he was not a paedophile but had an interest in gay sado-masochistic fantasies. Writing in the Canadian Catholic Register<sup>[5]</sup>, Deborah Gyaond reported that Lahey had *"engaged in a number of homosexual one-night stands before settling into a ten year relationship with a man."*

In my booklet<sup>[6]</sup>, I was keen not to focus unduly on the issue of homosexuality. After all, the majority of homosexuals show no sexual interest in children and most children abused in the wider society are female. However, it must be admitted that there is a specific problem in the Church. Also, in the light of recent scandals in Maynooth, Honduras, Chile, the United States and elsewhere, there is surely an on-going need for vigilance. Not to mention drug-fuelled gay orgies in the Vatican<sup>[7]</sup>.

In an important article in the Catholic World Report<sup>[8]</sup>, Father Vincent Twomey argues that widespread dissent from the Church's teachings on sexual ethics was a contributory factor. After the Second Vatican Council, large chunks of the Church's moral teachings were ignored. I might add that it became fashionable to borrow indiscriminately from popular psychological theories about being non-judgmental, value-neutral, affirming etc. A misplaced idea of empathy surely led some bishops to effectively turn a blind eye to sinful behaviour among clergy. There was also an undue reliance on counselling and moral guilt was minimized if not ignored.

Father Twomey cites the example of the book *The Sexual Celibate* by Dominican theologian Donald Goergen which was published in 1975<sup>[9]</sup>. In it, it is asserted that

*"when affectionate and genital feelings enter homosexual friendship, one should recognize and accept their presence. This does not mean the relationship is unhealthy."* The book became the reference book on sexuality in seminaries in the seventies. Much worse was Father Anthony Kosnik's book *Sexuality: New Directions in Catholic Thought* [10]. This came out in 1977 and made excuses for masturbation, cohabitation, swinging, adultery, homosexuality and even bestiality [11]. Amazingly enough, Kosnik remained a priest for a few more decades before finally leaving. The book also claims that *"the objective moral evaluation of a person's action must take into consideration the context of the person's moral stance, the circumstances of the action and the effects that issue from it."* If this is what is meant by accompaniment and discernment, it might mean many things, but it is not Catholic.

After the Second Vatican Council, the Church opened her windows. Sadly, at least some of what got into the Church was not fresh but filthy. Those great Gothic architects knew a thing or two when they made beautiful, soaring stained glass windows that let in the light of heaven while keeping the pollution at bay. Apologies and letters are well and good but not enough. What is needed is action. A great Carmelite priest once summed up the message of Fatima in three words: reparation, reparation and reparation.

True reparation, MUST include proper investigation of claims of abuse as well as a proper and robust response to each and every case of abuse. The Church must never tolerate, let alone protect abusers.

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*See also the article by Dr Ian Jessiman on page 14 of this issue*

## THE SUPREME COURT AND DEATH FROM DEHYDRATION

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The Supreme Court delivered its judgement in the case of "Y" on 30th July 2018 [1]. Mr Y was an active man in his fifties when, in June 2017, he suffered a cardiac arrest which resulted in severe cerebral hypoxia and extensive brain damage. He never regained consciousness following the cardiac arrest. He required Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH), provided by means of a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy, to keep him alive. In late September, his treating physician concluded that he was suffering from Prolonged Disorder Of Consciousness (PDOC) and that even if he were to regain consciousness, he would have profound cognitive and physical disability, remaining dependent on others to care for him for the rest of his life. A second opinion was obtained in October, from a consultant and professor in Neurological Rehabilitation, who considered that Mr Y was in a vegetative state and that there was no prospect of improvement. Mrs Y and their children believed that he would not wish to be kept alive given the doctors' views about his prognosis. The clinical team and the family agreed that it would be in Mr Y's best interests for



CANH to be withdrawn, which would result in his death within two to three weeks.

In November 2017 the Court of Protection advised that *"It is not mandatory to bring before the court the withdrawal of CANH from Mr Y who has a prolonged disorder of consciousness in circumstances where the clinical team and Mr Y's family are agreed that it is not in his best interests that he continues to receive that treatment"*