

On Abuse

Much ink has been used to write about the crisis of child abuse by priests or the covering up of the crimes by bishops or popes. I haven't said anything about it, because I assume that I cannot add much to what has already been said. But when a number of parishioners say, "Yes, but I want to hear what you say," then I have to write. If you're tired of hearing about this, then just skip reading this particular insert.

First, let us start with some facts. There have been several studies on child abuse and its frequency in this country. Hofstra University, Penn State University, US Dept. of Education, and the John Jay School of Law are just a few institutions which have studied this. I find these more useful for apologetics than studies done by the Church...neutral sources if you will. What have they determined? The studies show that this problem exists with every profession, and every human institution. The great majority of the cases of child abuse occur in the family. The top professions which commit this crime are doctors, teachers and farmers. The likelihood that abuse will occur increases if the individual is married. All religions have this problem, but of all religions Christian clergy are the least likely to do it. Of all Christian clergy, Catholic clergy are the least likely to do this. Catholic priests are at the bottom of the list of culprits. I think it was CNN which said that "The Catholic Church is engulfed in this epidemic." As if this defines us! As if a grand total of six accusations in the US for the year 2009 (no charges by civil authorities of these) constitute an epidemic.

It is also a fact that those who are the loudest in their accusations about the Pope have an agenda, and the Catholic scandals are useful for that agenda. You know the agenda: decentralization of power from the Vatican, married clergy,

an end to the traditional Mass, full acceptance of homosexuality, etc. Some unfaithful priests and bishops have given them a weapon to use against the Church in their agenda. Their weapon is the infidelity of clergy and bishops. This infidelity has a wide range – from the basest and most abhorrent violations of the 6th Commandment – to the most blatant heresy, though rags like the *New York Times* could care less about heresy. In fact, heresy would be a mark of honor in the eyes of the Times. And the paper could care less about the 6th Commandment too, but not if we condemn homosexuality as a sin. The press was churning out plenty of "news" on this, but only for Passiontide and Holy Week. After Easter passed, they stopped the full court press.

It is also a fact that those with the agenda are clearly not primarily interested in the protection of children. If they were, they would be zealous about where the abuse is occurring in the greatest amount.

But, it is also a fact that some priests have really done this disgusting act. It is a fact that some of them were shuffled around after some sort of treatment or penance. The damage done to the children should be our primary concern, and second, to that making sure the innocence of other children is protected. There are other concerns of course – the parents of abused children, justice done to the perpetrators – we could have some good arguments about the hierarchy of these concerns. At the bottom should probably be concern about the Church's image.

Please don't think there is nothing we can do about this, or that we are somehow outnumbered in this fight. Yes, on their side (those with the agenda) they have the press, the film industry, the

music industry, the United Nations, the television industry, etc. But on the side of fidelity to God is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Mother of God, the angels and the saints, the Doctors of the Church, the Catechism, the Papacy, the Code of Canon Law, etc.

And keep in mind that this painful purification is good. If someone – anyone – has committed or covered up one of these crimes, then let the consequences fall where they should. These painful stories in the news need to be said, though I wish the press would use honesty in saying them. I say they need to be said, because the normal means within the Church became too corrupt to properly function. So God in His mercy used means outside the Church to achieve the purification. The means He allowed to be used are flawed: the press, corrupt money-hungry lawyers, DA's eager to make a name for themselves, but they worked.

I mentioned fidelity. This is at the root of the problem, and we can really do some-

thing about it, and we can really help Holy Mother Church in this fight. Here at OLMC, we do what is in our power to make sure that we are faithful to the teaching of the Church. In the Sacred Liturgy and all the sacraments, we pay strict attention to the laws which protect the sacraments. We follow Canon Law to the letter, and civil law for that matter. The sermons you hear, the advice you receive in the confessional and the teaching in adult education, confirmation preparation, and catechism...we do all in our power to conform this teaching to the Church. The vestments, music, architecture; all you see and hear are not conformed to some remembrance of things past; "This is how it is done because Sister said so in 1957." They are conformed to the teaching of the Church. And if something is not in conformity with that teaching and tradition, then we will do our best to bring it into conformity. Just by being faithful here, we make a huge difference in the Church, and in the world.