

The Right Response to the Crisis at Hand, I

There's always a crisis at hand in the Church. There has been from day one. But I'd like for my parishioners to hear my two cents worth on the matter, as to how we ought to respond to what has transpired in the realm of scandal.

First, get the facts. We need the truth about these things; and Fr. Nolan's sermon last Sunday gave a good number of facts that are helpful in sorting this out. For example, in 2015 there were 3 million teachers working in our public schools, with 45 million students, and 3.5 million allegations of sexual abuse. In 2017 there were 60K clergy (total bishops, priests and deacons) working in our country serving 25 million children with four allegations.

Look at this chart for the comparison:

Clergy Sexual Abuse of Minors	1970-74	1975-79	1980-84	1985-89	1990-94	1995-99	2000-04	2005-09	2010-14	2015-16	2017
Allegations made since 2004	1,367	1,343	1,002	518	217	129	80	99	101	18	4
		1970s		1980s		1990s	2000-02				
Allegations reported in 2002 or earlier		3,445		2,074		431	172				

Therefore if you are a Catholic, your child has a 0.000016 % chance of being abused by a member of the Catholic Clergy. But if your child attends public schools, he has a 5.6% chance of being abused by an educator.

There are more statistics like this, which in one sense are heartening in that we can see real reform happening in the Church even in our times, but in another sense heartbreaking that any child or young man should have suffered abuse. I say "young man" since 81% of the cases reported are of same sex attraction for adolescents.

A second response is floating around the internet, and it sounds attractive at first glance. That is, don't give any more money to the dioceses or orders that have participated in the malfeasance. I say at first glance, but with a second look it should be easy to see that by pulling up the weed up will come some tares too. For example, cut off money from a diocese in order to punish two, and make a hundred suffer. But more to the point is this: is the problem financial? Is this whole thing a question of money? I say no. It is a different question altogether, and the problem is not financial, so addressing it financially is not much of a solution. If there were real evidence that stopping all payments to a parish because it is taxed by the diocese, and that this would produce reform in the Church, then I should be open to it I suppose. But stopping donations to a parish is simply a means for the parish to cease functioning. That's about all it would accomplish.

Another response is to sign petitions and write letters. There are quite a few of them going around. There is evidence that these do some good. We don't send them out via the parish flocknote system, because that is not what it is for. Another reason is that I receive an invitation to sign something about every five days. And if we coupled that with other causes such as boycotts of this company or that institution, then we would be sending something about every two days, and if we coupled that with all the political things such as letters to senators (these can be useful too), then we would send out several flocknotes per day on various causes. This is unreasonable. But writing letters and signing petitions has been proven to have an effect, though the question remains about what to write.

Another response has been to issue statements about not criticizing the bishops (mentioned in the Code of Canon Law) or criticizing the Holy Father (also mentioned in Canon Law). You wonder what the bishops or a pope would have to do to receive any criticism from some.

I refrain from doing this not because I have nothing to say about Pope Francis. I do. I have a lot to say about him and what he is doing. But I fear pride, and that the best I could say has already been said. I am convinced also that there are others who are much better at it than I. An example would be the members of the College of Cardinals. It is their job. But refraining from criticizing the pope does not address the situation, especially if or when a pope is part of the problem. I'll bend over backwards to give him every benefit of the doubt, but when he releases a statement that plastic in the oceans is the real emergency, then anyone may say in good conscience, "No, this is wrong." When his favorite cardinals second the thought – such as Cardinal Cupich – we have to tell the truth to each other and say "This is wrong."

Another response has been psychology. When I was first ordained, that was the default solution – to send clergy to the psychologists. But this assumed that the problem was psychological in nature. Fortunately, the bishops have largely discontinued this, since they have realized that the problem of pederasty is not psychological.

It is moral. We can say there are aspects of the scandals that are psychological, and sociological, and biological and so on, but it is primarily moral, which makes these scandals a doctrinal problem as well. And this is getting closer to the heart of the matter. For when we hear anyone deny a teaching of the Church, especially a priest, we should be able to smell the brimstone. Denying sacred doctrine is the gateway to acting contrary to it. Deny one aspect of the faith and you may as well deny all of it.

So in this regard, as Anthony Esolen wrote in his book Out of the Ashes, "Christians must repudiate the whole sexual revolution. All of it. No keepsakes, no exceptions. Remember Lot's wife." In *Humanae Vitae* Bl. Paul VI warned that contraception would lead to more, not fewer, children born out of wedlock; even he did not foresee the utter collapse of the family in West. Catholics used to argue that legalized abortion would lead to more abortions. But no one foresaw that one to one and a half million dead per year would be the result. Happy preachers said that easy divorce would not increase the number of divorces but would only alleviate the pain of divorces that were already going to occur, but even they did not foresee four or five out of every ten marriages ending in the car wreck of divorce. Nobody foresaw the endless disintegration of sexual personality that is implied in the ever multiplying categories of "identities." Nobody foresaw throwing parades for perversion and sadism and recommending them for children. No one foresaw just how insidious was the worm of feminism gnawing its way from the inside; that you can seek the good of woman without taking account of the good of man, as if the sexes were independent of one another, or forever antagonistic.