

Scandals in the Church...the facts that are often ignored.

By Fr. Joe Classen.

As the result of sexual abuse scandals surfacing throughout the world, the Church's credibility, integrity and moral authority are being questioned as never before. However, in the midst of a media field day and massive amounts of jaded reporting by the secular media, the whole truth concerning these matters is not reaching the ears of those who need to hear it.

First of all, the facts must be faced. Yes, there have been and there will unfortunately continue to be sinful individuals in the Church. There is evil and corruption in every organization and institution on earth, and make no mistake, not even an organization founded by the Son of God (The Catholic Church) is free from it. Indeed, for a man of God to sexually abuse the innocent of the Lord's flock is an abomination that cries to heaven for justice! For the Church's bishops to do little or nothing, or even seemingly protect the abuser, is horrific to say the least! Yes, some bishops have made huge mistakes in dealing with this terrible situation, and, yes, there are some priests who are very ill and have committed crimes for which they should be held accountable.

All that being said though, what is constantly glossed over in the mainstream media is that the majority of the cases that are in the spotlight today happened decades ago. Many of the allegedly guilty priests in question are now deceased! This, of course, does not justify these crimes in any way and it in no way (obviously) eases the suffering of the victims. But what is ignored is that the way the Church has dealt with past cases and how she deals with present cases are extremely different. As Church leaders openly admit, in the past, when a priest abused a member of the faithful, it was kept as quiet as possible to

not cause scandal and bring embarrassment to all parties involved. In most cases, the priest (often time with the victims approval) was sent off to psychological treatment. After the bishop was informed by psychologists and mental health professionals that the priest was properly treated, he was sent back to parish work. As time and experience has shown, this was a grave error, as the nature of such abuse can usually not be remedied with a mere treatment program. Today, an alleged abusive priest goes through the same avenues of criminal justice that any one else would go through, and rightly so. In fact, the last several priests who were found guilty of such crimes here in St. Louis have been (and are still) in prison.

To take a closer look at the nature of the abuse itself, the vast majority of sexual abuse at the hands of priests is not cases of pedophilia (the abuse of pre-pubescent children). Current studies show that 60% to 80% of clergy sexual abuse is of adolescent males, in other words, crimes of homosexual predation, which obviously is also a horrible evil that must be rooted out. Allowing married men to be ordained (which is a possibility) would not cure this ill. Statistically speaking, the vast majority of the sexual abuse of minors is committed by married men, not celibate clergy. Keep in mind too; the institution with by far the most sexual abuse taking place is not the Church, but the public school system. Presenting these facts is certainly not a feeble attempt to place the focus elsewhere, but a simple reminder that again, statistically speaking, the Catholic Church is one of the safest institutions on earth.

What often appears as “cover up” and “secrecy” is in reality the display of great caution in dealing with “alleged” abusive priests, and bishops (and Popes) that “allegedly” turned a blind eye to properly handling these crimes. And while there have

been many, many false allegations throughout the years, there are also many that have been genuine. Again, the facts must be faced...terrible mistakes have been made in the past which the Church and her leaders are working diligently to correct.

In recent years, (despite media claims of cover-up) Pope Benedict the XVI has taken the most aggressive approach ever to dealing with abusive priests in order to cleanse the Church of the filth that has beset her. As a part of this process, the Pope also homed in more closely on where the problem starts. In 2005 the Holy Father began investigating seminaries around the globe to rid out students who are actively homosexual. The truth is that the Catholic Church is one of the few voices that boldly speaks out on the grave, moral evils of the world today. However, there is at the same time, great evil at work from within and without that seeks to silence that voice, which is ultimately the voice of Christ. Let us continue to pray that our Church may experience the purification she needs and for the renewal and healing of all those who have suffered as a result of the sins of those within.