

Challenges of Clerical Sexual Abuse: Our Family Responsibilities and Collective Action

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Abstract

Clerical sexual abuse is a contradiction of life of chastity, an evangelical virtue for Catholic priestly vocation, which one has to observe as a chosen way of life. Yet, in recent years, the Roman Catholic Church worldwide has faced a dramatic increase in allegations of sexual abuse by its clergy, which affects the peace, security, social development and constitutes an abuse of human rights. One long term response has been called to allow clergy to marry but there are reasons to believe that this may not bring about the desired outcome. This article focuses on and explores the challenges as well as argues for family responsibilities in addressing clerical sexual abuse, and after examining the experience of a number of countries, the article suggests collective actions which have the potential to bring about the desired change.

Keywords: Catholic Church, clerical sexual abuse, family roles, restorative justice, collective action, peace.

Introduction

Apart from the recent case of a global pandemic of coronavirus disease, no other issue has dominated international attention in modern times as the allegations of clerical sexual abuse and scandal (CSAS), suggesting that both the Church and priesthood are experiencing crises of different kinds. The media is awash with issues of crises and sexual abuses involving Catholic priests (Guido, 2008; Flamini, 2011; and Richardson, 2002); stress in the Roman Catholic priesthood (*The Economist*, 2017; Doyle, 2005); child sexual abuse by Catholic Clergy (Dale *et. al.*, 2007; Isely *et. al.*, 2008); impact of the clergy sexual abuse on the victims and communities (Wind *et. al.*, 2008; McLaughlin, 2007); consequences of the crises and such abuses in the

Catholic Church (Frawley-O'Dea, 2004; Kline, *et. al.*, 2008). Other burning issues are allegations of bishops accused of involving in or covering sexual abuse and misconduct as well as actions taken against them (BishopAccountability.org). It is not pushing bad news under the carpet, but this article is prompted by the need to see the other side of the problem, which is family failures; to reflect on the authentic response to the call to the Catholic priesthood, and to awaken our consciousness to assume our responsibilities that would, by 'principled' nonviolence, help to bring about positive and peaceful change.

Clergy sexual misconduct is not only in the Catholic Church as research suggests that even worse and shocking clergy sexual abuse happens in other denominations and other faiths - Protestant, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Buddhism and non-traditional religious movements in the West, etc. (Gerdes, Beck & Miller, 2002; Adam, 1998; Jacobs, 1984 and Oxenhandler, 2008 cited in Garland and Argueta, 2010). Talking of the disappointments experienced in handling sexual misconduct and other improprieties at the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, the Third-Term President of Missouri District, Raymond Mirly (2013:13), frankly noted that “too often, ministers hide their behaviour, become entrenched in it or addicted to it, and they are so filled with shame and guilt that they do not claim the courage of Christ to confess” McClintock (2004:2) confirms the present widespread cases of clergy sexual abuse: “We have an epidemic of sexual abuse in the church.... People of faith and goodwill have been aware of sexual abuse in congregations for years.” From the experience of married priests of other congregations, the age-long calls for married Catholic priests may not bring the envisioned panacea by that school of thought. The Catholic Church's perennial teachings have always been reaffirmed from one papacy to another. As other observers and scholars opined, the marriage of priests may look like a solution, but that could raise a whole host of new problems.

If clergy sexual misconduct is widespread, why does that of the Catholic Church, which may be less in comparison to other denominations and even other faiths, draw much attention? Apart from the roles, the Catholic Church has played globally in history, chastity and clerical celibacy are enshrined and associated with Catholic

priestly life; hence, associating sexual abuse with it could not but be very shocking in the ordinary sense. However, evil remains evil no matter who commits it and where it is committed. So, clergy sexual misconduct is really a sin that shames all of us and calls for collective action to address it. The evangelical virtues (chastity, poverty and obedience) are corollaries of the Roman Catholic priesthood which one has to observe as a voluntarily chosen way of life. But how these virtues relate to the lives of all of us is often not noted. Hence, this article explores the failures of families in their own roles as central institutions in preventing sexual misconduct, educating and laying a good foundation for their children who become priests as well as the needed collective action to address the clerical sexual abuse.

The Call to Catholic Priesthood

At the height of the priestly ordination, a Catholic priestly candidate is proclaimed by the officiating bishop (in words of great significance) “Called,” “Consecrated” and “Set Apart.” By priestly ordination, one is set apart from the people for an important function. And, no one takes this honour on himself but must have been called by God as Aaron was (Hebrews 5:4; Galatians 1:15). That means that no one chooses to be a priest by himself nor is one qualified by his own merit. As Ugwu (2018:11) puts it: “If there are any real qualifications for your being a priest, it is the fact that you have been chosen.” Ugwu stressed further the human aspect of any vocation– the free-response that is required for it to be authentic. To be a happy priest, therefore, one’s conviction of his call, free response and readiness to embrace all challenges of the priestly life is necessary. Response to this call is propelled by a quest for happiness which consummates all the good things attainable by human activity since the response is at man’s freedom of will and power of his choice bequeathed him by the benevolent God (Madu, 2018). But the way we choose depends on our sense of direction, which on the other hand, is not consciously acquired when we are unduly influenced by people or feel pressured into doing things (Madu 2015:7). A sense of value helps our sense of direction. Our aim is happiness and fulfilment as long as our goal is not contravening the laws of God and that of society. By and large, understanding oneself and authentic response to the call to the

priesthood, like any other type of vocation, is a way of achieving happiness.

Discussing Aristotle, Anicius Boethius (quoted in Madu 2015b:78) sees happiness as completeness in itself; "a state made perfect by the aggregation of all good things". The word 'happiness' is derived from the Greek word, eudaimonia (from "eu", meaning "good" or "wellbeing") and "daimōn", meaning "spirit"), a name applied to that kind of self-realisation theory that makes happiness the chief good for man. It refers to happiness, not as mere pleasure or emotion, but well-being or a pleasant state of mind (Thomas, 1973). Happiness is the end of all ends. Hence, Aristotle concludes that happiness is found to be something perfect and self-sufficient, being the end to which our actions are directed (Ross, 1995). For Plato, what is actually real is the universal and the supreme principle of good (happiness) is separated from the world of experience; it is to be arrived at by the mind's ascent from the visible world to the intelligible world (Madu, 2015b:79). Hence, our happiness on earth is only a shadow of the ideal and, by reasoning with Thomas Aquinas, possession of God is man's ultimate happiness. Aquinas categorises happiness into two; perfect and imperfect. The imperfect is attainable in this life through the operation of the senses, while the perfect is only possible in the life to come and attainable through the operation of the superlative intellect (Gilby, 1976).

These views show that to realise our life's purpose, to actualise ourselves, and to attain perfect happiness, we must aim higher and go beyond the natural plane to the supernatural. Life has meaning and it goes beyond this present (earthly) concern. Saint Augustine believes that man does not seek happiness by accident, but as a consequence of his incompleteness, in other words, his finitude (Madu 2015b:81). A response to the call to priesthood is, therefore, in the quest for that happiness since it is a fundamental choice in one's life. But, "experience teaches us that there is a danger of having a wrong motive of being a priest, and if not guided, purified, transformed and constantly renewed" (Mozia, 1987:19), even one's good intentions can change. Responding properly gives peace of mind, which is inner harmony and stability as a result of contentment and happiness which

leads to fulfilment or self-actualisation (Madu 2015:208). Inner peace is important because one cannot give what one does not have.

Evangelical virtues (chastity, poverty and obedience) are the corollaries of accepting an invitation to Catholic (Roman) priestly vocation. Clerical celibacy, of course, is one dimension of Christian holiness; and hence, “one of the unique ways of giving a full response to this invitation” (Mozia, 1987:5). Everybody: religious, cleric, or lay is obliged to observe chastity since chastity is an aspect of holiness that all are called to (Vatican Council II. 2014, *Lumen Gentium*, Chp. V). But how different is the nature of chastity expected of a Catholic priest from the rest of us? The observance of chastity differs according to one’s vocation or state of life. The religious, in order to dedicate himself/herself in a special way to God, takes the voluntary vow of chastity as part of a public profession in a religious order (Madu 2015:114/115). What is then expected of a religious person is absolute perpetual continence, which is abstinence from all voluntary sex activity. The religious professing vow of chastity renounces marriage and avoids every external and internal act forbidden by both the sixth and ninth commandments of God (Exodus 20: 14, 17; Deuteronomy 5: 18; 1Corinthians 3: 16-17, New Jerusalem Bible, NIV). Clerics (clergy), being all men of Holy Orders of the Roman (Western) Catholic Rite, are called to celibate life (priests and deacons of the Eastern Rite may marry). Simply put, they are to remain unmarried. They observe this to devote themselves completely to the service of God and the works of the apostolate without distraction. Unlike in the case of religious life, clerical celibacy does not require the profession of a vow and the clerics are only obliged by the legislature (the Church's Law) to remain unmarried.

For the married, they are to remain chaste. Chastity for the married means the right use of sex activity within the bond of legitimate marriage (Madu 2015:115). The couple must be faithful to each other. An extra-marital relationship is considered a grave sin. So, it is also scandalous when our children (of the married couples) and those who look up to us for exemplary lives see us involved in this sin. In all other respects, clerical celibacy is similar to what is required of a person who is single, except that a person who is single can marry at any time, while a cleric who is obedient to his vocation does not. It is

sacrilegious for a religious to violate the vow of chastity and that may cause a serious scandal as the issue of this discussion. In fact, clergy sexual misconduct is scandalous no matter the faith or denomination where such occurs.

Essentially connected to chastity is the life of poverty and obedience. The poverty that is needed of a priest and, of course, all Christians really means wisdom in the use of the things of this world to attain the things of heaven. Life of poverty as a virtue is life completely stripped of avarice and does not mean destitution. It is being “poor in spirit and reality, industrious and sober in style, different and limited in the use of property” (Mozia 1987:25). This simplicity of life modelled after Christ’s life makes one exciting and attractive. That is the life that is really rich in meaning. Priests (of course, many Catholic priests) not only take up the spirit of poverty as a virtue but also stand against things and actions that plunge people into destitution. Poverty as destitution is a very serious situation that people should be saved from or helped to eradicate. In fact, it is the fundamental right of people to be freed from poverty (destitution) and any government that is not committed to this is failing.

Obedience and hierarchical authority are hallmarks of the Catholic Church. Lessius (2017) sees obedience as a man's allowing himself to be governed throughout his life by another for the sake of God. The term ‘obedience’ is derived from the Latin word, *ob-audire*, which means “to listen intently.” Hence, the basic meaning of obedience is listening in order to comply, different from command and control of military force (which may be for what is not right). As the bishops and cardinals as well as all Catholic faithful are under the authority of the Pope (the Vicar of Christ), so are all the priests and religious under the authority of their bishops and superiors. The Catholic faithful at different ecclesiastical levels is also under their different levels of authority in the church. Definition of obedience, in a religious sense, touches every person and situation:

It is primarily an attentive listening: to self, to others, to the events and experiences of life that demands a response. We are called to listen to the signs of our complex times and to respond with a new sense of mission. It requires that we should be attentive to the

multiple ways in which God's presence is revealed in the world around us. It always means fidelity to God... It is listening to God who speaks through our times, nature, various events, the Word of God, our conscience, etc. (Joaquim, 2017).

Country Cases of Clerical Sexual Abuse and Punitive Measures

The sexual abuse among priests is surely bewildering as this has occurred across the globe, from Europe, North America, Asia, Africa, South America to Oceania. Few selected cases can help us make sense of the widespread nature of this shocking abuse and scandal.

United States

After several allegations of sexual abuse, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, a former Archbishop of Washington, was prohibited from public ministry starting from June 2018, when a church investigation found credible charges of sex abuse against him dating back nearly half a century (Goodstein and Otterman, 2018). However, still concerned by the confusion that the accusations brought against McCarrick were causing in the minds of the faithful and with further criticisms, the Holy See decided to make known the conclusions of the matter in due course, after a further thorough study of the entire documentation regarding the former Cardinal McCarrick (Holy See, 2018).

There have also been huge financial implications of clerical sexual abuse cases in the United States, such as the cases of Archdioceses of Los Angeles and Minnesota. Sexual abuse cases against the Catholic Archdiocese of Minnesota took \$210,290,724, (that is €179 million) for settlement and involving about 450 victims of clergy abuse dating back to 1950 and implicating thousands of clerics (*The Journal*. ie. 2018). That of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles settled in 2007 took 660 million paid to 508 victims (Mozingo J. and Spano, J. 2007).

Nigeria

Richard Burke, a member of the St Patrick's Missionary Society based in CoWicklow, who served as a priest in Warri and later became the

Archbishop of Benin City (all in Nigeria), resigned his position as the city's Archbishop in 2009 after an allegation of sexual abuse of a woman (Dolores Atwood) which began in 1983 (when Atwood claimed that she was 14 but Burk, a former Catholic priest at Warri, said she was an adult). The former bishop's reason for voluntary resignation was for his failure to observe his vow of celibacy. Admitting that he was deeply ashamed of his behaviour. Dr Burke expressed sorrow: "I have caused great pain, hurt and bewilderment to those around me" (Kennedy, 2010).

Making this report to Irish Journal by Ms Atwood for the first time while she was living in Canada with her husband and had continued her relationship with the priest raises several questions: why are there low reported cases of clergy sexual abuse in Nigeria? Could the reasons be due to the culture of patriarchy and subservience, lack of exposure? The later part of the relationship Ms Atwood voluntarily enjoyed with Burke was frequent amorous telephone conversations while she was far away in Canada with her husband of many years (Kennedy, 2010), suggesting Ms Atwood's own roles and cooperation in that matter as that continued at a time no one would doubt her maturity or support her claims of manipulation. Yet, she presented her claim with a sense of self-exoneration

Kenya

An intriguing report of the murder of Fr. Eutychus Murangiri of Meru Catholic Diocese in Kenya was an example of bad eggs from seminary formation (Otieno, 2019). He was secretly involved in a relationship with a woman even while in formation. The relationship which continued after his ordination led to his being stabbed to death in June 2019.

England (Archdiocese of Birmingham)

Father Alexander Bede Walsh, who received several actions of sex abuse and computer indecency was sentenced to 22 years in prison in March 2012 for serious paedophile offences against boys (BBC, 2012). One young victim was driven to a suicide attempt. It was alleged that when an accusation of sexual abuse of young boys which began in the 1950s to 1980s was brought against Father James

Robinson who worked in parishes in the English Midlands, he fled to the United States. Robinson remained in the United States for about 20 years when he was extradited to the UK to face charges and he received a 21-year prison sentence for multiple paedophile offences (*The Telegram*, 2010).

Chile

Not in all cases do the accused abusers accept, confess and apologise for their crimes. Some choose to deny, leading to prolonged investigations in search of truth which make some people believe that the Church is covering them. The case of Fr. Fernando Karadima of Chile was one of those that witnessed long denial and claim of innocence till he was found guilty of sexually abusing minors and convicted by the Vatican on 18 February 2011 in a canonical process handled by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. It is to be noted that "Karadima himself has never stood trial for his alleged crimes because of the statute of limitations," the hierarchy of the Church in Chile was thus accused of systematically covering up his abuse, and of doing the same for other accused priests (Barrionuevo and Bonnefo, 2011).

On 27 September 2018, Pope Francis laicised Karadima, expelling him from the clerical state, an "exceptional measure" taken in response to the "exceptional damage" done by Karadima's crimes, according to the Vatican.

Overview of the Cases

The Catholic Church might have had a deep-seated culture that had not thrown open for easy detection, handling and accountability of clerical sexual abuses (Pullella, 2018), but that does not mean that the Church has supported any such misconduct of its members. The stern warning of Jesus as the consequences of such misconducts are still upheld by the Church. Besides, following the investigations of some allegations, the Church has given touching apologies for such errors (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 2018) and She (the Church) has also taken forceful actions against many of such abusers in recent times. Such steps include the establishment of the Pontifical Commission for the

Protection of Minors, the tribunal to investigate bishops accused of failing to protect children and vulnerable adults from sex abuse (*The Guardian*, 2018) and declaration of zero tolerance to sexual abuse in the Catholic Church (Holy See, 2016). The extreme criticisms like that of Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano against Pope Francis for the misdeeds of some individual priests, such which the Pope had abhorred (as in the cited cases of former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and Father Ferdinand Karidima) would, therefore, be very surprising. Priorly known for advocating a tough stance against abusers before his pontificate, Pope Benedict on his part surprised the world with what sounded like a collective “*mea culpa*” (deep apology) for the Vatican's past handling of the scandal over priests' sex abuse of children (Flamini, 2018).

Causes and Consequences of Clergy Sexual Abuse

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) has become a global and widespread disease perpetrated by many and it is an endemic problem even in UN peacekeeping missions (Karim, 2016). However, in our discussion here, we are concerned with the segment of the population that many would find it hard to associate this abuse with, considering their vocation and its corollaries. While there seems to be overwhelming evidence of sexual abuse scandal involving some Catholic priests, one cannot forget the heroic strides, unimaginable accomplishments and sacrifice of Catholic clergies? Be it as it may, the consequences of the failures of those involved in sexual abuse have been disturbing and considered atrocious by all and sundry, including the Church itself.

Though clergy sexual misconduct has more to do with power relations between priests and their flocks, making the vulnerable ones be taken advantage of by some bad or erring elements in the priesthood, the behaviour of some parishioners could expose them or lead more to the bad situation. Judging from African experience, the awe and respect paid to priests by people who once approached them in different communities are fading away and many things are being taken for granted by some priests and the laity. There is no doubt, too, that some who associate with priests do not always have genuine intentions and that they can even be agents for failures. But, as Stiger

points out (referring to priests of every denomination), “it should be understood that in every pastoral relationship, whether parish ministry or specialised ministries (chaplancy, clinical pastoral education, counselling, etc.), the clergy person holds the greater power because of his/her office” (Stiger 2013: 7). This means that the responsibility for misconduct in such relationships will fall to the pastor first.

While Shupe (2007) has described religious groups and institutions as “hierarchies of unequal power where leaders have powers of moral persuasion, and in some, the theological authority to deny others access to membership and even ‘heaven’), Capps sees religious leaders as having “the power that comes with not being under surveillance or supervision of others; but on other hand, the power of access and accessibility; and the power of knowledge about members of their congregation, often intimate knowledge” (Capps 1993:350-361). Hence, the imbalance of power in the pastor-parishioner relationship is the ground for beginning to address the loss of faith and sense of abandonment in a child who trusted someone as the mediator in his/her relationship with God. To have that person act in a harmful way toward a child and the vulnerable adult can cause virtually irredeemable faith damage (Stiger 2013).

Temptation, which could be identified as another cause, comes to every normal human being, but the Church preaches resisting them with firmness. Life of immorality (the concupiscence of the flesh) is very dangerous, and according to the Church’s teaching, we are taught to work against it through self-discipline and avoidance of violating others or taking advantage of them. The present world of much pleasure embraces less mortification and much of passion and concupiscence of the flesh. Mortification, the struggle against our evil inclinations, is life’s long fight against the wrong pleasures of the flesh. The Christian Scripture sees it as to “chastise the body and subdue it,” lest after preaching to others one may be disqualified (1Thessalonians 4:3-7, New Jerusalem Bible, NIV).

Most Catholic priests and, of course, all Christians, are expected to train themselves to forfeit freely the pleasures that are quite legitimate to have the strength to turn away from pleasures that would leave their souls soiled. Yes, “pollution of the natural world exists with pollution of ideas and morals which can lead to the destruction of man.

The pollution is sin, from which lies are born" (Gomez 2018:9). Errors committed by few priests may seem to obscure the great sacrifices of other priests, especially in a frenzy world where many forget their responsibilities. Again, an ordinary human error should be differentiated from self-indulgence and sexual exploitation of the vulnerable, which is nothing else but the wickedness of those who perpetrate it. In the Church, it is carried out by the enemies fighting the Church from inside, and what a pain we all feel for the trauma of the victims and the wound such atrocities leave at the heart of the Church.

Due to the rampant nature of the abuse and scandal, it is not easy to quantify their consequences to the Church, to the individuals and the communities but as events unfold in different countries across the world, the weight of the evil has continued to confront us. Several dioceses in the United States of American were reported bankrupted by the settlement of civil lawsuits from victims (Bruni and Burkett 2002). Apart from huge financial costs, the clergy sexual misconduct is a flagrant misuse of the ministerial office and a betrayal of trust that has other disastrous consequences. Pope Francis understood this and made deep and sincere apologies, recognising specific atrocities of such abuse in his August 2018 visit to Dublin- asking for forgiveness from the families of child sex abuse victims who had killed themselves as a result of their trauma.

The consequences of family failures as linked to clerical sex abuse are of no small measure but they are often not considered. The family remains the basic structure of the church and society. Are we not accountable for our actions too? Can a broken home or failed marriages bring up better children to become good priests, when such children are more exposed to drug addiction, rapes, pornography, radicalism and all sorts of crimes? What examples do children copy from families of indecent lives? Our lives are interconnected, and no such social problems can ever be completely solved without using the family approach.

Three Ways Forward

Justice

For retributive justice, the law of the state should usually take its course. That means that the criminal justice system often works on a

retributive foundation. An offender who allegedly commits a crime against another (a victim) is prosecuted by the state and, if found guilty, is subject to punishment. That punishment may or may not have compensations to the victim but the victim may only get assuaged with the feeling that the offender has consequentially suffered punishment. An important question here is: Can the church deal with criminal acts themselves or must they report them to the criminal justice system? What of setting up an infrastructure which investigates such cases and charts a way forward? In recent times, the Church has been doing this, but the widespread nature and the unfolding cases may make it difficult to appreciate the extent of efforts of the Church. Some of the several steps taken by the Church have already been mentioned.

Often restoring the dignity and healing of the victim is less considered in the criminal justice system. However, for restorative justice, healing the damaged relationships is the focus, maybe using victim-offender mediation but involving, as in traditional African conflict resolution, all affected parties. Hence, restorative justice concerns “building a sense of self-worth and personal responsibility among offenders, and often involves efforts to build or rebuild the relationship between offenders and their victims” (Moyo 2017:207). Attention to healing the victim of trauma and his/her dignity is considered. It has often been argued that many of the methods used by African communities to deal with anti-social behaviours involve strong elements of restorative justice. This article recommends using restorative justice, which has the potential of healing the damaged relationships, involving all affected parties to collectively (offenders, victims and community) identify and address the harms, needs, and obligations, to heal and put things as right as possible.

Prevention

With the confessions and voluntary resignations of some perpetrators of the sex abuse in the Church's hierarchy, it is no longer a mere allegation that some Catholic clergies have been involved in sexual abuse cases. Whether or not the figure of those involved is comparable to that of male clergies of other denominations or that of the general adult male population is not the issue here but emphasise the need to join in the collective plea for forgiveness and chart the way forward. We need

healing of the wounds, dealing with the shame of failures, therapy and support services for the victims, upholding the decency of Christian faith and obligation as well as discipline. To acknowledge one wrong, repent for the wrong action and to apologise to the victims are the appropriate steps to begin the healing of such atrocities as sexual abuse and scandal. The needed critical family roles for prevention, education, and treatment interventions for the victims of clerical sexual abuse are therefore paramount. Preventive measures start with our roles in the family and society, how we educate children and how we conduct ourselves.

There is no doubt that the Catholic Church has an excellent pre-priesthood training system, but it is in the family that this training begins before the seminary takes over. During preparatory studies of the seminarians and further training programmes of the priests, the church should equip and encourage them to protect children and vulnerable adults from sexual harassment either by clergy or of the clergy. McClintock (2004) opines that raising awareness of the occupational and emotional risks inherent in pastoral ministry, the conditions in parishes and in the mental health of the individuals within them that lead to risky behaviours and communicate these ideas within the congregation would help children and vulnerable adults to be protected. There should be learning of both sound family values and congregational teaching and practices- humility, sobriety and continence. The strong moral teachings of the Catholic Church that shape the consciences of its members with a firm conviction of their accountability to God, who owns the human bodies and all things, remain important in strengthening character. The candidates for the priesthood should avail themselves of the openness and self-study that would help in making a conscious choice of what they want to be in life and the needed sacrifice to attain the goal. There is nothing short of the advice of Sun Tzu (2016): “Know yourself and you will win all battles.” Nothing good can ever be achieved without sacrifice.

Apart from protecting our children from abuse, other critical roles of the family are treatment interventions of a child survivor of abuse. Providing proper support and counselling to a child who is a victim of sexual abuse and saving him/her from stigmatisation. There have been reported cases of suicide attempts and post-traumatic

disorders, where the situation of a child is not well managed. Some have made mistakes of over criticising a victim of abuse in an atmosphere of poor judgment such that many victims get into self-guilt that is destructive. The imbalance of power in the priest-child relationship must be well understood; hence it leads to the loss of faith and a sense of abandonment in an abused child. It is important to note that the predicament befalling the child becomes worse when the home throws all the blame on the unfortunate child. Parents have the duty to bring their children close to themselves for the prevention and treatment of abuses. One of the disadvantages of divorce in marriages is the lack of adequate care and attention needed from both parents by their children. We all have to assume our responsibilities according to our callings and in giving proper foundation to our children to become good priests or good citizens in our society.

We have a high responsibility to protect our children from sexual abuse in our environment, church and schools through education and good parental attention. Things that are real transgressions of the natural law and the law of God are proposed these days as values and conquests of the human mind. Hardly would anyone who had been involved in child pornography or practised indecent sexual acts in the home become different when he has ordained a priest. Likewise, a homosexual child that was overlooked or undetected in a family has a high chance of being a homosexual or paedophile priest, if he schemes his way through to ordination. The moral teachings of the Church should be enshrined in the homes of its members and upheld by parents and teachers.

The true life of a Christian is that of the daily struggle for what is honourable and just. (Romans 6: 8, New Jerusalem Bible, NIV). It, therefore, needs constant revival so that one avoids slipping off or being overwhelmed along the journey. It is by resisting the concupiscence of the flesh that one realises how the body is truly the temple of the Holy Spirit, the assurances of the inner joy for resisting temptations. If a "man's entire existence on earth must be lived as a preparation for the realisation of perfect happiness in eternity and not fail in his destiny" (Madu 2015:82) then the human person is expected to lead a decent and responsible life and respect others' rights to life of decency and happiness.

Taking Collective Responsibility

While we condemn clerical sexual abuse, it is important to also look inward, to see how one is directly or indirectly contributing to such evil. Again, though the unfortunate issue of clerical sex abuse and scandal is shocking and embarrassing, priests should be seen as the products of homes, families and, of course, the products of society. Some seem to allege that the Catholic Church has not done enough to stop clerical sexual abuse. It is an issue that needs to be addressed collectively by everybody and at all levels – by married and unmarried individuals. The renewed pressing invitation by Pope Francis should be embraced by all: "to unite forces to fight against the grave scourge of abuse within and beyond the Church, and to prevent such crimes from being committed in the future to the harm of the most innocent and most vulnerable in the society" (Holy See, 2018).

Instead of being discouraged by the unpleasant wave of clerical sex abuse, we should get awakened and challenged to address the problem. Understanding that the problem is not the Church but the human agents in the Church who are not quite good as they should be is key to achieving this. The exemplary lives of the good ones (priests and religious) should inspire us as Bill Hayden (the celebrated former Australian atheist Governor-General) was. As reported by McLean (2018), Bill Hayden got converted and baptised in the Catholic Church at the time (2018) the rampant sex scandal was rocking the Church. Hayden was able to be inspired by the lives of some good religious in the Church, which made him see beyond the human element in the Church that is the cause of the current crisis and scandalous news. While we collectively join in the Papal plea for forgiveness, we strongly welcome the declaration of 'zero tolerance' for sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and also observe such in our homes, offices and all aspects of our lives.

Sexual abuse is violence that needs to be addressed by all. The only approach to avoid this violence is principled nonviolence and sensitivity to our responsibilities. To see the dawn of a new culture, we need a new value system and worldview, and these can only come from the nonviolent culture that is based on active, self-sacrificing love. "Looking ahead to the future," Pope Francis requests, "no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from

happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated" (Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, 2018). It is a culture that values and respects the right and dignity of other persons. This is a great restraint to exploiting or abusing anyone, including their bodies. Principled nonviolence (concrete actions that build a nonviolent consciousness) calls for mature judgement and keen inward assessment or search for a solution rather than unconcerned criticisms. The greatest enemy fighting the Church is the one from within. Just as we cannot win the war for the peace of the world by violence or in the quest for the selfish interest of any group, so it is difficult to achieve religious peace and overcome this common evil and its entrenched harm without the needed solidarity.

Conclusion

Clergy sexual misconduct cuts across denominations and people of other faiths. The dignified office of the Catholic priesthood has also been dented by the same shocking sexual abuse involving some priests in many countries. This article has been prompted by the need to see the other side of the disgusting problem- our individual and family negligence that have contributed directly or indirectly to it, and to awaken our consciousness to such responsibilities. While contributing to address the problem, the authors have given a layman view of what an authentic response to the call to Catholic priesthood should be. The life of celibacy, poverty and obedience are the embodiments of Catholic priestly life, a share in holiness to which we are all called, and which moulds one into total self-abandonment for the service of others.

We do not live isolated from one another. Our life is lived in common and this is one of the most inescapable elements of our existence. Man cannot exist without his fellows. Realising our responsibilities and living up to them would significantly reduce most of the ills we have in our societies, including the moral laxities in our children who become priests. As we support holding those found culpable in clergy sexual abuse accountable and disciplined for deterrence, we should also remember that we receive from the society what we give to it. Priests are the products of our homes, families and our societies. Family is central in providing the needed healing and reconciliation as well as in building safer communities and laying a

good foundation for children who become future priests. Our lives are interconnected and we need collective actions to address this malaise; for there is no better appeal than that of Pope Francis: "The only way that we have to respond to this evil that has darkened so many lives are to experience it as a task regarding all of us as the people of God. This awareness of being part of a people and a shared history will enable us to acknowledge our past sins and mistakes with a penitential openness that can allow us to be renewed from within" (Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, 2018).

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