

HOMILY ON THE CLERGY ABUSE SCANDAL (SEPTEMBER 9, 2018)

I think sometimes it's better to look at religion as an anthropologist than as a theologian or apologist. I am disgusted by the recent revelations but not surprised. There is never any excuse for sexual abuse by no matter whom.

Churches must hold themselves to a higher standard than others but to place things in context the percent of priests who abuse is hardly outside the statistical deviation. If there is a slightly higher incidence it is due to bad formation practices. Formations directors and seminaries not dealing openly and honestly with human sexual cravings accounts for far higher incidences of inappropriate behavior—gay or straight—than sexual orientation.

The Church and the State of California dealt with sexual abuse cases in 2004 by allowing a year when the statute of limitations was removed. All cases have been litigated and settlements reached. When the Pennsylvania cases came to light three weeks ago it was though we started all over again. I believe the matter must be handled nationally so we may deal with the matter forthrightly and are able to move on.

Personally, I am deeply hurt by the sexual abuse scandal because:

- Men abused the trust of young people under cover of their position of authority,
- Those violated often lose their faith as a result of abuse,
- The abused face difficult emotional recovery,
- Abusers thwart the mission of the gospel by their mal-behavior and make the work at the center of my being more difficult,
- Abusers impute guilt on me and all other priests who continue in ministry.
- The hierarchy betrayed the Church by exempting themselves from punishment,
 - Perpetuated abuse by covering for miscreants and
 - Left the lower clergy defend the Church.
- I must ponder if I will be the subject of a witch hunt by angry and sometimes hysterical people.
- Opportunists (Cardinal Vigano) are using the crisis to further their own ends.

Michael Barber, Bishop of Oakland, was open and honest with the clergy at our retreat last week. I hope his leadership at the local and national level will help us to weather the scandal and get on with ministry entrusted to us by Christ.

I, for one, am a priest of God to the core. I will continue to minister the gospel as best as I can, one way or the other, until the day I die.