

Clerical Sex Abuse Crimes

How Should Traditionalists Respond?

by Randy Engel

The first in-depth book I ever read on the sexual abuse of young boys by Catholic clergy and religious was *Unholy Orders — Tragedy at Mount Cashel* by Michael Harris, an account of institutionalized pederasty by Christian Brothers at the Mount Cashel Orphanage in Newfoundland, published in 1990. I still recall the moment I began to convulse with uncontrollable tears at reading a description of one orphan's being forced into a sex act with a priest after being given the "holy bread." That page remains stained with tears — a reminder to me of the horrific implications of clerical sexual abuse. All these feelings of emotional pain came flooding back to me when I recently read *In The Shadow Of The Cross* by Charles L. Bailey.

Charles "Charley" Bailey was ten years old when he was abused, by Father Thomas Neary, a Catholic priest of the Diocese of Syracuse, New York. Most of the attacks took place in his own bedroom while his mother and his siblings were downstairs — just a scream away if he could only manage one scream — but he could not. And so Charley screamed silently, inwardly, not unlike the unborn child held hostage in the womb of his mother trying to escape the abortionist's suction curette in the Bernard Nathanson 1984 film, *The Silent Scream*.

The sexual assaults on Charley, more than 100 incidents in all, went on for two years, until he was twelve and entering puberty, at which time Father Neary told him that he was not pleasing to God, and announced to Mrs. Bailey that his "counseling" sessions to assess Charley's vocation to the priesthood were terminated. Mrs. Bailey was crushed, but Charley was relieved, thinking his hell had finally come to an end — but it had not.

For you see, while Charley kept Father's "dirty little secret," Father's "dirty little secret" held Charley in bondage and in a state of emotional, mental, spiritual bondage turmoil for more than forty years. The dam finally burst on Memorial Day of 2002 when Charles told his wife, Sue, the story of

his sexual abuse at the hands of a Catholic priest. On that day, Charley took back his life and started the long and difficult road to recovery.

Conversations With Sex Abuse Victims

I originally met Charles Bailey via the internet. We began by exchanging books and a friendship developed from there. Charles is one of many clerical sexual abuse victims, (mostly male), whom I have corresponded and/or interviewed over the last twenty years largely in connection with my own book, *The Rite of Sodomy*.

When the subject of religion comes up, and it always does, and the victim/survivor learns that I am a traditional Catholic who loves Holy Mother Church and attends the Traditional Mass, their initial reaction is invariably one of genuine surprise - not a particularly flattering reaction, but an understandable one.

Liberal Catholic groups like Call To Action, We Are Church, and FutureChurch have managed to corner the market on "compassion" for victims of clerical sexual abuse. To date, they have been the only show in town, so to speak. Sex abuse victims are invited on a regular basis to speak at their conventions and meetings to tell their story and made to feel welcome. So it is easy to understand why victims tend to gravitate in their direction. At the same time, these groups have successfully exploited the genuine plight of victim/survivors and their families, to advance their own agendas which include an "inclusive" priesthood, homosexual and reproductive 'rights,' the "democratization" of the Catholic Church, and so on.

Traditional Catholics, I expect, can appreciate the irony of this situation, given the fact that many, but certainly not all, of the conditions leading up to the current sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, can be traced to the liberalization of faith and morals that has occurred over the last century around the world.

Then there is the matter of the

victim/survivor himself.

For many victims of clerical crimes, especially those abused in their childhood or their teenage years, the loss of innocence has been accompanied by the loss of their Catholic faith, or perhaps more precisely, their loss of faith in the Catholic Church. The tragic result is that many victims and their spouses and members of their family, like Charles and Sue Bailey, both cradle Catholics, have left the Catholic Church altogether.

Not all victims leave the Church voluntarily. I recall one poignant conversation I had with a middle-aged woman, a baptized Catholic, who had been sexually abused as a child by her pastor in church. I asked her if she had ever thought of returning to the Catholic Church. She replied that she had on occasion visited a Catholic church, but the scent of candles triggered such a violent emotional and physical reaction in her, that she was forced to leave. She said she still prays, but at home. I told her I would pray for her — and I do every day.

There are, of course, victims who remain Catholic, at least in outward form, that is, they still attend Sunday Mass and continue to receive the Sacraments. As a rule, this group suffers in silence. It is the worse type of suffering. This becomes manifestly evident when, for example, but only a few minutes into an interview concerning their case, the victim starts crying, as if the sexual assault happened just yesterday and they were reliving the experience all over again, when in fact, the abuse happened 20 or 30 years ago or more. Unfortunately, most of these victims have not sought out professional counseling in any form. They have not sought out legal redress for the crime committed against them, largely because of the statute of limitations. Neither have they, by choice, reported their abuse to secular law enforcement officers or made the name of their abuser a matter of public knowledge. In almost every case, Chancery officials had knowledge of the "problem" priest involved, but, unless a law suit has been

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brought against the diocese and abuser, did nothing to curb his criminal activities. Nevertheless, in private conversation, one can sense the victim's continued feelings of betrayal and isolation, and a sense of bitterness usually directed against diocesan officials, but overflowing into their feelings and thoughts about the Catholic Church.

The Unique Suffering of Victims of Clerical Molestation

Since the release of *The Rite of Sodomy* in July 2006, my contacts with victims of clerical sexual abuse has greatly increased. This includes not only Catholic laymen and women who were abused in their youth, but seminarians, priests and religious of all ages, who were abused by their seminary professor or spiritual director, or a member of their religious order or even their own bishop or religious superior. And I have learned a great deal about their particular sufferings as a result of their abuse.

Suffering, of course, has been part of the human condition since the Fall. It was and continues to be part of God's Eternal Plan of Redemption. We all suffer. Having acknowledged this reality, I also believe that there are extenuating circumstances related to clerical molestation that make the sufferings of victims particularly tragic. Sufferings which should engender a special concern and solicitude, especially among traditional Catholics. Whatever the long-term consequences of their assault, I don't recall any victims having claimed that they were made better as a result of the attack. Patterns of anti-social behavior are one of the consequences of sexual molestation of young males leading to run-ins with the law for crimes involving drug use or petty thievery, male prostitution, and even more serious crimes including murder. Premature sexual seduction of adolescent boys by pederast priests has been a factor in some victims' adaptation of dangerous life styles. Some victims commit

suicide. Much of the brunt of these ongoing sorrows, are, of course, borne by grieving parents, some of whom blame themselves for putting their child in harm's way. Familial frictions can lead to separation of spouses. Attorney and court fees for families taking legal action strain finances to the limit.... And on and on like the ripples of a pebble thrown in a lake.

The Need for Traditionalists to Reach Out to Victims of Clerical Abuse

This brings us to the question as to how the Traditionalist Movement and individuals like you and me can play a role in assisting victims of clerical abuse.

Certainly, we who value our Catholic faith so deeply should be the first to decry the loss of that faith in a fellow Catholic, especially since the loss is precipitated by the criminal actions of a priest or bishop or cardinal who stands in *Persona Christi* (in the Person of Christ). Ordained to save souls, he becomes a slayer of souls. Instead of praying with his flock, he preys on his flock. Is there a more dangerous man alive?

Traditional Catholics need to be at the forefront of demanding genuine justice for the victims of clerical abuse. This might present problems for some traditionalists, but it should not. I find no contradiction between loving Holy Mother Church and the Sacred Priesthood and the demand that church officials and religious superiors, from the Vatican down, act in an honorable and forthright manner in dealing with victims and their families. The time for cover-ups is over. Victims first - not last - should be our motto.

The key to stopping clerical sexual abuse is prevention, which includes proper vetting of candidates for the priesthood and religious life. That means Rome must take the lead in cleaning up dioceses, seminaries and houses of religious. Rome needs to remove every bishop and cardinal tainted by sexual vices from office —

even if it means a wholesale housecleaning by the Pope.

On an individual basis, we as Traditionalists owe it to the victims and to ourselves to become better informed on the subject. Charles Bailey's *In The Shadow Of The Cross* is a worthy read. One need not agree with all of his choices or his politics to appreciate his personal courage in the face of overwhelming odds. Whether he has left the Church or not, a soul is a soul, and every soul is precious in the eyes of God.

Traditionalist priests are in a unique position to make contact with victims of clerical sexual abuse and their families. In addition to offering sound spiritual advice, they can and should encourage victims to seek out other outside forms of counseling and assistance if needed. Laymen also can offer help in countless ways as circumstances permit. Just knowing that other Catholics truly care can be a great source of consolation to victims struggling to rebuild their lives and their faith.

Which brings me to what I believe is the most important way that traditional Catholics can help survivors of clerical sexual abuse.

When all is said and done - when all the dust has settled - the ultimate crisis of the survivor remains a spiritual crisis. And ultimately - so must the remedy be. And the most efficacious spiritual remedy we can offer them is the Holy Sacrifice of the Traditional Mass. It is through this door, I believe, that victims will recover their faith (or for many, discover it for the first time) and find the true peace of heart and mind that only Christ can give. What greater gift is there?

Our Lady of Fatima — Pray for us.

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For Church and Pontiff

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**EMAIL THE EDITOR WITH YOUR COMMENTS AND REQUESTS:
challenge_email@yahoo.ca**

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Editor Teresa Egan
Managing Editor Edward Roche

Research Larry Lewis
Vox Populi Tat-Siang Cortens

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