

The True Cost of the Crisis – Piercings to the Heart of the Church

Dear Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, Major Superiors, esteemed colleagues and fellow participants, it is an honor and privilege to address you this day. Thank you for allowing us to present to you.

Introduction

The international sexual misconduct crisis has had profoundly negative consequences upon the Catholic Church. This is an unquestionable fact. The ultimate import of these consequences is impossible to discern or measure at this time. Church and secular historians will eventually render their opinions for later generations to evaluate. However, we as Church -- and people in general throughout the world -- are presently living with the effects of the crisis and are therefore able to provide some witness and analysis of the issue.

The task of attempting to assess the damage caused to the Church by the crisis is certainly daunting and may seem to be an unattainable goal. No price can be placed on any one single soul. No value can ever be placed on the thousands of victims whose lives were changed forever. No price can be set on those poor victims who took their own lives out of desperation. No cost analysis can provide any of us with a sense of the true costs to the Holy Mother Church who is still suffering from loss each day as the crisis unfolds in countries across the world. Saint Paul taught us that “. . . We, though many, are one body in Christ.” [Romans 12:5] and if one of us suffers, we all suffer. We are gathered here for that reason alone. To clearly hear the sufferings of others, and together we continue to share and teach one another how to provide healing and reconciliation. We are not here to tabulate our losses, rather, we come together to count the gains. As paradoxical as it sounds, we rely on God’s power and operative Grace to see that all is not lost. We have, through this horrific crisis, seen God’s healing power in ways we never thought we could. More specifically, much good has come from the coordinated responses of proactive leaders in building safer communities for children and vulnerable adults. Be that as it may, we shall never be able to forget the loss. We take comfort again in the words of Saint Paul: “For to me life is Christ, and death is gain.” [Philippians 1:21] Nothing matters more here than the love of Christ for His Bride which is the Church.

Still, it is possible to break down the issue into constituent elements that are more easily considered and summarized. That is the purpose of this presentation.

Preamble

Before we proceed with our analysis, it is necessary that we dispel any lingering misapprehensions associated with one or more of several myths born of the crisis. These include: 1) the crisis is an American problem; 2) the crisis has been exaggerated by a Godless media that is antagonistic to people or institutions of faith; 3) the crisis has been instigated by avaricious attorneys whose only objective is to enrich themselves financially; and 4) homosexual orientation causes men to be sex offenders. [Nota Bene: Sexual offending is not about sexual orientation. The logical corollary to the proposition that homosexual orientation causes men to sexually offend against males, is that heterosexual orientation causes men to sexually offend against females. The reality is that neither homosexual nor heterosexual orientation is a risk factor, but rather, disordered or confused sexual orientation is a risk factor.] (1)

In fairness, it should be noted that there are, indeed, elements of truth related to each of the foregoing propositions, but none on its own, nor all of them combined, can even begin to explain and fully describe the misconduct crisis.

Given our theological tradition of understanding sin and grace, we also know the crisis as a failing of human nature and the ever present reality of sin and temptation. The negative consequences of the crisis that the Church has endured have certainly been affected by the four myths previously identified; but they are not at its heart.

Costs of the Crisis – in General

The categories of cost that the crisis has generated for the Church include:

- Financial losses that affect the ongoing mission of the Church
- Victimization of thousands
- Emotional distress caused to the families or loved ones of victims
- The shadow of the scandal and its burdening effect upon good priests, religious, and lay ministers
- Alienation of the laity
- Persons leaving the Church -- or losing Faith -- out of disillusionment
- Diminution of the Church's moral authority, teaching, and sacramental life
- Damage ultimately to the Gospel mission

We will examine each of these in order.

(1) Terry K, Smith M, Schuth K, Kelly R, et al. *The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950-2010*, John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York, 38, 62, 63, 64, 74, 100, 102, 119.

Financial Costs

We begin our analysis with this element acknowledging that it is not the most important, but rather, the least important of all those identified. It is, nevertheless, of significance, though no amount of monies can compare to the loss of the innocence of children and vulnerable adults. Please hear me clearly that nothing can compare to the losses we have experienced through the victimization of children and vulnerable adults.

Financial costs can be segregated into direct costs; indirect costs; and opportunity costs.

Direct costs are costs that can be identified specifically with a particular activity, project, service, operation or undertaking. In the context of the crisis, this would include: claim settlement values; legal and litigation expenses; costs of counseling and therapy for a specific individual; the costs of counseling, therapy and monitoring of perpetrators that have not been incarcerated; and the costs to develop, implement and monitor safe environment efforts.

Indirect costs include things frequently described as “overhead,” but in the context of the crisis they would include: the cost of efforts to accomplish tasks like investigating priests’ personnel files for evidence of long ago allegations and their handling at the time; the cost to produce “hard” copies or create computer logs of such efforts for review by Church personnel or Church attorneys or other Church advisors; the cost of increased insurance premiums imposed upon a diocese or religious institute; the cost of reduced contributions and support by disaffected laity or foundations that are otherwise normally inclined to assist the Church; and the cost of “reputational damage” which may evidence itself in ways such as laity leaving the Church to join a Protestant denomination.

Before we address opportunity costs, it is instructive to attempt to estimate the international financial cost of the crisis to the Church.

To begin, we need to accept that this cost is unknown and will never be fully known. Why, you may ask? Using the U.S. Church experience as an example, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice study entitled *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States 1950-2002* (which was released in February 2004), identified 472 million dollars reported in the surveys returned to the researchers by dioceses and religious institutes. However, the actual number is significantly higher by present date for the following reasons:

- 1) The study only addressed costs associated with misconduct perpetrated by priests and deacons, but significant settlements have been made in relation to

misconduct perpetrated by teachers, coaches, athletic trainers, youth ministers, choir directors, etc.

2) The diocesan response rate to the study was much higher than that of religious institutes, although religious institutes have experienced quite large sexual misconduct settlements.

3) At least 1.8 billion dollars of settlements have occurred in the United States since the end of the period analyzed by the John Jay researchers.

4) The researchers stipulated that it was unclear what percent of all actual cases were reported in the figures submitted with the surveys.

5) At least some dioceses had made many confidential settlements over the years, the total value of which may never be known.

6) Some settlements demand ongoing therapy and support services for victims, the ultimate cost of which cannot be determined.

7) Nowhere near the entire value of settlements was reimbursed by insurance companies.

8) Though the incidence and rate of new claims has been tremendously reduced, nonetheless, there are new claims each year.

None of the foregoing in any way reflects the non-U.S., international costs associated with current investigations, and in some instances ongoing litigation, in several African nations, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Germany, India, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Philippines, and Switzerland.

It is probably reasonable to estimate that the actual “out of pocket” cost of the crisis to the Church internationally, is well in excess of two billion dollars.

Now let’s talk about opportunity cost. Opportunity cost is the cost of any activity measured in terms of the value of alternative activities that are foregone. These alternative activities have been foregone, precisely because available resources of money, time and human effort are all finite and exhaustible and they have already been diminished or fully expended in pursuit of some other initiative or activity. Consequently, the opportunities associated with these alternatives are either forever lost or at least indefinitely postponed.

Opportunity cost is a function of money forever lost. For example, employing our estimated two billion dollars (1,451,235,407 EUR) or more as one means to assess opportunity cost, we would need to ask ourselves questions such as how many hospitals, seminaries, schools, churches, shelters for abused women and children, soup kitchens, free medical and dental clinics, etc., could we have built

with this amount of money? How many Catholic charities/social service programs and outreach opportunities could we have financed? How many sorely needed new employees could we have hired? Instead, we didn't build; we didn't finance; and we didn't hire.

Opportunity cost is also a function of time forever lost. For example, the litigation associated with the sex abuse crisis is not only expensive in terms of the related cost of services provided to the Church by its attorneys, risk managers, financial managers, etc., but also in relation to the immense amount of their time -- and the time spent by clergy, religious and lay ministers -- devoted to responding to these claims. Answering interrogatories; participating in depositions; meeting with attorneys to discuss and determine settlement or trial strategies; being called as a witness at trial; each of these is extremely time-consuming. Imagine the massive amount of time actually spent that has forever been lost and which could have been expended on ministry.

Finally, opportunity cost is a function of effort forever lost. Consider the ministerial talent and efforts that have been diverted and distracted by the sexual abuse crisis. Bishops engaged in press conferences and meetings with legal, financial and media advisors; priests, religious, lay ministers and faithful laity being required to spend hours in training and education efforts directed at prevention of child abuse and other forms of sexual abuse. Church spokesmen, including not only communication directors, but also bishops, priests, religious and even the Holy Father, spending time responding to inquiries by or involved in interviews with the press. Further, we cannot overlook the efforts of faithful Catholic laymen and women attempting to defend the Church and its actions in response to the crisis, when they are confronted by critics, skeptics or simply people genuinely seeking the truth and some reasonable explanation. All such efforts could have been expended in ministerial, charitable or devotional activities, but instead have been absorbed by sexual misconduct related matters.

The sad fact is that there is a huge amount of good that we could be doing now -- and for years to come -- that we will never do because of the money, time and effort already spent, and continuing to be expended, to address the sexual misconduct crisis.

Victimization

"...Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh." [Luke 6:21]

Throughout the New Testament, by His words and example, Jesus insists upon care of the needy, whatever the source or nature of their affliction.

It is an abomination that the Church -- through the actions of some of its most trusted and admired members -- actually created thousands of victims. In the United States alone, the John Jay "Nature and Scope..." study identified 10,667 victim allegations made in the period from 1950-2002, which number increased to 15,235 employing data through 2009. In that it is a well-known and accepted phenomenon that many victims of sexual assault never report their victimization, some observers have estimated that there may be as many as 100,000 total victims in the United States alone. We have only recently begun to amass data cross-culturally on the issue of sexual abuse outside of North America and Europe.

Victims of sexual abuse do not "just get over it." The victim's ultimate recovery is affected and influenced by a number of factors, including: 1) the specific nature of offense; 2) the frequency and duration of the offense; 3) the level of trust inherent in the relationship between the victim and the offender, and therefore, the extent and degree of betrayal experienced; 4) the environment of the perpetration; 5) the innate resiliency of the victim; and 6) the existence, or not, of a loving and supportive individual(s) to comfort and assist the victim.

Victims typically exhibit after-effects of abuse in seven distinct but overlapping categories: emotional reactions; post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); self-perceptions; physical and biomedical effects; sexual effects; interpersonal effects; and social functioning.

Physical symptoms experienced by child sexual abuse victims include:

- Chronic pelvic pain
- Gastrointestinal distress
- Musculoskeletal complaints
- Obesity and eating disorders
- Insomnia and sleep disorders
- Pseudocyesis (symptoms of pregnancy without an actual pregnancy)
- Sexual dysfunction
- Asthma and other respiratory ailments
- Addictions and substance abuse
- Chronic headache
- Chronic back pain

Psychological and Behavioral symptoms experienced by child sexual abuse victims include:

- Depression and anxiety
- Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Dissociative states (multiple personality disorders and schizophrenia)
- Repeated self-injury
- Suicide
- Compulsive sexual behaviors

- Sexual dysfunction
- Somatizing disorders (physical manifestations of abnormal mental states)
- Eating disorders
- Poor adherence to medical recommendations
- Intolerance of or constant search for intimacy
- Expectation of early death
- Inability to trust
- Inappropriate behaviors (lying, stealing, running away, etc.)
- Inability to maintain employment

Even in victims who “recover,” they are always occasionally haunted by the experience of what they endured (memory artifacts).

Bishop Blasé Cupich said it very well in his *Twelve Things the Bishops Have Learned From the Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis*: “The injury to victims is deeper than non-victims can imagine. Sexual abuse of minors is crushing precisely because it comes at a stage in their lives when they are vulnerable, tender with enthusiasm, hopeful for the future, and eager for friendships based on trust and loyalty.”

It also is a myth that there are a large proportion of concocted allegations made by people who are looking to use the Church as a “pot of gold.” Researchers agree that most allegations made by children are valid reports and adults who bring allegations much later in life must have their contentions ultimately “survive the gauntlets” of diocesan review board inquiries, insurance company investigations, independent medical examinations, legal depositions, etc.

We “Rejoice in Hope” [Romans 12:12] each time we encounter victims who have moved through surviving and ultimately thriving in our Church. Indeed, many have healed through the thousands of programs run throughout the world to assist those who have been abused. This is our prayer for every victim -- that they not remain chained to their victimization, rather to move to becoming the best they can be -- affirmed, supported, and viable members of our communities.

Family Trauma

Families are also victimized by child sexual abuse.

Often they are initially in a state of shock, confused as to whether the information they have received is credible and reliable in whole or part. This is particularly true when the alleged offender is a trusted and admired individual. Sometimes families will actually add to the pain of the victim, because they believe or suspect that the victim in some fashion invited the offense or cooperated with it because they enjoyed the offense.

Some family members become alienated from their loved one that has made the allegation, when the alleged offender is a person well liked by and enjoying a close relationship with the family -- as is often the case. This can occur even when they believe that the allegation is true.

Parents often become panicked, desperately seeking some way in which their child can be restored to the innocence that the victim knew prior to the offense.

Other common emotional reactions of parents and siblings include anger, particularly when they believe the offense could or should have been prevented; grief, as they gradually absorb the realization that their child has been grievously injured and on some level forever changed; and in some cases, depression, particularly if they believe that they had not adequately protected their loved one.

For all these reasons, it is imperative that the Church reach out to parents and siblings of victims with compassion, understanding, patience, apology, non-judgmentally, and with the offer of necessary counseling assistance.

The Shadow of the Scandal Singeing Good Clergy and Lay Ministers

Thousands of good priests, religious, and lay ministers have all been “burned” by the abuse scandal. They often must deal with distrust, resistance, suspicion and even ridicule from people with whom they interact, because they have been “painted with the same broad brush” that characterizes the egregious behavior of offenders within the Church.

In addition to their normal ministries, they still have to mediate disputes within the parish that relate to friction ultimately caused by perceptions of parishioners regarding the scandal and how it should be -- or should have been -- addressed.

According to Matthew Bunson and Gregory Erlandson in a July 7, 2010 ZENIT interview based upon their book *Pope Benedict XVI and the Sexual Abuse Crisis: Working for Reform and Renewal*: “The vast majority of priests are dedicated and faithful to their vows, yet they too have seen their reputations maligned and felt the distrust of strangers. ... The priests’ relationship with their bishops has also been damaged. It is not unusual for priests to feel that while they are only one allegation away from having their reputations destroyed, their bishops are not as accountable and their bishops have made them scapegoats for larger institutional problems.”

The U.S. Church’s National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People reiterated this theme in their December 2007 report, in which they note that: “Another set of issues relates to the relationship of the Church to its

priests, the vast majority of whom are not involved in the scandal, but many of whom feel alienated from both the bishops and the laity.”

This overall phenomenon leads to depression, anxiety and “burn-out” of good priests, religious, and lay ministers.

Alienation of the Laity

Bishop Blasé Cupich again provides us valuable insights through two of his comments in his *Twelve Things the Bishops Have Learned From the Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis*: “Catholics have been hurt by the moral failings of some priests, but they have been hurt and angered even more by bishops who failed to put children first. People expect religious leaders above all to be immediate and forthright in taking a strong stand in the face of evil, such as the harm done to children and young people by sexual abuse. The counsel of lay people, especially parents, is indispensable in a matter that so deeply affects families. Our capacity to respond to sexual abuse of young people has been bolstered by the insights shared with us by parents as to how to do so effectively.”

These comments must be placed in the context of the very natural reaction by most U.S. Catholics to revelations of abuse that erupted in 2002. The laity itself erupted at that time -- and to some extent continues to do so -- with pronounced feelings of betrayal, disillusionment, and mistrust.

Additionally, many in the laity feel embarrassed, inadequate and overwhelmed when confronted by the negative perceptions, criticism and cynicism regarding the Church, expressed to them by relatives, friends, neighbors or other observers.

Importantly, for Catholics living through this in the United States, one solution to help solve the problem was to heavily engage themselves in the Church-wide safe environment and victim assistance efforts. Their tremendous outpouring of care and concern was another example of hope which “springs eternal” amid the evil in our world. Countless numbers of children and vulnerable adults are spared the torments of abuse due to the coordinated efforts of the Church members who came forward to recreate safe environments and programs.

It must be said that for some, they see this as a personal commitment to handle a situation that many Church leaders mishandled.

Reactions of Deeply Wounded Catholics

While the Church's mission in this world is to serve as the beacon guiding people to salvation through Christ, the confusion, disillusionment, disappointment and anger resulting from the sex abuse crisis has tragically often had the opposite effect on those she serves.

I personally know people who left the Church for other denominations, or far worse, have abandoned their Faith entirely. While in hope we trust in the mysterious workings of God's grace to continue to shape those who have left the Church due to this crisis, there remains the fact of a horrible breach of responsibility by priests and Church leaders and of the Church's fundamental mission of reconciliation and of being the instrument of every human being's realization of their common call to holiness, a life in God through Jesus Christ.

I remind these people who have left that *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* instructs us that "Christ, 'holy, innocent and undefiled,' knew nothing of sin, but came only to expiate the sins of the people. The Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal." (LG 8 §3) "All members of the Church, including her ministers, must acknowledge that they are sinners. In everyone, the weeds of sin will still be mixed with the good wheat of the Gospel until the end of time." (Part One, Section Two, Chapter Three, Article 9, Paragraph 3, ll., 827, pg.219)

Nonetheless, for some the hurt and pain of betrayal is too deep and the chasm between them and the Church too wide, for the message to be heard.

Diminished Moral Authority, Teaching, and Sacramental Life

"But they will not follow a stranger; they will run away from him, because they do not recognize the voice of strangers." [John 10:5]

You will no doubt recognize this passage from the parable of The Good Shepherd. While Jesus was making a point about the Pharisees, the language of the parable aptly describes the damage that the crisis has done to the Church's exercise of its moral authority, its Magisterium, and its sanctifying role.

Many within the Church find it inexplicable and unacceptable that the source of moral leadership, doctrinal education, and sanctifying example could possibly have gone so far astray, in so many different places, involving so many different people, for so very long. Some question the proposition that "The bishops and priests sanctify the Church by their prayer and work ... They sanctify her by their example, 'not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to

the flock.” (1 Peter 5:3) (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition, Part One, Section Two, Chapter Three, Article 9, Paragraph 4, I., 893, pg.236*)

Outside of the Church, rational observers are often highly critical of the Church, while less rational people with an agenda make the Church a target of ridicule and mockery.

Damage to the Gospel Mission

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” [Matthew 28: 19, 20]

Every source and nature of damage that precedes this section, can be aggregated into a terrible burden that places a monumental obstacle in the Church’s path as it seeks to follow the command of Jesus in fulfilling her mission to make disciples of all nations.

The work of the Holy Father and of every bishop, priest, religious and lay minister has been made more difficult because of the sexual misconduct crisis and related scandal. The faith of everyone in the laity has been tested by the crisis and will continue to be so for some time into the future. The witness of all baptized to God’s love has been obscured and compromised by the prominence of the scandal. The skepticism of the world confronts all members of the body of Christ as never before.

Conclusion

“And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” [Matthew 28:20]

We remain confident that all is not lost. The Church in the United States’ response to the crisis -- while still a “work in progress” -- nevertheless can demonstrate much success and very positive accomplishments in the work to eradicate sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults. Protocols, policies, procedures and programs exist that have demonstrated their value and utility. Experience, including much that was painful, has been gained and can be shared. Training models exist that are “tried and true” and immediately available as templates. No local church has to “start from scratch” or “reinvent the wheel.” We already have the means to help restore the Church as the most recognized force for good in the world.

The Church has the distinct opportunity to become the international model and leader in the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

This Church has been tested repeatedly over the centuries and has endured many severe crises; in each case, because Jesus is the source of this perdurance. The work will be long and sometimes arduous, but with a very attainable and fulfilling goal.

We pray for God's greatest blessings upon your efforts; that the Holy Spirit helps you discern your way forward; and that the grace won for us by Jesus Christ will continue to give you strength and hope!

“Peace be with you.” [Luke 24:36]