

# COLUMNISTS

## Sex-abuse crisis more than failure to obey rules

The word on the conservative street is that the sexual-abuse crisis in the Catholic Church was caused by a lack of fidelity to the church's teachings on human sexuality — the underlying assumption being that only "dissenters" fell from grace and caused the biggest scandal that the church has faced in modern times.

A second assumption is that all of the offenders were homosexuals and that they were encouraged in their perverse course of behavior in the 1960s by liberal (read: dissenting) seminary faculty members, who implicitly disparaged the requirements of clerical celibacy.

According to this view, a gay subculture developed in seminaries during that "permissive" decade which marginalized and disheartened orthodox, heterosexual seminarians, who then abandoned their quest of the priesthood.

This is the line taken in Michael Rose's *Goodbye, Good Men: How Liberals Brought Corruption into the Catholic Church*, and in George Weigel's forthcoming book, *The Courage to be Catholic: Crisis, Reform, and the Future of the Church*, judging by his recent interview with *belief.net*.

It is also the position taken in various articles, press interviews and television appearances by Father Richard John Neuhaus, editor of *First Things* magazine,



By FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

essays in theology

who insists that there are just three words to describe the solution to this whole crisis: fidelity, fidelity, fidelity.

The assumption is that no priest or bishop would have engaged in the sexual abuse of minors, or in any other kind of immoral sexual behavior, if they had been faithful to the commandments of God and their ordination vows.

Which is a bit like saying that we wouldn't have any wars if countries acted peacefully, or that we wouldn't have any thefts if people obeyed the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." The "analysis" is tautological — without value.

Medical professionals would not agree that clerical pedophilia (sexual abuse of prepubescent children) and ephebophilia (sexual abuse of postpubescent minors) would stop if only potential perpetrators

were faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church. The problem goes much deeper than a failure to obey moral rules. We are dealing here with compulsive, addictive behavior and with the mystery of evil itself.

If active dissent against teachings of the church were the real cause of such depravity, why is it that "orthodox" clergy have also engaged in it? And, if linked with homosexuality, what evidence is there that liberal clergy are more likely to be gay than conservative clergy?

Polls show that outrage against the bishops over their mishandling of this crisis knows no ideological boundaries within the Catholic community. Conservatives have, in unison with liberal Catholics, called for the resignations of bishops who have moved predatory priests from assignment to assignment, and then covered up their actions.

Although Father Neuhaus himself hasn't demanded any resignations, he had said, just before the bishops' meeting in Dallas, that they should all "get down on their knees" to ask forgiveness from God and their Catholic people.

However, few critics on the right, apart from Rod Dreher of *The National Review*, have taken the next logical step and pointed a finger at John Paul II himself, who

has been in office for nearly 24 years and has named 90 percent of the bishops, including all of the leading figures in the U.S. hierarchy.

If there is a gay subculture in seminaries, it is actually more evident now, after more than two decades of John Paul II's leadership, than it was in the 1960s, when Paul VI was pope. This is the clear impression of more than half of all U.S. priests, according to a recently published survey sanctioned by the bishops and conducted by Professor Dean Hoge of The Catholic University of America for the National Federation of Priests' Councils.

Significantly, 47 percent of younger priests (25-35) said there was "clearly" a gay subculture in their seminaries (in the late 1980s and 1990s), while only 8 percent of priests between 56 and 65 (seminarians of the 1960s and early 1970s) and only 3 percent of priests over 66 had that same impression of their own seminaries (in the 1950s and early 1960s).

In other words, the subculture problem seems to have become much more pronounced during the current pontificate.

Michael Rose and company, please take note.

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Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

## God rewards us for service, not for time served

25th Sunday of the Year (September 22): (R3) Matthew 20:1-16; (R1) Isaiah 55:6-9; (R2) Philippians 1:20-24, 27.

Have you ever noticed that we are content with what we have — until we compare it with what someone else has?

A sparrow complained to Mother Nature, "You gave beautiful colors to the peacock and a lovely song to the nightingale, but I am plain and unnoticed. Why was I made to suffer?"

"You were not made to suffer," answered Mother Nature. "You suffer because you make the same foolish mistake as human beings. You compare yourself with others. Be yourself, for in that there is no comparison and no pain." That's easy to say but hard to implement.

It is hard not to compare what we have with what our neighbor has.

Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire men to work in his vineyard. He agreed with the laborers for the usual daily wage and sent them into his vineyard. About nine o'clock and again at noon, three o'clock and five o'clock, he went back to the marketplace and saw other men standing there. He said to them, "Go into my vineyard and I will give you what is just."



By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

a word for sunday

In Palestine the rains come soon after the grapes ripen. The harvest, if not done quickly, is ruined. Any worker, even if he can work for only an hour, is welcomed.

When evening had come, all workers received a full day's pay. Those hired earliest thought they should receive more. But the owner said, "I'm not cheating you. Did you not agree for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go."

The workers would have been happy if they had not compared what they were paid with what the others were paid, and then they were dissatisfied. That is true of many of us. We are at peace until we begin making comparisons.

This great parable is in one sense a warning to the disciples. It is as if Jesus said to them, "Don't bank on the fact

that you had been called into the church earlier than others. That is a great privilege. But never let it cause you to look down on others. Pray that God will give them the gift of faith, and also pray that you will get the grace to live your faith and be humble and grateful for it."

The parable is also a warning to the Jews, who hated and despised the Gentiles. Jesus wished them to remember God is a father to all peoples and wishes the salvation of all. So should we.

Furthermore, the important thing is that one comes to God! It may happen early in life like the call of the Apostles or late in life like the good thief. The heart and hands of Jesus are always extended to receive all no matter when they come home. All are dear to him.

Then, too, how compassionate is God! Unemployment can be tragic. In Palestine in our Lord's day men waited in the marketplace for someone to hire them. The master in the parable employed all looking for work, regardless of the hour. And he gave all a full day's wages, for he knew there would be a worried wife and hungry children at the workman's home. God wants us all to work no matter how late the hour.

Finally, the first workers made a con-

tract: "We will work for so much pay." Those engaged later made no contract; they just wanted to work and left the payment to the master. Likewise, we should work for the joy of serving God and our fellow man.

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Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

### Daily Readings

- Monday, September 23**  
Proverbs 3:27-34; Psalms 15:2-5; Luke 8:16-18
- Tuesday, September 24**  
Proverbs 21:1-6, 10-13; Psalms 119:1, 27, 30, 34-35, 44; Luke 8:19-21
- Wednesday, September 25**  
Proverbs 30:5-9; Psalms 119:29, 72, 89, 101, 104, 163; Luke 9:1-6
- Thursday, September 26**  
Ecclesiastes 1:2-11; Psalms 90:3-6, 12-14, 17; Luke 9:7-9
- Friday, September 27**  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-11; Psalms 144:1-4; Luke 9:18-22
- Saturday, September 28**  
Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:8; Psalms 90:3-6, 12-14, 17; Luke 9:43B-45

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