

Sipe: Donohue is a Bozo

Tom Gallagher | May. 23, 2009 NCR Today

The following was [written by Richard Sipe](#)

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The Irish Report of sexual abuse in institutions meant to care for children is now public. It represents 9 years of investigation and interviews with more than a thousand victims and church reports found in church files. (Cf. NYT 21 May 2009) In 2,600 pages it catalogues physical, emotional, and sexual abuses perpetrated by Catholic priests, brothers and, nuns over a 60-year period. The institutions involved were established and financially supported by the Irish government, but administered by Catholic religious dedicated to the service of others and the imitation of Jesus Christ. The contradiction is so obvious that no commentary is necessary.

William Donohue, the voice of the Catholic League, cites the reaction to the report as "Hysteria." Donohue is a Bozo. I don't know any other appellation that can adequately describe the uninformed, unintelligent, and frankly stupid reaction of a man who responds thus to the facts of abuse by supposedly responsible and trusted religious. Even Irish Cardinal Brady could admit that he was "profoundly sorry and deeply ashamed" and hoped that the publication of the report would help heal victims' hurts, and "address the hurts of the past." The Christian Brothers who have a longstanding reputation of delivering good education with a heavy rod resisted resolution by instituting lawsuits much like the operation of the U.S. church. The sisters of Mercy, better known for their charity, have been a bit more forthcoming in their repentance for the abuse.

Over, and over, and over again faithful and former Catholics give witness the fact of abuse by Catholic clergy and religious. Mostly that witness is given with pain and regret—and sometimes with disillusionment and even rage. Father Andrew Greeley estimated a decade ago that U.S. Catholic clergy had abused at least 120,000 minors. He was being modest and conservative. But he was on the right track. If some of the clergy have been taken out of commission by the Dallas accord the victims and survivors remain. The Church—and those who fail to understand the reality, causes, and consequences of clergy sex abuse—cannot expect trust or respect. Sarah Lyall spoke not only about Ireland when she wrote, "The revelations have also had the effect of stripping the Catholic Church of much of its moral authority and political power." (After all, 31 percent of American adults brought up Catholic have left the faith. Cf. Pew Forum, 08)

Apologies from the hierarchy continue to be offered as if the problem of sex abuse is "now behind them." News Flash! The problem of sex by Catholic clergy and religious is very much alive and well within the clerical system. Sexual distortion—expressing itself in at least 6 percent of priests who abuse minors—is endemic to the clerical culture because its members are not sufficiently educated to know about sex and how to handle their sexuality. Most are not actually interested in understanding or practicing celibacy. The theories of sexuality they depend on are "intrinsicly" inadequate and false. The system of authoritarian ecclesiastical control fosters and protects secret sexual expression—homosexuality and a double life. The power structure colludes to cover up the facts about clergy sexual activity. Sexual failings by bishops and priests are relegated to the confessional wastebasket where all is forgiven and forgotten rather than considered in an evaluation process where causes and effects—and the necessity of change—are honestly measured.

The problem is over? Is there anyone who thinks that Irish and American bishops and priests have lost their sexual drive? or their orientation, or their habits and relationships? In what ways has the clerical system of education or culture changed? In what ways have any of their operations vis-à-vis sexuality? birth control, masturbation, homosexuality, sex before marriage or after divorce/widowhood, optional celibacy for priests, ordination of women? changed?

As one reviews the list of clerics who support Donohue and the League? Egan, Mahony, Chaput, O'Brien, O'Malley and others? with encomiums for ?the protection of the faith, the defense of victims, courage to speak up candidly, teaching the hard truths of the Gospel?? one is struck by the oppositional, obstructionistic, and arrogant way all of the clerical Donohue supporters still operate. Like Cosa Nostra?

Those like Donohue who minimize and distort the real picture of clergy abuse of sex and power continue to do a huge disservice to the Catholic Church. Every U.S. Grand Jury investigation into clergy sexual abuse of minors came to exactly the same conclusion: the church has colluded to cover up facts, protect offenders and preferred institutional image and the avoidance of scandal above the safety of children. Hundreds of thousands of Catholics know the truth even if many are too intimidated or tired to say so aloud. There is nothing hysterical? over emotional or attention seeking? in the Irish Report or in reactions to it. Only a Bozo would think so. Facts, even painful facts, are still facts? the truth remains solid even after attacks or dismissals from powerful coalitions. Truth silently prevails, Bozos don't.

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