

Colloquī

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A journal for restless minds

Out Of Control

No rhyme nor reason

Colloquī is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose: to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God.

Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

Be forewarned! Articles may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the express intent to seek the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God.

Out Of Control

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Dreams and nightmares share the same pajamas; like identical—a misnomer, if ever there was such a thing—twins, products of the same egg, such visions soon diverge into almost but not the same; from one two are formed unique and different. No matter how alike in outward appearances, each has the probable potentiality to become either a dream or nightmare.

So much of life germinates from the same seed, sameness loses similarity to difference, tolerance for intolerance, dreaming visions of dancing sugarcanes transform into horrific terrifying nightmares. Absent all that is good, evil celebrates its conquest; without love, hate

shouts in victory; death determines life, meaningless defines meaning, reality unbecoming a dream waxes into degenerate nightmare.

There is no rhyme nor reason to the madness of this age; Humpty Dumpty has cracked and the yolk is upon us all. While rotten eggs are rare but common enough there are good eggs more than plenty to make a tasty omelet. The key is

to avoid mixing the rotten with the good which spoils the lot yet how does the chef adjudge the egg before the shell is well and truly cracked?



The latest "Catholic" scandal tells a sordid tale, one which cannot be swept away or dismissed. Nor, heaven forbid, should it! It is the Catholic Church's worst nightmare; a self-induced nightmare of frightening proportions and yet

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in spite of all the sensationalism generated by the media and the absolute disgust, horror, repulsion, and disbelief from the Catholic lay faithful resulting from these latest scandals coming out of Pennsylvania and Washington, D. C., there is a harsher reality which has garnered little, if any, attention.

The truth is this is old news. There is no excuse—nor can there ever be—for such nightmarish abuse of office or abject misuse of positional power, no exception for such destructive, sinful, detestable, thoroughly evil behavior, ever more than when offending the most vulnerable among us.

I can neither, nor will I, attempt to ameliorate or reconcile with such evil; I share the disgust and dismay expressed by Catholics and all of God’s children at the evil that men (priests, bishops and cardinals in particular) do. And yet, I must lend my voice to this current controversy which is, in truth, both stale and dated, and as is too often these days misleading, presenting one particularly biased point-of-view while ignoring what does not fit the popular narrative.

While it makes for sensational headlines, according to Michael Knowles, the latest reports of clergy abuse are decades old, many occurring more than 50 years ago by clergy long deceased.

Fortunately most of the 301 priests listed in the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report are now dead, and many have been dead for decades. If so horrific and widespread a

crime can be said to have a silver lining, it is that the vast majority of sexual assaults took place decades ago, during the 1960s, ‘70s, and ‘80s. Their incidence seems to have waned substantially in recent decades, which complicates justice in its own way: because so much time has passed, statutes of limitations will protect most abusive clerics still alive from prosecution.

On what can we blame the abuse? Some will blame priestly celibacy, or else the prevalence of homosexuality among the clergy. But the social scientific data, including a five-year study by John Jay College of Criminal Justice at the City Univer-

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sity of New York, show no link between either celibacy or same-sex attraction and child abuse. Further, these studies show that sexual abuse of children is no more prevalent among priests than among the general male population.

Is there something wrong with the Catholic faith itself? According to findings of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, child abuse is no more prevalent in the Catholic Church than in any other religious setting. Companies that insure various Christian de-

nominations affirm those findings. One executive explains, “We don’t see vast difference in the incidence rate between one denomination and another. It’s pretty even across the denominations.” In fact, sexual abuse appears to be far more prevalent outside of churches and synagogues. One study prepared for the U.S. Department of Education found that “the physical sexual abuse of students in schools is likely more than 100 times the abuse by priests.”

Nothing which Knowles reports excuses the evil inflicted upon the innocent, absolutely nothing. What we expect though from our priests is greater moral rectitude. After all they serve “*in persona Christi*,” which means priests act in the person of Christ when administering the sacraments, especially Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation.

All too many are of the mind that evil does not exist, that evil is a make-believe concept. As Knowles reports:

Before his death in 2016, the Vatican’s chief exorcist for over a quarter century, Father Gabriele Amorth, observed, “The Devil resides in the Vatican, and you can see the consequences.” We are seeing the consequences now from Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. all the way up to the College of Cardinals. Fr. Amorth described “cardinals who do not believe in Jesus and bishops who are linked to the demon.” ...

Last year, an American couple, Jay Austin and Lauren Geoghegan, quit their jobs to ride their bicycles around Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. During their journey, Austin declared on his blog, “Evil is a make-believe concept we’ve invented to deal with the

complexities of fellow humans holding values and beliefs and perspectives different than our own." Last month, Muslim terrorists murdered the couple as they bicycled through Tajikistan, ramming them with their sedan and stabbing them until they died.

Evil is not a make-believe concept. Neither is it mere metaphor for disordered sexual desires or feckless bureaucratic management. Evil exists, and it has a personality. Secular, self-styled sophisticates often deny the existence of the Devil. But as the late Antonin Scalia reminded a flippant New York Magazine interviewer in 2013, "Most of mankind has believed in the Devil, for all of history. Many more intelligent people than you or me have believed in the Devil."

The particular evil of the present moment is a call to arms against the Devil, not the Church. Of course the Devil resides in the Vatican. Where else should he concentrate his efforts? The Devil exists. He is a murderer and a liar, and he is crouching at your door. Any reform that denies that reality will not only fail but will let evil fester.

Frank Sheed, a prolific Catholic writer, publisher and a forceful public speaker in the Catholic Evidence Guild once wrote:

We are not baptized into the hierarchy; do not receive the cardinals sacramentally; will not spend an eternity in the beatific vision of the pope. Christ is the point.

The scurrilous scandal now so publicly splayed before us ought not shatter our faith; now is not the time to turn away from Christ. Now is the time to follow Jesus Christ and be more Catholic than ever. Christ chose twelve men to "Go into all the world

and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15) and of the twelve one would betray him. The faith of the eleven was sorely tested but never lost for their faith was in Jesus Christ. The focus of their faith and of our own Catholic faith must always be on Christ. We must ask ourselves in whom do we worship, of whom do we serve: God or man.

As stated earlier, the most current scandals (former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report) involving the sexual abuse of minor children and seminarians are new only in the recency of their revelation. Just sixteen years ago, in 2002, the disclosure that more than 4,000 (out of 110,000) priests had been accused in the U.S. of sexual abuse of minors in the previous half-century flooded the media.

According to data collected by CARA, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, the number of priests in the U. S. has declined by 33% since 1970. Nearly fifty years ago, in 1970, there were 59,192 priests in the U. S., today that number has fallen below 37,000.

To put this in some perspective consider the page upon which these words are printed. The images and words are not stamped on the page but formed by thousands of tiny dots; a typical printer is capable of placing 600 dots per inch or 360,000 dots per square inch. That is a lot of dots in a very small area. Should a small percentage of dots (say one-tenthousandths or 360 dots) go astray would that square inch of print be noticeably different? Not likely.

This in no way is meant to lessen or minimize the devastating impact such depraved abuse by a few has had on the lives of their victims. Yet while our focus is justifiably on the broken few, have we perhaps lost sight of the many thousands who have faithfully served our Lord and ministered to our own brokenness in as many years? And what of ourselves, are we perfect in every way? Can we be the one to cast the first stone? Do we actually live as if our Catholic faith is true?

Jennifer Fitz, writing for National Catholic Register, suggests not. In a recent article she writes:

We now know that many of our bishops do not. We can look around the pews and see that many ordinary Catholics do not either. We go through the motions, but our lives are basically the same as everyone else's. Jesus Christ is the one most important thing to every man, woman and child alive today, and yet we content ourselves with a vague hope that everyone will be fine, and the we ourselves have no particular responsibility in the grand scheme of things.

That's not what Jesus Christ said. Jesus Christ gave every Christian a mission to go and make disciples. Are you doing that? Are you actively praying, sacrificing, and working to bring others into a deeper, fuller relationship with God?

We have seen that our Church is infected with nasty, self-serving, slothful men who would rather protect their neat little lives than take the courageous steps needed to carry out the mission God has given them. Are you one of them?

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) convened shortly after the earlier disclosures and adopted a “systemic response” to specifically root out those priests who had abused minors, provide protection for children and offer care and support for the victims. As well-intentioned as the bishops response may have been it was far from complete, leaving several glaring holes which have as yet been remedied. According to commentary by Father Roger Landry for National Catholic Register:

First, the phrase “credible accusations” was exceedingly vague and could encompass even accusations that were immediately demonstrably false.

Second, bishops exempted themselves from the policy.

Third, they didn’t have the courage to address what the data clearly showed was the main part of the crisis: It wasn’t pedophilia, or the sexual abuse of pre-pubescent girls and boys; it was ephhebophilia, the same-sex molestation of post-pubescent boys, encompassing more than four out of five accusations.

Fourth, they did not focus adequately on the corrupt culture that permitted such widescale abuse and the lack of determination to eradicate it: the practical toleration in many dioceses of priests living double lives, cheating on their vocations with men and women. As Father Thomas Berg recently wrote, “We can’t prevent the sexual abuse of minors or vulnerable adults by clergy while habitual and widespread failures in celibacy are left unchecked.

While across the U. S. Catholics are reeling from these latest scandals, similar scandals are rocking the Church in our Southern hemisphere. Sexual abuse and a pervasive homosexual culture have been reported in a letter submitted to Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga, the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras and the coordinator of the “C9” group of cardinals advising Pope Francis on Church and Curia reform by 50 seminarians.

In the letter written to the seminary’s formators that was subsequently circulated in June to the country’s Catholic bishops, the seminarians asserted “irrefutable evidence” exists that a homosexual network pervades the institution and is being protected by its rector. They pleaded that the homosexual activity among seminarians be stopped and that the bishops adopt stronger admittance practices for choosing seminarians.



The Honduran bishops have responded like the proverbial three monkeys, by denying the claims made by the 50 seminarians in their letter. The disingenuousness of the bishops’ response is especially noticeable with the acceptance by Pope Francis of the resignation of Tegucigalpa Auxiliary Bishop Juan Jose’ Pineda Fasquelle, a Honduran bishop accused of sexual misconduct with seminari-

ans. In part, this is the Honduran bishops response:

With all certainty and truth, we affirm that there does not exist, has not existed, nor should exist in the seminary an atmosphere such as the one presented in the news report at NCR, which gives the impression that institutionally there is the promotion and sustaining of practices opposed to the norms and morals of the Church under the complacent watch of the bishops.

Edward Pentin, Rome correspondent for National Catholic Register notes that the statement by the Honduran bishops did not refer to or deny the contents of the seminarians’ letter, nor any of the other substantiated facts previous reported by NCR.

The NCR report which the bishops response mentions was from the August 5-18, 2018 issue of NCR, also written by Pentin, adds relevance to what is happening both in Honduras as well as the U.S.

The disturbing Honduran allegations have particular resonance in the United States because they echo some key aspects of the current scandal in the Church in the United States, surrounding alleged sexual abuse by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the archbishop emeritus of Washington.

Similar to the charges surrounding Cardinal McCarrick, who reportedly engaged in a longstanding practice of pressuring seminarians into sexual activity with him while he was serving as bishop in two New Jersey dioceses during the 1980s and 1990s, Auxiliary Bishop Jose Juan Pineda Fasquelle of Tegucigalpa has been accused of engaging in

homosexual interactions with Tegucigalpa seminarians.

And, just as the revelations regarding Cardinal McCarrick have provoked troubling questions about what his brother U.S. bishops and the Vatican knew about his interactions with seminarians and about why nothing was disclosed publicly for so long, the Honduran allegations call into question the actions of Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa.

While Cardinal Maradiaga ... is not himself the subject of allegations of sexual misconduct, he is now under fire for appearing to have disregarded a wealth of evidence of homosexual misconduct by Bishop Pineda. ...

There can be and is absolutely no doubt, the facts speak for themselves, there have been widespread and systemic sexual abuses by Catholic clergy upon the vulnerable. Such abusive behavior has too long been ignored or dismissed or even worse, condoned and practiced by the successors of the holy apostles.

The question many are asking is "Who is guarding the hen house?" which is a rather trite euphemism for "Who is guarding the guardians of the Church?" It is a good question and a necessary and crucial one given the historical unwillingness of the bishops to confront the issue directly and with firm resolve.

The issue will continue to fester and drag the Church into the dark cesspool of immorality and sin until all those who are ordained to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ follow the ordinal words which all deacons at their ordination promise: "Believe what you

read. Teach what you believe. Practice what you teach."

As a member of the Order of Deacons, an ordained minister and clergy I am profoundly ashamed and appalled that members of the clergy, whether deacon, priest, bishop, cardinal or pope, have defiled the sanctity of their office, inflicting great damage to the Holy Catholic Church. Deacon Joseph Cinquno, from Catonsville, Maryland offered these words which I now share with you:

The recent disclosures regarding ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, and the responses of some bishops to them, have been appalling, to say the least. Great harm has been done not only to the unfortunate victims of abuse, but to the many innocent and holy priests and bishops, my own included, who labor each day as good shepherds to their flocks.

Just a few short years ago, one of the great joys I experienced as a permanent deacon was to help catechumens and candidates in RCIA come to an understanding of the "four marks" of the one true Church; the Church established by Jesus had to exhibit these four marks.

It must be "one" in its beliefs and teaching, "holy" in its separation from—and firm stance against—the often sinful practices of society at large, "catholic" in its presence and essential uniformity throughout the world, and "apostolic" in its lineage going all the way back to the apostles and to Jesus himself.

Until recently, it was easy to demonstrate that the Roman Catholic Church was the only church that met those criteria.

Today, though, except for the last of the four marks, it is becoming more difficult, if not disingenuous, to

maintain that the Church is one, or that it is holy, or that it is indeed catholic.

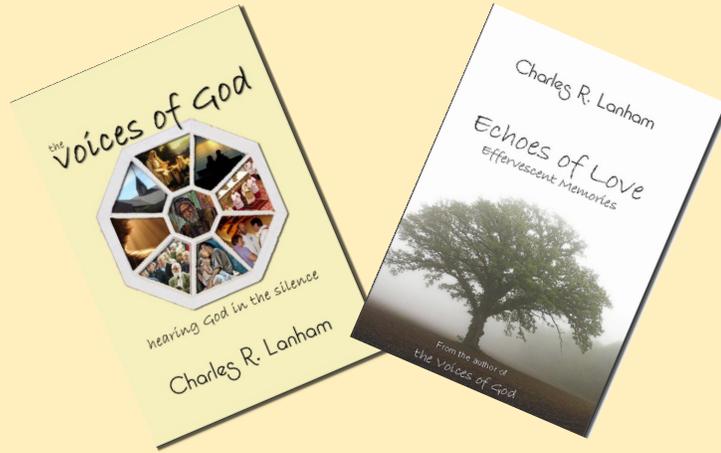
We know the many reasons for this disturbing development. The Church's "oneness" is being undermined by errant teaching and changes in pastoral practice that threaten the indissolubility of marriage, the proper place of individual conscience, and the very meaning of the Eucharist. Likewise, the Church's position as a countercultural beacon of truth is rapidly disintegrating, as she apparently seeks to defer to the values and the language of the secular world around her, and as more and more ghastly revelations of priestly and episcopal sexual perversion and cover-up come to light.

Lastly, her catholicity is slowly evaporating, as bishops' conferences and diocesan or national boundaries begin to replace sound doctrine as the touchstone of what is right or wrong, of what is permissible or impermissible.

As we live through these terribly sad and confusing times, though, there is one constant that encourages me and should encourage all Catholics to remain faithful and hopeful.

Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega, will be with us always, as he promised, and the Holy Spirit will remain present to guide the Church to all truth. Nothing that is said or done or may happen within the Church can alter this essential reality, or can diminish the Good News that God loved us so much that he sent his only Son to rescue us from sin and death, and that he continues to love each and every one of us, despite our human frailties, more than we can ever imagine.

Well said, enough said. May God, who loves us, forgive our sins and lead us from all temptation. Amen.



Books are available on **Amazon.com** or from the author's web site at:

deaconscorner.org

Deacon Chuck Lanham is an author, columnist, speaker, and a servant of God.

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