

COPING WITH THE CLERGY SEX ABUSE CRISIS

*How do we keep the faith amid such betrayal?
How do we talk to our kids about this?
Here's what you need to know*

BY GREGORY K. POPCAK, PH.D.

It's getting harder and harder to watch the news. It seems that almost every day, a new story emerges about priest sex abuse or cover-up in the Catholic Church. It's unconscionable. Words can't describe the disgust, frustration, pain, betrayal, and anger many Catholics feel. It's enough to make a person give in to feelings of despair or even to wonder whether it's worth remaining Catholic.

It's natural to experience these feelings, and the outrage they spark can lead to important changes that will hopefully cure the infection in the Body of Christ and prevent similar wounds from happening in the future. But along the way, it is possible for people to be so frustrated that their faith doesn't survive to appreciate the cure. Here are some suggestions to make sure this doesn't happen to you.

Ask yourself: "What do I believe in?" Researchers who study the psychology of faith know that people belong to a church for different reasons. Some people go to church

TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT THE SCANDAL

“Dad, Mom, why did priests hurt kids?” That’s not a question any parent wants to face. Here are some suggestions for talking with children about sex abuse in the Church:

Ask questions. When your child asks a question about the scandal, before you answer, make sure to ask questions like, “What do you think about that?” And, “Can you tell me what you heard/where you heard that?” Taking a moment to ask where kids are getting their information and assess the conclusions they are coming to on their own is critical to formulating an effective response to their honest questions.

Let them lead. When you answer a child’s question, ask if he or she has any other questions. Let the child lead the discussion so you know how much or how little you need to say to satisfy any concerns or curiosity.

Remind them that you will keep them safe. Remind your children that they don’t have to worry. You will take care of them and keep them safe from any possible harm.

Remind them what we believe in. Just like grown-ups, kids need to remember that we don’t believe in Father So-and-So or this particular congregation. Rather, we believe in Jesus Christ and his sacraments, especially the Eucharist that makes us one with Christ and maintains our life in Him. We are Catholic not because of people, but because of the Eucharist.

■ GREGORY K. POPCAK, PH.D.

because they like the people they find there. Others go because they feel comforted. These are fine reasons to go to church, but they tend to result in weak ties to a faith community. *What happens to my faith when the people I believe in let me down? What do I draw comfort from when my faith community is the source of so many uncomfortable feelings?*

In these times, it’s important to remember that Scripture cautions us against putting our faith “in princes, in mortal men in whom there is no salvation” (Psalm 146:3). People are always imperfect. They will always let us down. We cannot belong to the Church because its people are always good, because, unfortunately, they are not. If we belong to the Church, it must be because it is where we most

intimately encounter Christ in the sacraments. Those who take this opportunity to refocus on their connection with Christ in the sacraments will experience the scandal as painful, but not as faith-shattering. They, like the

early Apostles, will look at the face of Christ in the midst of the crisis. When He asks, “Will you also leave?” they will say, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of everlasting life!” (John 6:68).

“HOW CAN YOU STAY IN SUCH A CHURCH?”

► In the wake of the sex abuse scandal, many people — and especially the media — are asking, “How can you stay Catholic?”

A recent CBS poll revealed that 88 percent of Catholics report that the scandal has had no effect on their dealings with priests. 82 percent say it will not affect their Mass attendance, 79 percent say it will have no effect on donations, and 87 percent say that it will have no effect on their children’s involvement in Church activities.

These statistics may come as a shock to the secular media or the general public, but they aren’t a huge surprise to the faithful who know that they are not Catholic because of the perfection of the people they meet at church or the priests they know. Far from it. Catholics aren’t surprised by sin. We are often saddened by it, appalled by it, and disgusted by it, but we’re really not that surprised.

What we are surprised by is that, despite the sin that is undoubtedly present in our hearts and in the Church itself, Jesus Christ continues to find ways to powerfully change lives and challenge the world through the Church He founded. We are surprised by the breathtaking way Christ touches our hearts through his sacraments, nourishes us through the Eucharist, and, through his grace, empowers us — despite our individual and collective weakness — to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable with the Gospel of Life. It is this surprising encounter with Christ that keeps the faithful faithful. Despite our brokenness and the brokenness within the Church, we believe that we are founded upon the rock, and the gates of hell will not prevail against us (Matthew 16:18). ■ GREGORY K. POPOK, PH.D.

HOW TO
RESPOND
TO FRIENDS,
FAMILY, AND
OTHERS

Keeping alive the church we love

With seemingly no end to the horrible deeds and cover-ups coming to light, it's easy to lose sight of what we love about the Church. So while we're struggling with the truth and mobilizing for positive change, it's a good idea to also keep in mind the good things about the Church. For example:

Acknowledge that progress is being made. While more needs to be done, in the past 20 years the Church in the U.S. has taken many crucial and effective steps to protect children and help victims (see page 44).

Reflect on the "good eggs" in your life. Who are the Catholics you know who live good and holy lives? It might be a dedicated person at your parish, an inspiring friend, or a Catholic schoolteacher of a child or grandchild. How do they encourage and inspire you?

Remember the good priests. "I had never met such a caring and vibrant priest." "His loving gentleness reflects the love of God the Father." "I felt that God sent him." "He has changed my life." Though a small minority of priests have sorely betrayed their calling,

most priests dedicate themselves tirelessly each day to their vocation. During the Year for Priests, *Catholic Digest* has featured many letters from readers (from which the above quotes have been taken) who share all the wonderful ways that priests have made a positive impact on their lives.

Connect with the saints. Read about their lives, pray to them, and give thanks for all they have done to promote the Gospel, care for the poor, challenge injustice inside and outside the Church, and follow in Jesus' footsteps.

Discover the good works of the universal Church. From rescuing abused children to providing spiritual nourishment for the visually impaired, the Church is doing amazing things around the world.

■ JULIE RATTEY

Pray. Prayer is critical to maintaining our faith through crisis. By all means, be honest with God about the frustration you feel that his Body has been broken in so many horrible ways. Tell God about your frustrations with Church leadership, about your anguish for the abuse victims, and about your own sadness that your faith is being challenged in these ways. But ask God to help you grow in love for Him and for his Church. Ask Him to strengthen you for the journey ahead, that you might be able to be an encouragement to the many faithful priests who are so deeply hurt by the failings of their brothers, and a source of healing and compassion for the victims of the abuse.

Aid in the healing. In response to the crisis, the pope and many faithful bishops and priests have called for everyone to be more faithful and even to do penance. This often results in the laity getting more than a little irritated. “Why should I do penance? I didn’t do anything wrong!” The reaction is understandable but, I think, misguided. Doing penance for your personal sins and strengthening your commitment to living out the truth of the Church in your everyday life is not the same as participating

in some false claim of personal complicity in the scandal. Think of it this way: When your body gets sick, sometimes that sickness can spread to other parts of the body that were previously unaffected. Or sometimes, your body might get a secondary infection that preys on your weakened state. When the Church calls people to repent and be more faithful, she isn’t saying it’s your fault that some priests abused kids and some bishops covered it up. She is saying that she needs your help making the whole Body of Christ as healthy as possible without falling prey to secondary spiritual “infections” (like despair, hopelessness, loss of faith) so that the Church can concentrate its efforts on healing the part of the Body that is hurting the most. When we commit to our spiritual health regimen (prayer, fasting, service to others, penance), we help the Church focus on the healing that needs to be done, and inspire others to greater spiritual health as well.

Get your facts straight. The secular press does a great service by exposing the sins of the Church. Even so, sometimes reporters simply do not have enough understanding of either theology or Church governance

to get the story straight. Before you make any judgments about what is or isn't happening in the Church because of something you read in the paper or on the Internet, check multiple sources (conservative and liberal, Catholic

and secular) to get a better bead on what's really going on. **CD**

Gregory Popcak, Ph.D., directs the Pastoral Solutions Institute, a telephone counseling practice for Catholics. Visit CatholicCounselors.com.

Help for victims

According to Teresa Kettelkamp, director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, dioceses across the country are providing outreach and services for victims, including:

- Psychological/psychiatric evaluation and counseling, spiritual counseling
- Masses and services for healing for victims/survivors of sexual abuse
- Meeting with the bishop
- Apology service wherein a bishop apologizes to the faithful
- Diocesan-wide Day of Atonement
- Victims/survivors planning group (gives feedback to the victim assistance coordinator)
- Programs for victims/survivors and their families (presentations and seminars, recovery, support groups, healing retreats and follow-ups)
- Collaboration with community organizations to help victims/survivors
- Outreach through bulletin and diocesan newspaper ads, posters with tear-off information for victim assistance coordinators
- Helping with individual and financial needs of victims/survivors

► **IS IT ENOUGH?** *Barbara Blaine, president of the Survivors Network of Those Abused By Priests (SNAP) is among those questioning the adequacy of the Church's response.*

"Actions do indeed speak louder than words, and when low-level church employees see bishops continuing to fight tooth and nail in courthouses and statehouses to defend and exploit every legal technicality and maneuver to prevent the truth from surfacing, those employees know that secrecy is still the watchword." She continues: "Only a tiny handful of non-abusive church employees who concealed abuse have ever suffered even the slightest consequence for wrongdoing."

A note from the editor

WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR THE CHURCH TO HEAL?

In the preceding article, Dr. Greg Popcak helps us deal with some of the personal faith questions that come up when we discuss the awful crisis of clergy sexual abuse. Now we turn to the next crucial question: What is being done to fix the problem? Since the pope and bishops must take the lead on this, we went to them for answers — specifically to Teresa Kettelkamp, a former officer of the Illinois State Police and current executive director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection. We let Ms. Kettelkamp answer the questions as she wished. We have not edited her responses. They appear on the following pages in full, although for space limitations some

■ NOT EVEN THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS AS AN ENTITY CAN FORCE BISHOPS TO DO ANYTHING.

of them appear on our website, catholicdigest.com/abuse-crisis.

We are grateful to Ms. Kettelkamp for answering our questions so thoroughly, but we also have to acknowledge the unfortunate truth that her office does not have the power to force bishops to comply. (Not even the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops as an entity can force bishops to do anything. It's only the authority of the pope and the universal law of the Church that override a bishop's authority in his own diocese.) Which leads to another unfortunate truth: This is not the first time that the USCCB has tried to assure American Catholics that bishops are dealing effectively with this crisis.

Back in 1992, when I was editing *Catholic Digest's* sister publication *Today's Parish*, we ran a series of articles about the sexual abuse crisis in the

Church, prompting a letter from Mark E. Chopko, then general counsel for the United States Catholic Conference, outlining the actions the American bishops had taken up to that time.

“For the last eight years or more, the hierarchy of the American Church has struggled with this problem,” he wrote in his letter. “It has been a difficult and traumatic experience for those responsible for the administration of the Church. ...But it has also been a time of learning, a time of redirection, and a time of hope.

“Five times the National Conference of Catholic Bishops met on the subject,” he wrote. “So why is it that even after all those years of sometimes very public and painful struggle, leaders of parish communities still doubt either the bishops' commitment or resolve? ...I am confident,” he wrote, “in a spirit of prayerful hope, that we have begun to turn this tragedy around.” (Mr. Chopko's entire 1992 letter, along

with his 2010 response to our invitation to comment on the current situation, can be read on our website, catholicdigest.com/abuse-crisis.)

In the years that followed, I often thought of Mr. Chopko's letter. I thought of it all through the 1990s as cases of clergy sexual abuse and cover-ups continued to come to light. I thought of it again in the early part of this millennium as the firestorm of allegations hit many dioceses, especially Boston, giving American Catholics lots of reasons to doubt the "commitment or resolve" of some bishops. And I thought of it recently as the scandal spread to Ireland and Germany, and as American cases even touched the Vatican.

Mr. Chopko's letter is worth reading in its entirety. It shows a lot of important steps the American bishops' conference

Benedict XVI on the sex abuse crisis



The greatest persecution of the Church does not come from the enemies outside, but is born from sin inside the Church," the pope told reporters in May. "The Church has a profound need to relearn penance, to accept purification, to learn on the one hand forgiveness but also the necessity of justice. And **forgiveness does not substitute justice.**"

had taken up to that time, and it shows a real dedication on the part of the conference's staff to deal effectively not only with the problem of priest sexual abusers, but with the cover-ups. And clearly they were making progress: Reliable studies have shown a significant drop in new cases in that time and since then, and for that we owe them a great deal of thanks.

But Mr. Chopko and other conference staff persons, like the conference itself, had no authority over individual bishops, and studies also show that in 1992 only a small part of the problem had been revealed. What Mr. Chopko and other staffers at the conference could not know was

the huge number of old cases and cover-ups still lurking in so many diocesan files. But surely those

bishops and their chancery officials knew or should have known, and since then the truth has come

out, sometimes in a storm, and sometimes in agonizingly slow bits.

Mr. Chopko expressed confidence in a spirit of prayerful hope. Prayerful hope is always appropriate (and we share it), but events since 1992 show that such hope can take a long time and a lot of hard work to come to fruition. And while Ms. Kettelkamp's responses on the following pages clearly show that important progress is being made, I fear that today's hopes that this situation is finally being dealt with effectively may also be premature, unless all of us who love the Church demand a full accounting of the truth and full accountability of our leaders and

18 YEARS LATER ...



Mark Chopko left the USCCB in 2007 and went into private law practice. As we prepared this issue, we asked him to reflect on his 1992 letter.

"I remain actually more optimistic than I was in 1992, not in spite of but because of what was experienced in the intervening years," he told us. "People can know the size and shape of the abuse problem in the Church from the raw numbers and audit reports which are publicly reported every year. No other child-serving institution does that... There is new emphasis on prevention through specific and ongoing programs, which are also publicly reported.

"I have often wished," he added, "there would be reporting on all the positive programs that dioceses and Religious Orders have in place that serve victims, and serve to prevent new ones. If these programs got even half the attention that decades-old claims continue to get, there might be a better public understanding."

Mr. Chopko's 1992 letter and his 2010 response can both be read at catholicdigest.com/abuse-crisis.

■ “IF CATHOLICS DON’T MAKE
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ourselves. We must push for the full truth to be revealed, through disclosure and fair, investigative reporting, in which the Church should take the lead, and we must push for the Church to adopt, as universal law, comprehensive, clear, and enforceable safety and accountability standards that every bishop, diocese, and Religious Order must obey.

We must also take a good look at ourselves. Most of us were willing participants in the clerical culture that led to cover-ups (see my article “Clergy sexual abuse and the pope,” available at catholicdigest.com/abuse-crisis). We cannot be self-righteous about the outcome. In fact, as a

non-religious person said to me recently, “If Catholics don’t make a stand for truth and accountability, then they are complicit in the evil done to children.” I fear he is right. And standing for truth and accountability is the only way that healing can come to the victims, and to the Church as a whole.

That’s why I am asking you to read through Teresa Kettelkamp’s responses and think about it all. What needs to be done? What answers would you challenge? How can we help her clean up our mess? Please join our discussion at catholicdigest.com/abuse-crisis. **GD**

DAN CONNORS



FOR MORE ON THE SEX ABUSE CRISIS, AND TO
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The
clergy
sex abuse
crisis:

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



Teresa Kettelkamp

Are priests more likely to abuse than others? How can I spot an abuser? How do we hold the bishops accountable?

Catholic Digest asks crucial questions answered via e-mail by **Teresa Kettelkamp**, executive director of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection

1 *How widespread is the problem of sexual abuse in the Church? What is the percentage of people who are abused in the Church and who are abusers? How does this compare to the general population?*

A Nature and Scope Study conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice found that from 1950 to 2002, the percentage of clergy who sexually abused children and young people was around 4 percent. John Jay found that there were 109,694 priests in ecclesiastical ministry from 1950 to 2002 and that 4,392 of them were accused of abusing minors. The number of individuals who made allegations during that time (1950 to 2002) as reported by the Nature and Scope Study was 10,667.

“The majority of (accused) priests (56 percent),” the study states, “were alleged to have abused one victim, near-

ly 27 percent were alleged to have abused two or three victims, nearly 14 percent were alleged to have abused four to nine victims, and 3.4 percent were alleged to have abused more than 10 victims. The 149 priests who had more than 10 allegations of abuse were allegedly responsible for abusing 2,960 victims, thus accounting for 26 percent of allegations. Therefore, a very small percentage of accused priests are responsible for a substantial percentage of the allegations.”

For perspective, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported 87,900 cases of substantiated sexual abuse cases of minors in the United States for the year 2000.

In 2002, the U.S. Catholic Church adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (available at usccb.org/ocyp/charter.shtml). It provides stringent victim outreach and child

protection guidelines. The *Charter* was reviewed in 2005, and will be reviewed again by the bishops in November 2010 at their General Assembly.

2 *Are priests more predisposed to being abusers than members of the general population?*

No. Statistics reflect the opposite. In 2009, there were six credible reported cases of abuse of a minor by a member of the Catholic clergy. For the general population, statistics show that one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused by age 18. However, one instance of abuse by a priest is one too many.

3 *What is the universal Church doing to end sex abuse in the Church? Is there a Church-wide program in place to eradicate this? How is this different from what was previously in place?*

The universal Church has strict rules to govern handling of sexual abuse of minors. In 2001, Pope John Paul II declared in the

apostolic letter *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela* (Protection of the Holiness of the Sacraments) that such offenses are among the “graver offenses” of Church law and that they must be reported to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Previously, such offenses could be dealt with locally.

Writing to the world’s bishops the same year, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, as head of the Doctrinal Congregation explained that once the crime against a minor was reported to the Doctrinal Congregation, the congregation then could allow a local diocese to handle the case under the new rules, or the congregation could take up the case immediately in its own tribunal. The Doctrinal Congregation also was established as the court of appeal for cases tried in local church tribunals.

At the same time, Pope John Paul II changed canon law’s statute of limitations for bringing charges for sexual abuse of minors to 10 years after an alleged victim has reached his 18th birthday. For the crime of sexual abuse, the new norms defined a minor as anyone under age 18; in

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■ THE CHARTER WILL BE REVIEWED AGAIN BY THE BISHOPS IN NOVEMBER.

general Church law, a minor is anyone under the age of 16. (The United States, since 1994, had been operating under the newer norms.) In addition, in 2002, Pope John Paul II decreed that the Doctrinal Congregation could revoke the statute of limitations, case by case, following a reasoned request from individual bishops.

Prior to 2001, a sin against the Sixth Commandment committed by a cleric against minors (sexual abuse of minors) was not referred to the Doctrinal Congregation except if it occurred during Confession. Otherwise, in most cases a bishop would adjudicate the matter locally. Appeals against that decision would go either to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota (if a penalty had been issued in a formal juridical trial) or to the Congregation for Clergy, if the penalty or disposition had taken place through executive power of governance.

In another effort to deal with this problem, the Church since the mid-1980s has called for increased scrutiny of men seeking entrance into the seminary, and

called for their seminary education to include annual psychosexual workshops, courses in moral theology, and frequent spiritual direction. In 1985, the Vatican Congregation for Catholic Education issued *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (Basic Norms for Priestly Formation), a document that regulates norms for seminary education universally. Each bishops' conference implements this document through its particular program of priestly formation.

4 *There are people in my parish who say sexual abuse could never happen in our parish. Of course we love our priest and parish leaders, but I'm sure many of the people whose children were abused loved these figures too. What should I tell those who still think it couldn't happen to us?*

Sexual abuse can happen to anyone anywhere. Most sexual offenders are charming, socially gifted people. Otherwise, people would not let them around

TEN REASONS WHY THE SEX ABUSE CRISIS AND COVER-UPS HAPPENED

While the bishops are conducting their study about why the crisis and cover-ups happened, many others have pointed out contributing factors. Especially notable were the findings of the National Review Board, a group of laypeople who researched and reported on the causes of the crisis to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2003. Here are some of the factors these various sources have reported or proposed:

1 A clerical culture that fostered institutional secrecy over truth and transparency; overly valued priests, Religious, and deacons above the laity; and projected an exalted image of the Church and its privileged people that this culture felt must be protected at all costs (see “A final word,” on page 64, as well as Dan Connors’ article “Clergy sexual abuse and the pope” at catholicdigest.com/abuse-crisis)

2 In previous decades, a faulty understanding of the nature and prevalence of sexual abuse and of offenders’ prospects for rehabilitation; in more recent times, a willful failure to place the protection of children above the protection of offending priests

3 Improper screening of seminary candidates, which led to the ordination of some psychologically unfit men

4 Poor formation or training of seminarians in areas of sexuality and abuse

5 Lack of accountability, given that the laity have no voting power in the Church and that the USCCB as an entity can’t force bishops to do anything. Only the pope and the universal law of the Church can override a bishop’s authority in his own diocese

6 Failure on the part of some clergy to fully understand the gravity of sexual abuse of children and its consequences, not typically having children of their own

7 Fear of litigation, leading to the adoption of an adversarial stance

8 Discomfort among some bishops about sexuality and sexual abuse, leading to an unwillingness to address the topic, confront abusive priests, and meet with victims, which also may have made it easier to ignore the magnitude of what was happening

9 Cumbersome and slow bureaucracy on the part of the Church, which allowed more abuse to take place in the interim and which made it difficult to laicize priests

10 Institutional unwillingness to question or change the status quo

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children. Adults need to know all they can about preventing child sexual abuse everywhere, be it in parishes, sports leagues, summer camp opportunities, and even in families.

5 *Is there a particular profile of a sex abuser? What signs can I look for?*

Offenders prefer to be with children; they go overboard with touching, and that touching includes wrestling and tickling. Offenders give gifts to children without asking parents' permission, and let children do things their parents do not allow. Offenders frequently use drugs, alcohol, and pornography to lure children into feeling complicit in the sexual behavior. If you spot these warning signs, report them to a supervisor, or if you suspect abuse, report it to the police.

6 *How can I find out if someone in my parish has a history of abuse?*

A check with the state's sex offender registry would reveal if the person is listed. Surrounding states' registries also might be checked, since offenders move around and

More questions and answers online ▶

To read the answers to the rest of the questions we asked Teresa Kettelkamp, including questions like, "**What types of background checks or psychological screening do seminarians undergo before they are allowed to become priests?**" and "**What happens to a priest who has been accused of sexual abuse? What is the course of action the Church takes?**" visit catholicdigest.com/abuse-crisis.

will go where they are unknown and have access to children. It is also important to know that not all offenders have been convicted in a court of law, and thus their names would not appear on an offender registry. That is why it is vital to know how to identify grooming behavior by an offender and warning signs of abuse.

7 *How do I discuss sex abuse within the Church with my children? How do I teach them to be safe, or where can I read about guidelines for keeping them safe?* Open communication between

WILL THE CHARTER CHANGE?

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, the U.S. bishops' guidelines for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy, is due for review in November and priests from across the country are recommending modifications, says Father Richard Vega, president of the National Federation of Priests' Councils. The NFPC sent its concerns to the bishops prior to the review.

"I think that we have made great strides but I think there's still areas of growth," says Vega of the Church's handling of the issue over the last decade. "One of the things the NFPC pointed out ... was that there is an unevenness in how dioceses are applying the *Charter*. It's that unevenness that is causing some level of frustration.

"We would strongly encourage the Holy Father to invite his brother bishops to transparency and accountability in a spirit of true charity for the good of the Church," he adds. You can read a summary of the NFPC's concerns at catholicdigest.com/abuse-crisis.

parent and child is critical. Children need information presented in an age-appropriate way. Tell them what to do if someone touches them, makes them feel uncomfortable, shows them pornography, or tells them to do something you have forbidden them to do. Have this conversation with your children often.

8 *What are the factors that contributed to the sex abuse crisis and cover-ups?*

We are still trying to determine that. The *Causes and Context Study*, set for release in February,

is investigating this phenomenon to ascertain what contributed to this and looking at steps the Church took to address it. That study is still in progress.

The bishops took a number of steps prior to 2002 to address the clergy abuse issue, and one of the issues being looked at is why the crisis in 2002 happened, with all these prior actions being taken by the bishops. For example, in June of 1992, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops formally stated five principles for dealing with accusations of abuse. These five principles became the roots of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*

(usccb.org/ocyp/charter.shtml):

1. Respond promptly to all allegations of abuse where there is reasonable belief that abuse has occurred.

2. If such an allegation is supported by sufficient evidence, relieve the alleged offender promptly of his ministerial duties and refer him for appropriate medical evaluation and intervention.

3. Comply with the obligations of civil law as regards reporting of the incident and cooperating with the investigation.

4. Reach out to the victims and their families and communicate sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being.

5. Within the confines of respect for privacy of the individuals involved, deal as openly as possible with the members of the community.

In June of 1993 the bishops established the Committee on Sexual Abuse and issued “Restoring Trust Vol. I,” which included a review of diocesan policies, information about treatment centers, and articles on topics ranging from pedophilia and victims/families to parishes as victims and expectations of treatment. By 1993, 157 dioceses, or 80 percent of all dioceses, already had policies dealing with allega-

tions of clergy sexual abuse on their books.

In 1995, the committee issued “Restoring Trust Vol. II,” which offered descriptions of eight treatment centers, a presentation on care for victims/survivors, and articles considering everything from the offender to the effectiveness of treatment to insurance.

In 1996, the committee issued “Restoring Trust Vol. III,” which reviewed Church efforts and activities addressing this issue and noted areas still to be addressed.

STUDIES AND REPORTS AVAILABLE ONLINE

You can read the studies and reports mentioned in this article at usccb.org/nrb and usccb.org/ocyp.

In 1997 the Ad Hoc Committee promoted a video on boundaries issues.

From 1999 through 2002 the bishops met with victims and victim advisory groups.

On January 6, 2002, *The Boston Globe* launched a series of articles sparked by the case of Father John Geoghan, which unleashed a flood of coverage and reports of abuse cases around the country.

The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* was adopted in June of 2002.

Given what had been done, the Causes and Context Study is exploring why the outpouring of cases in 2002 occurred.

9 *I've heard that the sex abuse crisis happened because of gay priests in the Church. Is this true?*

No. Statistics do not find that a homosexual orientation indicates a predilection for sexual abuse of a minor.

10 *Some argue that having married priests would fix the sex abuse crisis. Is this true?*

Unfortunately statistics show that married people abuse minors too.

11 *Some argue that having women priests would fix the sex abuse crisis. Is this true?*

Again there is evidence that women also abuse minors.

12 *What is the age range of young people that most priest offenders gravitate towards?*

The Nature and Scope Study found that “the largest group of alleged victims, 50.9 percent, was between 11 and 14; 27.3 percent were 15 to 17; 16 percent were 8 to 10 and nearly 6 percent were under age 7. Overall, 81 percent of victims were male and 19 percent female. Male victims tended to be older than female victims. More than 40 percent of all victims were males between the ages of 11 and 14.” Surveys conducted since 2004 by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate show that the dominant gender and age is male, ages 10 to 14.

13 *If 81 percent of the victims were male, why do we not see a connection to gay priests?*

I think that is an oversimplification of the cause of the clergy sexual abuse crisis. Having a homosexual orientation does not make one a pedophile. The Causes and Context Study is looking at this issue as to why the abuse is primarily same-sex.

14 *Why does someone become a sexual abuser? And are these men evil or sick? Both?*

If the specific answer were known

to this question, then identifying these individuals before they harmed children would be much easier. Many people who abuse have been abused themselves, but being abused does not make one an abuser. That is an important distinction. According to the Di-

agnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, pedophilia is one of several paraphilia mental disorders.

Past behavior is the best way to predict future behavior, so often it is not until after someone has abused a child that people

HOW IS THE CRISIS AFFECTING OUR PRIESTS?

For the vast majority of priests who have been faithful to their vocation, the scenario of abuse in the Church is painful. They are sensitive to the issue and are at times hypersensitive as to how people might look at them — “Is he one of *those* priests?” Priests today experience a deep embarrassment from the pain a small number of their brothers have caused and which has cast a dark shadow over the priesthood. Thus, priests are striving even more to be men of integrity and relying upon the grace of God to grow in holiness.

Faithful parishioners are supportive and a tremendous gift to their “spiritual fathers.” Priests view this moment in history as a time of purification for the Church; whatever is in darkness must come into the light so that the Body of Christ can begin to heal. The men entering the seminary have not been deterred by the negative publicity, but instead move forward with courage, saying, “I can do better” and “My Church needs me to be the best priest I can be.”

Priests desire the healing of the Church: for victims and their families, for the restoration of the image of the good name of the Church so that the works of charity may be fulfilled, for brother priests who have injured others to experience healing and peace, and for all parishioners who are suffering because of the shame and horror evoked by abuse committed by a person who was meant to bring healing and peace. When this healing takes root, the world will be able to see in all of the baptized (priest, Religious, and laity) the light of Christ shining out of the darkness.

■ FATHER DAVID TOUPS, ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE USCCB SECRETARIAT FOR CLERGY, CONSECRATED LIFE, AND VOCATIONS

■ NO ONE CAN GUARANTEE THAT AN ABUSER WILL NOT OFFEND AGAIN.

know the person is an abuser. This fact reinforces the need for adults to be aware of the grooming practices an abuser uses and the signs that a child might be being abused.

Sexual abuse is a sin and a crime, and though treatment is available for those who would sexually abuse children, no one can guarantee that an abuser will not offend again. Creating and enforcing a safe environment around the vulnerable is the best way to protect them from harm.

15 *What can an individual parishioner do to prevent sex abuse from happening in his or her parish?*

Parishioners can attend the Safe Environment training at the parish whether or not they are a volunteer or employee. They can become familiar with and support the diocesan policies, procedures, and the code of conduct. They can ask people in charge of programs in which their children

participate if the volunteers have gone through the required training and the screening and if all policies are being followed. They can show support of the diocesan policies by following them and requiring others do so as well.

16 *What is being done in American parishes to prevent sexual abuse (e.g. Safe Environment training)? Does this meet with a law enforcement standard of prevention such as might exist in, say, public schools? Are these programs standard across all dioceses? What kind of accountability is there if these measures and programs are not followed?*

Since 2002, dioceses are required to train clergy, employees, and volunteers who work with children on how to prevent, identify, respond to, and report child sexual abuse as well as to establish codes of conduct. In addition, dioceses conduct background evaluations. Most states require

school employees to undergo an FBI criminal history check. Catholic schools follow the same requirements. The annual audit provides accountability. Dioceses/eparchies not adhering to the *Charter* are found non-compliant. The names of non-compliant dioceses/eparchies are published in an Annual Report. The Safe Environment programs in place in Catholic parishes and schools are equal to or surpass those in public schools.

17 *Can a bishop opt out of this Charter?*

A bishop can opt out of those articles in the *Charter* that are not included in the Essential Norms.

18 *So are the articles on Safe Environment training not part of the Essential Norms? If so, why are they not considered "essential" when the safety of children is at stake?*

The *Charter* is a comprehensive framework for responding to clergy sexual abuse. The bishops

could adopt many of its aspects on their own for developing diocesan policies. The *Charter* contains an extensive declaration of intent on the part of the bishops on future policies, and it provides the framework for the Essential Norms.

However there are certain articles related to Canon Law which need to be approved by the Holy See, and these were put into what are termed the "Essential Norms."

With regard to Safe Environment training, the bishops have full authority to implement Safe Environment training on their own, and do not need canonical approval to implement these programs. And in fact, the bishops have already done this very successfully.

19 *You say that dioceses not adhering to the Charter are found non-compliant and that their names are published in an annual report (visit usccb.org/ocyp/annual_report2009.shtml to view the 2009 report). That doesn't sound like a very big penalty for non-compliance. Is there any accountability other than a*



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bishop not wanting the diocese named in the report?

In this media-charged global environment, not to be compliant with the *charter* and have that non-compliance published in a public report that is shared with the Holy See is a much stronger hammer than you would think. No bishop wants to be non-compliant because the message that is sent, whether it is true or not, is that the bishop is not keeping his promise to protect and pledge to heal, and that children are not safe in his diocese. Pressure from his brother bishops and his faith community, not to mention the media pressure and negative coverage, can be very powerful.

20 *The 2009 report found several dioceses non-compliant in various ways. Can you assure us that they are all now moving into compliance?*

Many of them have moved to compliance already (4 out of 6) and that is so noted in the annual report. For any others, we offer our assistance to help resolve their non-compliance challenge, and they are also automatically included with those dioceses for which an on-site audit is required in 2010.

21 *One diocese and several eparchies refused to be audited at all. How does your office deal with such a diocese?*

Other than publishing their refusal to participate in the audit process and the internal and external pressures that would result from that, we continually offer to meet with them and provide any assistance that would encourage their participation. Ultimately, however, participation is the decision of the bishop.

22 *With parishioners having no voting power in the Church, I feel helpless to change all the problems, including the sex abuse crisis. What can I do to express my frustrations, call people out on their abuses, change the cover-up culture, and help make things better in the future?*

The laity can cite the *Charter* and insist its requirements be met. Before they allow their children to participate in church or school activities, they can ask if everyone involved in the program has been trained and undergone a background check. They can support diocesan policies and procedures by following them and vocally supporting them. They can make

their support known to the pastor and bishop. The laity also can recognize what the Church has already done. Safe environments have been created in parishes and schools. Offending priests have been removed and are being removed from ministry as allegations are determined to be credible. Allegations both past and present are being reported to the civil authorities. Victims of past abuse are coming forward to receive healing and reconciliation.

23 *I donate money to my parish but don't want that money used as payoff for sexual abuse. How can I make sure this doesn't happen?*

Most dioceses have pledged that parishioners' money will not pay for settlements. More than one-third of the payments come from insurance. The diocese also may use money from savings or the sale of property. If you are not sure, ask the diocese from where the settlement money came.

24 **How much has the American Church paid out in sexual abuse claims?**

The Nature and Scope Study

estimated that from 1950 to 2002, costs paid by the Church exceeded \$500 million. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, which has conducted an annual survey of Allegations and Costs for the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, has stated that from 2004 to 2009, \$1,897,599,482 has been spent on costs related to allegations. The combined total is \$2,397,599,482.

The fiscal cost was not captured for 2003, so the total figure would be higher than this estimated total.

This cost is staggering in terms of a fiscal expense and in the related loss to other worthwhile ministries. Worse are the costs in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual harm to victims/survivors and their families. You cannot put a price on that. **CD**

Teresa M. Kettelkamp is executive director of the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection. She retired after 29 years from the Illinois State Police, where she was the first woman to attain the rank of colonel. During her police career she led a specialized team that conducted state-wide investigations into missing and/or sexually exploited children.

TO READ THE REST OF THIS ARTICLE,
SEE "MORE QUESTIONS AND
ANSWERS ONLINE" (PAGE 55).

A FINAL WORD FROM THE EDITORS

How the Church needs to change

Many observers place at least part of the blame for the sexual abuse cover-ups on a “clerical culture” in the Church. A culture is a very complex organism not easily described, but unhealthy parts of this particular culture include fostering institutional secrecy over truth and transparency, overly valuing the talents and privileges of a special class of persons within the culture (deacons, priests, bishops, and sometimes Religious Sisters: “They always know best”), and projecting an exalted image of the Church and its special persons that must be protected at all costs. In this clerical culture, whatever challenges that exalted image of the Church is taken as an attack on the faith itself. (Such cultures of expert privilege, of course, are not confined to the Church; they can be found in almost any profession.)

We laypeople in the Church

have been as heavily invested in this clerical culture as the priests and bishops. No faithful Catholic wanted to see the Church tarnished. Seeing priests as weak or sick or perpetrators of crime had ramifications way beyond the individual in question. It touched the life of the Church and the trust we placed in it; it would give aid and comfort to people who scorned the Church we love. Many bishops made horrible, even criminal choices in handling abuse cases, but everything in the clerical culture we willingly participated in encouraged them to do so.

A lot of us may feel a lot freer to criticize priests, bishops, and the institutional Church these days — from whatever rubrical, religious, and political perspective we hold — but many unhealthy aspects of clerical culture continue. When we’re not wishing this whole sex abuse crisis would just go away, many of us still defer to the clerics in charge — we have no authority in the Church anyway, we reason, so

we'll let the experts take care of this. They know best.

But maybe they don't. The history of the last 20 years testifies to that. The media should not be biased, but even when they are, they've done something for us that our clerical leaders did not do: bring to light these awful secrets sickening the Body of Christ on Earth.

And no, we laity don't have a lot of authority. But at the very least we have to challenge a clerical culture that is unduly secretive and proclaims that they always know best. Isn't this something that Catholics of every stripe can agree on? We need to love the Church while we proclaim that no human being is above the law. We need to value confidentiality while being clear that some things must be brought out into the light. We need to recognize that some people are biased against us, but without thinking that every press report or inquiry is an enemy attack. We need to recognize that the Church has been rocked by many scandals and survived, but that trying to protect an artificially pristine image of the Church almost always causes lots more harm — to the Church

and to individual believers who feel betrayed — than the original scandal would have.

We need to love our priests as we love our Church, and uplift and support them as they do the same for us. But blind trust and unquestioning obedience are never good ideas when human beings are involved. As baptized members of Christ's Body, we share in his priesthood and in the responsibility to keep digging for the truth no matter where it takes us, to keep reaching out to victims no matter how many there are or how hard their stories are to hear, to keep demanding accountability from all involved, no matter how painful and difficult that may be, to question authority when it needs to be questioned, and to do all this out of love and compassion.

What we've described here is not easy. It's a long, difficult path that all of us who love the Church must walk. But as with all true paths of discipleship, we must live in hope that it leads to healing, and to life. **CD**

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