

## **Outline: Pope Francis and His Critics on Clergy Sex Abuse July 12, 2018**

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### **Introduction**

1. Francis inherited a massive horrendous worldwide scandal that included abuse and cover-ups.
2. Almost all commentators were critical of Francis for the way he handled the scandal during his first five years, especially his initial response to the situation in Chile.
3. The pope's subsequent apology and remedial actions have drawn praise but critics see the need for more institutional change.
4. The Church is a graced but sinful institution, a community of graced but sinful persons. It is not the kingdom but is the flawed sign and instrument of the Kingdom.
5. Readings : *Child Sex Abuse and the Catholic Church* by Marie Keenan; *Lead Us Not Into Temptation* by Jason Berry (1991).

### **I. History cf Thomas Doyle (Dominican priest, cannon lawyer, advocate for victims)**

- A. In general
  1. Clergy sexual abuse of all kinds has been a well-known continuing problem throughout church history; recognized by church leaders who often did not hide the problem, tried to impose disciplinary laws, and sometimes sought help from secular authorities to punish offenders.
  2. Sometimes church authorities identified complicit bishops.
- B. Specific efforts to deal with the problem.
  1. Cardinal Peter Damian (1007-1073) challenged the clerical decadence of his day, insisting that abusers be dismissed from the priesthood.
  2. Trent imposed penalties on bishops and priests who violated mandatory celibacy.
  3. Fr. Gerald Fitzgerald (1884-1969) founder of Servants of the Paraclete who treated priests suffering from addictions warned bishops as early as 1952 that priests who abused boys could not be trusted to be in ministry. Fitzgerald, who was a spiritual director and not a psychologist, sent his warning to the Vatican and met personally with Pope Paul VI. Unfortunately his warning was not heeded by the American bishops.
- C. Developments in U.S.
  1. 1984 - Fr. Gilbert Gauthé of Lafayette, Louisiana was accused and eventually pled guilty to 11 counts of molestation of boys.
  2. 2002 - Boston Globe published a series of articles on abuse in Boston Archdiocese (cf movie *Spotlight*) that led to convictions of 5 priests including John Geoghan who allegedly abused over 130 children and the resignation of Cardinal Law for reassigning abusive priests. Law was given a prestigious position in Rome and a funeral Mass in St. Peter's basilica.
  3. After this courageous victims came forward all over the U.S. From 1950 to 2012 Catholic dioceses paid out an estimated \$3 billion to victims. Eight dioceses have declared bankruptcy.
  4. June of 2018 - Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, age 87, retired archbishop of Washington suspended by the Vatican from public ministry for allegedly abusing a minor in 1971 and 72. He previously had settled 2 lawsuits with adults more than 15 years ago. Questions arise about how and why he was promoted as auxiliary bishop of New York, bishop of Metuchen

and Newark and cardinal archbishop of Washington even though there were many rumors of his sexual misbehavior with seminarians.

D. Response

1. June, 2002 - American bishops accepted the Dallas Charter. (Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People) establishing a zero tolerance policy, background checks for employees and pledging safe environments for youth.
2. The Bishops also created a National Review Board that commissioned the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to study the period from 1950 to 2002 showing that 4.7% of more than 100,000 priests and deacons ministering over a 50 year period were accused with only a tiny number (.1%) convicted and imprisoned. Most reassigned priests received counseling and 40% went through treatment programs often with unreliable reports that they were safe to minister to youth.
3. Each year since 2002, the bishops issue a report on extending care to victims, reporting abuse to authorities and holding perpetrators accountable. The June 2018 report showed 695 allegations down from 936 in 2013. It also warned of complacency as though it is a past problem (there were 24 allegations from current minors). Noting the societal problem of abuse of women (Me too movement and hundreds of U.S female gymnasts) the report indicated the Church should be attentive to victims inside and outside the Church.

E. Ireland

1. Thousands of victims, alleged cover-ups by 4 archbishops of Dublin.
2. Important study: *Child Sex Abuse and the Catholic Church* by Marie Keenan; seminary training tends to produce men who are underdeveloped emotionally making it difficult to establish adult relationships, failing to note the “human-loss” produced by celibacy lauded as a gift; abusers she studied were not pedophiles but were hard workers, seeking to live a celibate life, having a position of power in the church but feeling powerless, unable to form healthy adult relationships, got involved with minors (whom they considered more friends than victims) because all routes to healthy adult relationships seemed closed. Clerical culture failed to foster open conversation about sex and honest personal sharing. Irish respect for priests facilitated cover-ups, even by civil authorities and bishops more interested in protecting the reputation of the Church than protecting youth.
3. Keenan reminds us that we need comprehensive solutions: better seminary formation, healthier attitudes toward sexuality, more realistic approaches to celibacy, more authentic clergy-lay relationships, more fraternal relationships between priests and bishops and more realistic expectations about joys and sorrows of priestly ministry.

F. Papal Responses

1. Paul VI apparently did not act on advice of Fr. Fitzgerald.
2. JP II (1978-2005) made some positive moves: 2001 - sent email to churches around the world apologizing for clergy abuse of children; 2002 - called all America cardinals to Rome and issued a statement calling sex abuse “an appalling sin” and insisting no room in priesthood for abusers; sponsored three day training for Curia with presentations by psychologists. Critics claim he mishandled situations; appointing Law as archpriest of St Mary Major in Rome; defending Cardinal Groer archbishop of Vienna despite pleas of Austrian bishops; and especially defending and praising Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado (1908-

2008), founder of Legion of Christ who fathered children by two women and abused many minors including his own children.

3. Pope Benedict (2005-2013) positive moves: removed Maciel from active ministry and instituted reforms of Legionaries; often met with victims showing compassion. Critics say: as archbishop of Munich in the 1980s Cardinal Ratzinger allowed an abusive priest from another diocese to be assigned in Munich despite warnings of psychiatrists (the diocese claims the vicar general did the reassignment); Benedict failed to remove Bishop Finn of Kansas City who was convicted in 2012 for failing to inform proper authorities of a suspected priest predator in his diocese.

## **II. Pope Francis elected March 13, 2013 Initial Efforts**

- A. 2014 established Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors led by Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston with 2 of its 17 members victims, including Marie Collins who resigned over the ineffectiveness of the Commission which started by trying to raise awareness of the problem in almost 200 dioceses worldwide and then unsuccessfully pushed for a tribunal to judge complicit bishops at the urging of Francis.
- B. Collins, who defended the pope's good intentions to stop abuse, offered these criticisms: inadequate funding; difficulties communicating with Curia; failure of CDF to set up a tribunal to judge bishops and the last straw for her- the refusal of Curia to implement the simple recommendation approved by the pope to respond to all substantiated complaints from victims.
- C. Criticisms of Francis: did not have a scheduled meeting with victims when he visited U.S. (one was arranged while he was here); delayed establishing the Commission for a whole year: did not invest time or energy to get cooperation of the Curia; allowed the funeral of Cardinal Law to be in St. Peter's; did not meet personally with Marie Collins; allowed the Commission's three year mandate to expire in Dec, 2017 while waiting until Feb 2018 to reestablish it; appointing Cardinal Pell to the Council of Cardinals when he was already facing abuse allegations in Australia.

## **III. Chile**

- A. Timeline: February 2011, popular, influential priest, Fr, Fernando Karadima was convicted by Vatican of abusing minors and forced out of ministry.  
January 10, 2015, Francis appointed Juan Barros as bishop of Osorno over the objections of the Chilean bishops concerned about his complicity in the abuse committed by the notorious priest predator Fernando Karadima, first accused in 1984; January 31, 2015, Francis wrote a letter acknowledging the concerns of the Chilean bishops but rejecting their plea to have Barros resign because, as Francis later said, there was no evidence of his involvement in a cover-up; February 2015, over a thousand Chilean Catholics in the Osorno diocese, lawmakers, priests and lay persons, signed a petition urging Francis to revoke the Barros appointment; March 21, 2015, Barros was installed as bishop of Osorno in a Mass marked by violent protests; April 12, 2015, Juan Carlos Cruz wrote a letter accusing Barros of witnessing the sex abuse inflicted on him by Fr. Karadima, which was hand delivered from Marie Collins to Cardinal O'Malley, who personally gave it to Pope Francis; May 15, 2015, Francis told a spokesperson for the Chilean bishops that the opposition to Barros comes from leftists who speak "nonsense" about him; January 15, 2018, Francis arrived in Chile, was greeted by unprecedented protests, apologized for the

“irreparable damage” suffered by sex abuse victims and held two tearful meetings with survivors; January 18, 2018, Francis responded to a journalist that there is “not one shred of proof” against Barros and it is all calumny; January 20, Cardinal O’Malley publicly rebuked the pope, saying his comments about calumny “were a source of great pain” for abuse survivors; January 21, while flying back to Rome, Francis repeated his charge of calumny, his claim that no victim has come forward with proof, and his conviction that Barros is innocent; January 30, the Vatican appointed Archbishop Charles Scicluna to investigate the Chilean situation; February 5, Cruz released his previous letter to the pope, decrying not only the abuse he suffered but also his subsequent “terrible mistreatment” by pastors; February 17, Archbishop Scicluna met with Cruz for three hours in New York and then flew to Chile, where he took testimony from more than 60 witnesses; March 21, 14 priests suspended in the diocese of Ranagua for alleged abuse and sharing pornographic material; April 11, Francis released a letter to the Chilean bishops admitting he made “serious errors in judgment,” apologizing to victims and inviting them to come to Rome so he can beg their forgiveness in person; April 27, the pope began days of meetings with Cruz and other survivors, James Hamilton and Jose Andres Murillo; May 2, at the end of the meetings, Cruz and the others said they accepted the pope’s apology and urged him to take concrete action to end the “epidemic of abuse and cover-ups.” May 15 – 17, spent three days in prayer and discussion with 34 Chilean bishops, who almost all submitted their resignation. June 2 - 3, he met with more Chilean victims, including five priests. June 11, the pope accepted three of the resignations, including that of Osorno Bishop Juan Barros, an appointee of Francis, who has been at the center of the scandal, and appointed temporary leaders for each of those vacant dioceses; June 12, Archbishop Scicluna and a colleague began a healing mission to Osorno. June 28, the pope accepted two more resignations, including Bishop Goic, who courageously denounced human rights abuses under President Pinochet, but apparently failed to notify authorities of abuse in his diocese.

B. Responses:

1. In an interview after the meetings, Juan Carlos Cruz said he was convinced the pope was misinformed about the situation in Chile. He also noted the pope’s sincerity: “I have never seen someone be so contrite about what he was telling me,” adding his remembrance of Francis admitting: “I was part of the problem. I caused this and I am sorry.”
2. After the pope accepted some of the resignations, Cruz applauded these moves: “A new day has begun in Chile’s Catholic Church,” adding that the “band of delinquent bishops” has begun “to disintegrate today.” Other critics see it as a positive step with much more to be done to restore the credibility of the Church in Chile. Meanwhile, new scandals have been reported in the Diocese of Rancagua, where 14 priests have been suspended for allegedly being part of a “gay sex ring,” and their bishop has admitted he was slow to act on accusations of the abuse of a minor. We have not heard the last word on the scandal in Chile.
3. The *Atlantic* ran a May 21, 2018 article by Emma Green noting “an aggressive redirection” by Pope Francis, and “a tonal change” from a defensive stand to a focus on “the pain of victims and the errors of the Church.” The article quoted Juan Cruz as saying the developments in Chile are having “a tsunami effect” that will affect what happens in other countries.

4. A May 23, 2018 *New York Times* editorial commented on the pope's apology: "Now, at long last, Pope Francis seems to have glimpsed the depths of the global crisis." Noting "the profound damage done to the Catholic Church world-wide, by clergy sex abuse, the editorial noted that Francis has made "a good and welcome start" by "opening his ears and heart to victims," but concluded, "but this is just a start."
5. A May 22, 2018 *Guardian* editorial called the developments in Chile "electrifying," noting that the pope told the Chilean bishops that the Scicluna report (2,300 pages based on interviewing 64 people) showed "a series of absolutely reprehensible acts...unacceptable abuse of power, of conscience and sexual abuse." The editorial said the resignation of the Chilean bishops was a good thing, but asked "Will it be enough?," noting that Marie Collins thinks that resignation is too easy and there needs to be a proper disciplinary process as well.
6. Writing in *First Things* after the mass resignation of the Chilean Bishops, Philip Lawler, author of *Lost Shepherd* (very critical evaluation of Francis papacy) says that the way Francis responds "will determine how history judges him." Lawler says that the Pope intervened unilaterally in Chile (probably demanding more resignations) and did not use a mechanism for disciplinary actions against offenders, suggesting the Vatican does not have a working system in place for holding bishops accountable. The article brings up Chilean Cardinal Javier Errazuriz one of the Council of Cardinals who has been accused of suppressing information about abuse. It quotes a tweet by Marie Collins: "Chile: No resignation from Cardinal Errazuriz? No removal from the C 9? No bishop removed – all allowed to resign. Really nothing changes." Lawler also accuses Francis of lack of transparency: for example, do not know for sure if the pope demanded all resign, Vatican tried to keep secret a strong letter from Francis to Chilean bishops (it was leaked).
7. Issues remain: Why did Francis not react to the original letter of Cruz detailing abuse? Will resigned bishops be charged? And tried? What about those already over 75? Will there be more resignations accepted by Francis? Will there be greater transparency? What institutional mechanisms will be put in place? Will Chile try to learn from U.S. approaches – zero tolerance, independent studies, reporting to civil authorities? What about Cardinal Errazuriz? Will he stay in Council of Cardinals?

#### IV. Worldwide

- A. We can expect more allegations to surface around the world, including Asia and Africa.
- B. Australia, Archbishop Philip Wilson of Adelaide convicted of cover-up, some say the charges are questionable and that he spoke out against clergy sex abuse. Cardinal George Pell (age 76) is facing two trials on charges from the 1970s and another from the 1990s.
- C. Francis cannot intervene personally in every country. He must find a way to establish institutional mechanisms to deal with the problem, especially a tribunal to try alleged complicit bishops.
- D. The United States could provide guidance for other countries.

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