

# 'FORCED' CELIBATE STRESS DISORDER AND THE TRAUMA OF OUR AGING CLERICS IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Dr. Joseph Dietrich Dr. P.H. February 26, 2013

## SUMMARY

Roman Catholic religious celibacy, when freely chosen, is the beautiful dedication of a mature person's whole life force to build a spiritual community of unmarried persons for the leadership and inspiration of the People of God.

However, this essay describes '**forced' celibacy** in some men who follow celibacy only as a prerequisite for priesthood. 'Forced' celibacy can become for some individuals a way of life which contributes to a type of stress called 'critical incident stress'. The stress is critical because, for those who do not have the gift of celibacy, this life can overwhelm their typical ability to cope, contributing to atypical reactions of anger, fear, and sorrow; sometimes accompanied by sleeplessness, avoidance, and startle reactions; which can become acute (when these reactions last for more than a week); and even traumatic (where these reactions last for more than a month); where the person loses their sense of safety, experiences unusual intense emotional pain, and often, isolation. (c.f. American Psychiatric Association, 2000, Appendix I).

In the case of 'forced' celibacy this has led to immaturity in relationships; to thinking that celibacy is protecting them; to rigidity in relationships; and hopelessness, assuming that celibacy cannot be changed. This condition can lead some to be so burdened by 'forced celibacy' that they seek their maturity outside of clerical celibacy, or criminally turn their sexual affection towards minors. Studies cited by Richard Sipe reveal that 'at any one time, as few as 50% of priests are actually celibate,; some have taken 'wives' and are having children by them. According to priests who have worked there, in some South American countries pastors are often not trusted unless they have a 'wife' and children.

This 'Forced' Celibate Stress Disorder (FCSD) can influence those around them who can 'take on' all the stressors involved. This is called Secondary FCSD; and it can contribute to stress in other priests, especially the hierarchy, who since the 12th century, have insisted that celibacy is necessary for priesthood, (even though many of the apostles were married), including the assertion that the Bible states that women cannot be priests, (even though in the early Church women regularly 'presided' at liturgical events); possibly contributing to injustice toward women in the Church, mirroring the 'stained glass ceiling' toward women in society.

The 'Forced' Celibacy necessary in the twelfth century for good social order, (partially to hinder bishops ordaining their male children to ensure the inheritance of their city states) has over-valued the lives of those who do not have sexual relations. Some hierarchy seem to use it as a means of control...so much so that there are regular reports of 'covering up' priestly love affairs, and of bishops criminally 'covering up' the sexual abuse of minors by priests. We have the anomalous situation where those priests who have wives/ lovers may have become a prophetic witness to a mature loving life: they may be stepping outside the 'forced' rule in favour of mature spirituality.

'Forced' Celibacy (FCSD) is described, along with the effects on youth of criminal abuse and criminal cover-up as reported from recent scholarly studies; along with a description of the secondary 'trauma' of all those who "know" of the cover-up of these acts, including laity, priests, bishops, and Vatican officials; who all, to varying degrees, seem to, at least implicitly, assert that this situation is somehow necessary to protect the priesthood; and even that this criminal cover-up is somehow part of the valid tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, despite the fact that world wide, every instance of child abuse must be reported to legal authorities.

Suggestions to help resolve this confusing situation are given including the suggestion that Pope Benedict XVI and other involved clerics, tap into the vast experience of married priests for mature counsel; and/or in certain cases, submit themselves to judgement at an International Court.

## INTRODUCTION

The recent revelations of years of sexual abuse of minors by some priests all over the world, as well as the culture of cover-up of these criminal acts, juxtaposed with Roman Church's good works and the hierarchy's many mature and important world decisions, has left many Catholics puzzled and scandalized; and many others shaking their heads in amazement. Many clerics displayed very erroneous judgments about clerical sexual activity, as described in the stinging condemnation by the recent (2009) Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse in Ireland which found "a climate of fear...children lived with daily terror", and "**when confronted with evidence of sex abuse, religious authorities responded by moving the sex offenders to another location where in many instances they were free to abuse again**"; and naming four archbishops as being at the center of the cover-up. Recently it has been revealed that Pope Benedict XVI was the archbishop, in the 1970's and 1980's in a German diocese when Priest pedophilia and cover-up occurred. Worldwide, the Church hierarchy has spent **billions** of dollars settling criminal claims against clerics, in some cases excluding them from the clerical life; in other cases moving them, often to re-offend; or "hiding" them in the Vatican. In addition there is the claim by several researchers (Sipe) that only up to 50% of Catholic priests are actually celibate, some are 'married' or have intimate relations with their partners; and that many South American pastors are not trusted unless they have a 'wife' and children. The hierarchy turn a blind eye to this and refuses to consider reassessing the 'forced celibacy' law to try to understand what affect it may have on the affected priests, and their partners, and the young victims of what many name "child rape". It is important to examine this situation, and make some recommendations to our hierarchical leaders and to Catholics and all people of goodwill everywhere.

It is my thesis that many of our hierarchy are suffering from a stress condition that I am calling 'Forced Celibate' Stress Disorder (FCSD), which is the result of their reactions when they were young dedicated priests and were shocked by the realization that they could no longer follow a life of celibacy; complicated by the fact that some of their fellow celibates were not being celibate; but that unless they remained celibate they could not continue their priestly ministry. This may have led them to the realization that the normal loving feelings they were beginning to feel toward relationships was pitting their dedication to priesthood against their authentic growth to psychological, physical and spiritual maturity. The resulting conflict may have contributed to their losing their sense of safety, to experiencing unusual emotional pain, and to becoming isolated... signs of possible trauma. Untreated trauma is rarely mitigated by time, and this isolation can follow a cleric through his priesthood; and secondary trauma can reinforce the rigid stance that denies priesthood to anyone who has sexual relationships, furthering the chauvinism and sexism endemic to many Catholic hierarchy and laity.

'Forced Celibate' Stress Disorder (FCSD) is best understood in comparison with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), (Appendix I). In PTSD, as a result of one or more critical incidents (e.g. incidents which overwhelm one's ability to respond to them), a person displays critical incident stress, that is, atypical emotional reactions of anger, fear and sorrow; and other reactive activities (sleeplessness, avoidance reactions, startle reactions etc.,) which are not typical of the person's everyday life. If these reactions continue for more than a few days the person may experience acute stress; and for more than a week or two, the person may experience Post Traumatic Stress. In many, these effects can be present during a person's whole lifetime. These effects are sometimes experienced as 'heaviness', often with fatigue and some sadness.

## MY EXPERIENCE AS A PRIEST IN THE PAST

My experience as a priest in the 1960's was that each of my fellow priests *were* called to pursue honest affective maturity, emphasizing the integrity of living as religious men who had unconditionally enriched both the vow of chastity and the promise of celibacy (about which a recent Vatican document on Priestly Life speaks). Most of my fellow priests *were* leading fulfilling and enriching lives. But my experience also was that many of them, including myself were not really content with celibacy. Some were “putting up” with it, struggling to “grow up” as human beings even as they were being burdened by what they saw as an unnecessary “law.” As some of us were growing in maturity, we realized that emotionally we had many adolescent traits, and may have stopped growing upon entering the seminary; but after a few years, some were entering life-giving relationships, relationships that were helping us grow into maturity. With some clerics these relationships led to loving sexual activity. But because of the conflict between the law of celibacy and the desire to remain active in ministry, we were either walking away from these maturing relationships or abdicating our responsibility to our loved ones. Most of our loving partners were upset, even frustrated, wondering why decent men approached them and now were fleeing. Many of these clerics were forming mature and intimate relationships, with the blossoming sexual tension that accompanies a beginning intimacy. Some apparently were able to form loving, non sexual relationships with their partners, dedicating themselves to one another in a platonic relationship. (At present many active priests still enjoy these committed unions). Others who had formed these relationships were also active sexually. However some of these affected priests remained in the clerical life with great dedication because they judged that celibacy was not possible for them, and/or they had few other professional credentials and felt they had few options for employment. Thus although they and their partners lead a double life, many are the unsung heroes of the Church striving for loving maturity as ‘married’ priests. Some of these did not mature and seemed to stagnate, often with the criminal results that have been revealed in recent years.

As a young priest I faced these struggles with celibacy and relationships and wondered about the future. To come slowly to the realization that the very celibacy that was being held up as a safe path to sanctity was proving for some to be a barrier to mature holiness left me with very unsafe feelings. That some fine men whom I respected were imposing a prescription which some were unable to fulfill left me with a lot of pain—anger, at the injustice of it, fear for an unknown personal and institutional future, and a profound sense of loneliness and isolation. I wondered whether my own maturity was possible in the midst of such confusion.

It was only many years later during post doctoral training that I came to realize that these contradictory experiences were actually critical incident stress events that overwhelmed my ability to respond to them. The path from critical incident stress through acute stress to post traumatic stress is clear, as described above. After many years removed from the clerical state, I remember the training seminar when I recognized that I had gone through that process myself many years before, as a young priest. I now describe this syndrome as 'Forced Celibate' Stress Disorder (FCSD).

## **'FORCED' CELIBATE STRESS DISORDER (FCSD)**

*FCSD (Forced Celibate' Stress Disorder) may be described as the condition present when a person is left stunned when their personal/social growth is interrupted by the organizational "rule of celibacy" which inhibits maturity and pits them against their own nature: friendships are frowned upon; "particular" friendships are forbidden; intimate relationships are discouraged (as dangerous); adherence to the celibate rule is seen as the cost of membership in the clerical state, with any departure from the rule seen as disloyalty. It is called "forced" because one is forced to be celibate if one wants to continue in clerical ministry.*

Realizing that this type of celibacy was not helpful for my growth in authentic spirituality, I received my dispensation from clerical life from good Pope Paul VI; and several years later, met and married (as witnessed by the Bishop's Representative) my wife of 39 years. It is revealing that many who have left the clerical life felt relieved of what they saw was a tremendous burden. I felt that 'tons' of weight was taken off my shoulders. Others report feeling 'light' and racing around and literally jumping for joy.

After these years as husband and father, I am in the process of understanding the meaning of disciplined maturity: to reflect your love in the love of one other human being by identifying your boundaries in the relationship so that your spouse knows what you want: going from just *needing* one another to also *wanting* one another; staying on the marriage path because you have decided to do so; embracing and supporting your children; achieving the freedom of two people who have come to enjoy their relationship and who want to be there; traveling to loving maturity.

## **THE NEED FOR MATURITY IN PRIESTS**

From this perspective, some Roman Catholic clerics lead immature and even undisciplined lives: they rarely experience the love and give-and-take of one other human being. When someone gets "too close" emotionally, some can and many do, end the relationship. Now this is no different than a married person who, because of their marriage vows sets boundaries on their relationships. However, married persons can turn to their spouse for support and often achieve more maturity in their marriage. For the celibate who does not have the charism of celibacy, it is difficult for them to integrate their sexuality into the totality of their loving relationships. Sex is beautiful and life-giving; but just one aspect of the boundary setting required for a loving relationship (spirituality, religion, children, family rules, money, friendships, hobbies, careers are others) – boundary setting which helps a person grow from a relationship just based on needs to one based also on wants. When you *need* someone, they are in charge; when you *want* someone, you are in charge. Relationships that are healthy and free are between two people who have needs, but who both *want* to be there. It seems some Roman Catholic clerics are denied this opportunity for mature growth. It is very difficult to achieve true discipline unless one lives one's life closely with another human being.

## **STOP 'COVERING UP' AND CONCENTRATE ON 'GROWING UP'**

Most present priests are dedicated men who lead exemplary lives. But some celibate Roman Catholic clerics may be experiencing FCSD, as witnessed by those who describe their lack of the sense of safety, their pain, and their loneliness. This, along with the hierarchical rule that no sex is necessary for the clerical priesthood, could explain, at least partially, the origins of

the present day hierarchical activity: some clerics whose committed relationships and mature friendships have led to sexual intimacy; with some clerics criminally turning toward young girls and young boys for sexual relationship. When these clerics are emotionally at the adolescent phase and without the balance and discipline of another mature person in relationship, these yearnings can be seen as emphasizing the sexuality of adolescence. Perhaps this adolescent mentality is at the root of the hierarchical leaders' criminal covering up of criminal sexual activity: Boston, Philadelphia, Seattle, Los Angeles, various dioceses in Canada, Ireland, Germany, and the world. Perhaps this adolescent mentality is contributing to such questionable statements that the low birthrate is a result of creeping secularism without reference to the terrifying overpopulation in our society; and the availability of abandoned children at every Children's Aid Society in the world; or the outright condemnation of the termination of pregnancy even after rape without reference to the fact that a significant percentage of all pregnancies are naturally miscarried. And the command that no birth control methods may be used by Catholics even in the face of AIDS epidemics, overpopulation, and a Papal Commission, just after Vatican II in the 1960's, which recommended a reformulation of the birth control guidelines. When these relationships become mature dedicated commitments, these priests often continue in them with the thought that these loving relationships are allowing them to be more mature priests and that the hierarchy are too immature to alter these man-made laws. Sometimes their "wives" understand and accept this situation; sometimes they do not, and they lead lives of unnecessary conflict.

### **THE CELIBACY LAW MAY BE CONTRIBUTING TO CRIMINALITY**

And all of this under the umbrella of a code of canon law, which apparently directs that the first responsibility of the cleric, is to protect the good name of the institution. These cover-ups, some of which are criminal, *seem* to extend to all levels of the hierarchy. After all, was not Pope John Paul II in charge when many of these loving priest and their wives were forming these unions; and when the criminal acts, and their cover-up, occurred? And was not Cardinal Ratzinger, now Benedict XVI, head of the Holy Office during this time? And head of an archdiocese where these acts have been revealed. And if they didn't know about this loving and sometimes criminal activity, what on earth were they doing? And who did know? What are they doing now...invoking the protection of the Vatican State which grants them immunity from prosecution? Many right-thinking persons are looking on with amazement, as some clergy apparently seem to think that it is acceptable to sacrifice our children, and many unsuspecting women, so that these clerics can remain in the ministry. How long will they continue to take these unbalanced positions without admitting their role in these cover-ups, some of which are criminal acts, and these continued examples of priest-woman abuse? Yes, it's good to apologize... but, if warranted, necessary to admit personal guilt and accept the consequences...like, for instance, submitting to an International Criminal Court for assessment. Adult professionals in the social-health-religious areas know they are responsible in law, to immediately report the abuse of children. Yet virtually all over the world, Roman Catholic Hierarchy have hidden and are hiding, or delayed the reporting of, thousands of cases of the priestly abuse of children; and have often reassigned the offending clergy who sometimes re-offend. This could be explained as the immature behavior of an adolescent hierarchy.

## AGEING ADOLESCENT CLERICS AND THE NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

And this might mean changing the 'law' of mandatory 'forced celibacy'; and if you are being traumatized by this thought, then changing the law is unacceptable. Some clerics have become, apparently, a law unto themselves, justifying their abhorrent and/or criminal actions, or covering up the criminal actions of fellow clerics as necessary for the preservation of the hierarchical Catholic Church institution which is saddling itself with an unnecessary law. Some clerics have guilt-laden consciences which is often reflective of emotional adolescence: some clerics needing to confess sexual episodes before they go to celebrate Eucharist; indication that some older clerics are still having sexual difficulties well into their 70's and 80's; a few guilt ridden clerics sustaining sexual activity with women friends and men friends; other clerics doing all this with no guilt, assessing celibacy as not possible for them; and leading a double life. There are even reports that many clergy all over the world are married, and in conflict with the Vatican. In some ways these priests are changing the rule of forced celibacy from within the priestly ranks; and their partners are having to be courageous change agents. The number of these couples is probably underestimated; and they may be the ones growing into maturity while many of the hierarchy seem to have stagnated emotionally at the adolescent stage – perhaps at the stage that they entered the seminary. Along with those of us who have left the clerical life and married, there are hundreds of thousands of priests and their partners who can witness to the sanctity of partner relationships. Surely the hierarchy could open themselves to this vast source of experience and help them incorporate this new reality into the active life of Catholicism. And yet so we have many of our 70+ year old hierarchy are governing like 17-year-old adolescents, with few people to assist and confront them and help them mature. I am naming these individuals 'Aging Adolescent Clerics' and I am prophetically confronting, and assisting them, now.

## TRAUMA, SAME-SEXUALITY, AND THE CLOAK OF SECRECY

These realities, 'cloaked' for so many years, are being uncovered. Richard Sipe ([www.Richardsipe.com](http://www.Richardsipe.com)) who has interviewed more than fifteen hundred priests, asserts in his 2008 essay '**Clerical Sex, Blackmail, and Sexual Abuse**', that the Roman Catholic clerical system produces and protects a certain number of sexually active clergy some of whom abuse minors; that there is enough same-sexual contact between seminarians and priest faculty that the Congregation for Catholic Education has developed a category named *transitional homosexuality* which permits seminarians in this situation to be ordained after three years of abstinence from same-sexual activity. *"Different, however, would be the case in which one were dealing with homosexual tendencies that were only the expression of a transitory problem - for example, that of an adolescence not yet superseded. Nevertheless, such tendencies must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate."* This an enlightened directive for the adults and a safeguard for the of-age young people involved if you accept same-sexuality. But this is not the case with the Roman Catholic clergy; and there is indication (Sipe) that at the present time about 6% of Roman Catholic clerics may be engaged in abusing young seminarians or 'preening' them in preparation for sexual activity. Spong and others estimate that as many as one-half of all Roman Catholic clergy are same-sexual or have same-sexual tendencies. And several websites such as "Apostles Wives' Club", "Good Tidings", "Leaving the Priesthood", and "**S**urvivors **N**etwork of those **A**bused by **P**riests" are helping victims tell their stories to help uncloak the secrets that are apparently sometimes being safeguarded by the seal of the

confessional. If this is true, then there is implicit collusion for this disorder at all levels of the Catholic laity; and thus there are several levels of “secondary trauma”: Bishops and priests know what is going on but tend to ignore or hide it. Laity ‘know’ this is occurring but are turning a 'blind eye' to it. Should not Catholic organizations like the Knights of Columbus, the Knights of Malta, Opus Dei, the Catholic Women’s League and many others be “up-in-arms” defending the honor of our children, and the often unsuspecting women all of whom are victims here? Part of the 'secondary trauma' of the laity is that they largely remain silent; and those who do protest, feel guilty and are often ostracized as unfaithful; when it is they who may really be the ones faithful to integrity.

**WHEN YOUNG PERSONS ARE SEXUALLY ABUSED**

When these 'aging adolescent clerics' lead our children through **clerical duress** to unwanted sexual acts, they are condemning our youth to a vision of their bodies as, at the very least, just controlling “containers” which harbor unmanageable feelings; and at worst seeing their bodies as radically unsafe. Body psychotherapist Roz Carroll of England describes the sensory-motor feedback loops which exist between our feelings and our bodies.

“Feeling feelings helps us make sense of our environment and act appropriately...When the motor-sensory function is split, there will be sensory dysfunction, often marked by numbness and pain; and motor dysfunction—typically manifesting a rigidity/flaccidity of the muscles, or compulsive motor discharge (hyperactivity). Health can be described as the consequence of balanced physiological and psychological functions; whereas ill-health is called omnipotence which is the dissociation from bodily functions, (in medical terms a sympathetic nervous system ‘overcharge’), where the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system are out of balance”.

This is described in the following chart:

<p><b>4 types of nervous</b></p>	<p>1. <u>sequestration</u>: One or more organ, muscle group, or physiological function becomes “ill”.</p> <p>2. <u>antagonism</u>: 'battle' Between the Sympathetic/Parasympathetic: drive and control; heart 'gives out'; addictions.</p>	<p><b>Ego</b> becomes relatively rigid</p>	<p><b>Body</b> is used but they are wary of it: afraid their feelings will become unmanageable</p>	<p><b>Self-image</b>: body is simply a container</p>
----------------------------------	--	--	--	--

<b>system</b>	3. <u>instability</u> : wild swings in mood and body symptoms	<b>Ego</b> becomes fragile	<b>Body</b> is feared as radically unsafe	Body is an 'enemy', an anti-container
<b>dysfunction</b>	4. <u>trauma</u> : whole nervous System becomes unstable			

[08]

How long, by our silence and inaction, will we permit our aging clerics to condemn some of our youth to this rigid and fragile vision of themselves with the consequent panic attacks, cold sweats, palpitations, nightmares, outbreaks of violence, inability to cope, and rapid changes from hot to cold and back? And how long will these 'aging adolescent clerics' continue to exhibit these characteristics themselves without reassessing the value of 'forced celibacy'? The criminal acts of clerics with minors are getting mixed up with the loving relationships that many priests have with their "wives". For those of us who have been married for many years this is an unnecessary burden on many and a scandal to our Catholic people, and all people of God.

### REASSERTING THAT SEX IS GOOD

In the past few years there has been Vatican activity of 'cleansing' seminaries of sexuality including homosexuality. This must be based on the assumption that many seminarians are not practicing celibacy; or what difference is there between heterosexuals or homosexuals if they are not sexually active? Perhaps the present "investigations" focusing on the sexual activity of same-sex relationships can be seen as a "smoke screen" for anything related to sexual activity. Is there intimation that *any* sexual activity is 'bad'; and is not part of a loving relationship? For adolescents, as they mature, the experience of sexuality is slowly integrated into their loving relationships. For most, some self-stimulation proceeds to sexual experiences with others, and then to more permanent commitments such as steady dating, and marriage. However, if one looks at sexual activity as always somewhat suspect, then, in hierarchical thinking, if they 'clean up' these activities, then they'll cleanse the church. *"I'm not sure we fully appreciate the influence that a generally sex-denying culture (in the Church) had upon us, and upon the choices we made in joining the community of priests/religious. While some of us may have been close to the point where we could have chosen marriage from the beginning, I suspect most of us chose 'heroic celibacy/chastity' because we had been indoctrinated by church and family to believe there was something inherently 'second class' about sex in any form (and women too). I believe there are some people who are not cut out for marriage, and if these people choose to dedicate their life energy to the building of community in some other form, they are to be respected for that choice. Where I think the Church did itself (and us) a great disservice was in glorifying celibacy, and raising it to the level of heroic virtue."* (Personal communication from a fellow ex-cleric)

### DEFENDING THE STRUCTURE AND INJURING THE FAITH

It is difficult to intervene with aging clerics, especially Bishops, who usually seem so conflicted in their approach to any loving relationship of priests and so protective of the present



hierarchical structure. They throw “thunderbolts” at those who oppose them perhaps as a way to keep them safe and continue the cloak of secrecy. When they threaten well informed teachers with dismissal if there is any discussion of women’s ordination, same- sex relationships, or married priests, we have a serious jurisdictional, moral and theological problem. Could these activities be part of FCSD (Forced Celibate Stress Disorder) as these aging clerics try to achieve safety amidst their pain and loneliness?

Aging clerics are, perhaps, afraid that their own immaturity and their FCSD will be revealed. Perhaps they are afraid to look at themselves to “see” that it may be their immaturity and imbalance toward sexual issues and their implied stance that sexuality is somehow second rate that may be one of the attitudes influencing the present situation? It is this thinking that seems to have influenced many of our Roman Catholic clerics: that a human being under God is somehow diminished by having loving sexual intercourse with another human being. Such thinking is really “beyond the pale” for those of us who have been married for many years. Our lives are being enriched and our social activities largely defined by our relationship with our partners and our children. In fact, and we must prophetically say it... *the celibacy law is not always defending the faith; it is sometimes injuring the faith.* But some present clerics who know the extent to which fellow clerics are acting outside the law of celibacy, and sometimes committing criminal acts... they too are remaining silent.

## **THE 'GLASS' CEILING IN THE HIERARCHY**

This is complicated by the pronouncements of the hierarchy on the primacy of men in the sacramental activity in the liturgy. On the one hand the Vatican talks about the value of women and their important role as nurturing providers; but on the other hand, the Vatican limits the role of women in the liturgy, citing the argument that Jesus was a man and that women cannot follow Jesus as priests; despite the fact that in the early days of the Church the sacred writers describe women as regularly presiding at community liturgical gatherings which usually commemorated the last supper. But this is denied as no longer valid because Jesus was male. It is such a specious argument, that many women, and men, are seriously discouraged at the Vatican's intransigence. Why are not dedicated and faithful Catholic married women brought in to this discussion and its resolution? It is hubris pure and simple for celibate Catholic hierarchy to be making judgments in this area without pivotal decision making by married women.

## **SCHOLARS ARE DOCUMENTING THE DAMAGE OF ABUSE**

Drs. Marianne Benkert, M.D. (Medicine) and Thomas Doyle J.C.D. (Canon Law) have described the process of abuse and its ‘cloak of secrecy’ on young and innocent boys and girls...the victims. In their November 2008 study: ‘Religious Duress and its Impact on Victims of Clergy Sexual Abuse’ they summarize this as follows:

“...as a result of religious indoctrination and training...fear, awe and respect for the clergy foster the development and actualization of *religious duress*. This phenomenon can seriously impede a person’s capacity to accurately perceive and evaluate abusive actions perpetrated on them by clergy. This constraint poses an impediment to emotional and spiritual development. Internalized religious duress confuses and psychologically overwhelms such individuals and renders them incapable of absorbing their sexual trauma. The consequent feelings of numbness and immobility distort the perception of reality. It then becomes impossible for the individual to act in a manner that would promote their emotional growth and spiritual

well being”. (cf. above essay printed in Sipe)

After describing the effects of clergy abuse on the victims, the authors then describe the trauma and its secondary effect on the abusing clergy themselves (who slowly ‘preen’ their victims); on those clergy whose ‘loyalty’ to the governing church hierarchy ‘forces’ them to hide this activity (they hear the confessions of both perpetrators and victims), and ‘seal’ these crimes under the cloak of the confessional. So we have, at various levels of knowledge, a whole range of complicity: the Pope, the cardinals and bishops, the priests, the seminarians, the laity themselves.

## **SILENCE VS. THE GOOD BEING DONE**

Why are people so silent? Well, is it that we all must face our ‘shadow’; that is, the tendency to senescence and decay which is present in all reality, and present in all religions? Pedophilia, a distinct issue, is difficult to confront in all religions and is not just a Roman Catholic issue. But my thesis here is that we are not just describing pedophiles, we are describing traumatized priests and bishops who manifest adolescent approaches to sexuality, and who pathologically hide the abuse of children; deny that celibacy can be changed ; or whose unhappiness with the unnecessary ‘law’ of celibacy is leading them to break their vows with unsuspecting and needful women, whom they often neglect; or with minors, a criminal act; all the while struggling to remain faithful to the people of God. But, largely because of the tremendous good done by many priests and religious, most of us remain silent, do not want to ‘rock the boat’, and/or jeopardize our own position and standing in the Church.

## **POWER- IN -THE –VATICAN, VS. THE INNOCENCE OF OUR CHILDREN**

And further to that is the power of the Vatican and the hierarchy. The slow transition from married clergy to the celibate laws is well documented. This has been a subtle movement: from the intimation of the primacy of the unmarried by the desert fathers of the fourth century, to the necessary celibate laws to ensure social order in the twelve century( Bishops were ordaining their infant children to the priesthood and designating them heirs to their city states); to the present celibacy laws which are no longer necessary, but which exist because to change them would traumatize those hierarchy who are 'ageing adolescent clerics'; and because this 'forced celibacy' strengthens the power of the Vatican. This is a story which has been well documented by scholars some of whom have been silenced by the hierarchy. Furthermore, the number of young men in North America and Europe seeking the priesthood has diminished... about 150,000 priests have left the clerical life since 1960. And we must all ask ourselves, (and I am asking this of you the reader): Is it worth the price?...the price of these losses plus the loss of the innocence of some of our younger boys and girls especially in this clerical culture where these abusers may be, at this very moment, as you read, in the very act of ‘preening’ even a small minority of our young people for abuse?...Or the unnecessary and sometimes abusive breakups of wonderful man-woman relationships which had the possibility of leading to mature love which could help many of our priests be holier and more effective ministers?

## **CHANGE IS HINDERED BY REVERSE MISSIONARY ACTIVITY**

And this is complicated by the process of what may be called “reverse missionary activity”: Priests from more 'conservative' societies like Poland, Africa and South America are

being sent over to 'developed' countries to provide liturgical activities for parishes without priests. It is a complication because instead of facing the issues I have described, we are covering them over with a type of Catholicism which arises, at least partly, out of the desire of young men in these societies, (legitimate desires it is true), to achieve not only priesthood, but also to get an education and further their lifestyle and social status. This process happened in the 1950's and 60's when many good young men came from dedicated Catholic families, many from the rural areas, seeking priesthood. And it's happening again; and the added numbers tend to 'cover over' the need for change, that is, for married clergy, and women deacons and priests.

## **WHAT ARE WE TO DO?**

We can courageously and prophetically call aging clerics, including Pope Benedict XVI and the bishops to repentance—to *metanoia*—to turn around this confusing and scandalous situation, and restate our position that *we are People of God*, and in Spirit, we expect that our hierarchy, who are our servants, seek a balanced maturity.

We can understand that the present situation is at least partially the result of decisions that, in many cases, had their origins in the 1950's and 1960's and could be part of FCSD ('Forced' Celibate Stress Disorder). And we can support aging clerics to admit their need to change and grow; and if we are qualified, and are asked, to help them with this growth. The path to recovery in FCSD, as in PTSD, is clear, but often difficult: get into relationships, accept and integrate the pain they have experienced; and slowly regain their sense of safety.

We can ask that those ageing clerics who are covering up priestly criminal behavior give themselves up to the justice system and then resign, or be relieved of their duties; and that those clerics who are "living with" girlfriends (or boyfriends) reveal their loving activity and force the issue of change by making "honest people" of their partners.

We can realize that threats from aging clerics, bishops included, may be the results of their own confusion in secondary 'Forced Celibate' Stress Disorder, especially when they realize that they may have to leave their adolescent behavior and face adult relationships. For aging adolescents, this is often fearsome; for aging adolescent clerics this could intensify their trauma.

We can pray that the hierarchy will support this healing change and see the importance of a balanced and integrated social/sexual/spiritual maturity in both the people of God and in all their ministers; and call on them to stop giving the impression that loving sexual activity is somehow 'second rate'.

We can call for all mature priests to demand a change in the requirement of 'forced celibacy' for candidates to the Roman Catholic clergy. Read up on the history of celibacy and come to your own conclusions; and/or join your fellow priests in groups like the various federations of married priests and their spouses and friends, all of whom seek a more proactive and integrated ministry.

We can pray that our Creator will help these aging clerics, including the Pope and Bishops, seek counseling to help reset their priorities; give up their criminal cover-up of child abuse; confess their sinful activity and give themselves up to the courts for judgment... and I'm referring directly to Pope Benedict XVI, the offending cardinals archbishops, bishops and other Catholic hierarchy! Stop it!!! You are injuring the children, their siblings and their parents; and you are shaming many Catholic women and men everywhere, and confusing the whole world community!

Pope Benedict XVI and many Bishops, you seem to have much fear and confusion in many of your decisions and seem to be over-emphasizing sex and sexuality, which is only one aspect of a mature person's life. Stop making such an issue of it; and let us all get on with the larger and more important social/health/spiritual issues of our people and our world—overpopulation, environmental degradation, universal health care, starvation, war and pandemic diseases to name a few.

#### References:

- American Psychiatric Association (2000). "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder", Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders DSM-IV-TR (Fourth Ed.). Washington D.C.:
- Aquinas, Thomas, St., Summa Theologia II. I., Quest. 35-47(Of Human Acts: Sorrow, Fear, and Anger)
- Benkert, Dr. Marianne M.D. (Medicine) and Thomas Doyle J.C.D. (Canon Law) November 2008
- 'Religious Duress and its Impact on Victims of Clergy Sexual Abuse' in [www.richardsipe.com](http://www.richardsipe.com).
- Catechism of the Catholic Church, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ottawa, 1994, (The principal passions are love and hate, desire and fear, joy and sadness, anger.)
- Carroll, Liz, 'Body Psychotherapy', [www.thinkbody.co.uk](http://www.thinkbody.co.uk).
- Congregation for Catholic Education. Directive on Transient Homosexuality Nov.2005
- Genelin, Eugene T., Focusing, 2nd ed., Bantam, Toronto, 1980( What successful patients do inside themselves)
- Haldane, Sean, Emotional First Aid, New Horizon, N.Y.. 1984, (Overcoming frustration, anxiety and loneliness)
- Kabat-Zinn, Jon, Full Catastrophe Living, Bantam, N.Y., 1990 (Using the wisdom of the body and mind to face pain and illness)
- McMahon, Edwin M., Beyond the Myth of Dominance. An alternative to a violent society, Sheed and Ward, 1993 (focusing and biospirituality)
- Ranke-Heinemann, Uta, Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven, Penguin, N.Y. 1990
- Sipe, Richard, 'Clerical Sex, Blackmail and Sexual Abuse' in [www.richardsipe.com](http://www.richardsipe.com)
- Teeguardin, Iona, The Joy of Feeling (Bodymind Acupressure) Japan Publication. N.Y. 1987
- Upledger, John, Your Inner Physician and You (CranioSacral Therapy and SomatoEmotional Release) North Atlantic Books, 1987.
- Aaron, Susan, Psychodramatic Bodywork®, cf. [www.youremotions.com](http://www.youremotions.com)

#### Appendix I: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

In 2000, the American Psychiatric Association revised the PTSD diagnostic criteria in the fourth edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR). The diagnostic criteria (Criterion A-F) are specified below. Diagnostic criteria for PTSD include a history of exposure to a traumatic event meeting two criteria and symptoms from each of three symptom clusters: intrusive recollections, avoidant/numbing symptoms, and hyper-arousal symptoms. A fifth criterion concerns duration of symptoms and a sixth assesses functioning.

#### Criterion A: stressor

The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following have been present: 1. The person has experienced, witnessed, or been confronted with an event or events that involve actual or threatened death or serious injury, or *a threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others* (Being forced to live an unmarried life) (Underlined words are mine). 2. The person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror. Note: in children, it may be expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior.

**Criterion B: intrusive recollection** the traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in at least one of the following ways:

1. Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions. Note: in young children, repetitive play may occur in which themes or aspects of the trauma are expressed.
2. Recurrent distressing dreams of the event. Note: in children, there may be frightening dreams without recognizable content
3. Acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions,

hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur upon awakening or when intoxicated). Note: in children, trauma-specific reenactment may occur. 4. Intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event. 5. Physiologic reactivity upon exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.

**Criterion C: avoidance/numbing:** Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by at least three of the following: 1. Efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma 2. Efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma 3. Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma. 4. Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities. 5. Feeling of detachment or estrangement from others 6. Restricted range of affect (unable to have loving feelings) 7. Sense of foreshortened future (does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span).

**Criterion D: hyper-arousal:** Persistent symptoms of increasing arousal (not present before the trauma), indicated by at least two of the following: 1. Difficulty falling or staying asleep 2. Irritability or outbursts of anger. 3. Difficulty concentrating. 4. Hyper-vigilance. 5. Exaggerated startle response

**Criterion E: Duration** of the disturbance (symptoms in B, C, and D) is more than one month.

**Criterion F: functional significance** the disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

**Specify if:** **Acute:** if duration of symptoms is less than three months **Chronic:** if duration of symptoms is three months or more **Specify if:** **With or without delay onset: Onset of symptoms at least six months after the stressor Reference.**

American Psychiatric Association. (2000). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders DSM-IV-TR (Fourth Ed.). Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association.



### *Afterword*

Many of us who have been dispensed from the clerical life largely because celibacy for us was a burden not a gift, have taken the position that mandatory or 'forced celibacy' is unnecessary for the priesthood. In this essay I am going further and **taking a stand:** I am stating that celibacy for some is a positive detriment which has led many priests to immaturity, especially in the feelings necessary for relationships; to irresponsible behaviour by many clerics towards women friends; to criminality by those who have abused minors; and worse, to the adolescent criminal acts of those who have 'covered up' and are still 'covering up' these acts.

**No responsible adult professional in the social health field in the world would hesitate to report immediately the sexual abuse of minors. And yet the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, including Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John Paul II before him, and the bishops, have consistently hidden and/or left thousands of cases unreported.**

I am further saying that our Catholic hierarchy are not only criminally covering up this abuse but are refusing to relate any of this abuse to 'forced clerical celibacy' as if they are afraid of the concept of changing mandatory celibacy, to the extent that they judge that if they were to change the law of celibacy, they would lose their sense of safety, experience unusual fear, anger and sorrow and become isolated ...all signs of primary or secondary trauma.

The continued position of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy regarding 'forced celibacy' is contributing to a traumatized hierarchy and a traumatized laity; and is a scandal to all ordinary people everywhere.

Dr. Joseph Dietrich, Dr. P. H., Ottawa, Ontario, February 26, 2013