

Another Trembling Upon Rome

Trust is one of the linchpins of society at large. For too long, the Catholic Church (and others) has abused that trust, allowing pedophiles to continue their heinous crimes against children. Without fundamental change, public trust will continue to slump. Something concrete and transparent must be done to reduce priestly pedophilia.

*

Back in 1983, one of my favorite thriller authors, the late Richard Condon, wrote a *roman à clef* about a period in the history of Catholic Church when there were three popes at the same time, early in the fifteenth century. It was a wonderfully satirical novel, full of the usual Condon excesses about the nature of humanity and, in particular, about those who are supposed to be the guardians of faith and in whom the common folk placed their trust. The book's title is *A Trembling Upon Rome*.

Most by now would have read about the German pedophile experiences coming to light; Internet news feeds are copious. And just today (April 2nd), I listened to the news coming from Italy on the same sordid topic, and at a school for the deaf *again*, as in U.S.A. Also, further reports are coming from Spain and Switzerland.

Hence, one could be forgiven in thinking that the guardians of the faith in Rome are trembling, once again, in the light of the global furor about priestly pedophiles. And so those guardians *should be* trembling because the church is now in danger of being sued for even more millions of dollars, having already paid out hundreds of millions for past transgressions in the United States, Australia and Ireland.

How long can any organization survive in the face of repeated civil actions that can cost so much? And without even beginning to count the cost in human misery at the hands of those evil people who've done so much to undermine the faith of some many – a cost that can never be repaid, and never recovered.

Though I doubt the writing is on the wall for the Catholic Church. Moreover, it's not surprising to me that we find pedophiles in the Catholic Church, or any organization where children are at risk: occasionally, pedophiles are exposed in scouting organizations and other types of boys and girls organizations – even in schools or a doctor's office. In short, pedophilia occurs at all levels of society – simply because it originates mostly in men, *all types of men*.

Hence, the Catholic Church and its culture is merely one of many organizations that suffer from child predators and destroyers. Read back through history and we find that sexual abuse of children has occurred in civilized societies of ancient Greece and Rome; in at least one so-called primitive society in Africa where, until recently, twins were summarily discarded at birth; and in modern day Middle Eastern and Asian societies where children are still regarded as disposable property, with girls of nine, for example, being forced into marriage.

Consider Islam, where for centuries, it has been common practice to use children of both sexes **for intercrural sex**; and the Koran, for example, specifically sanctions marriage for girls at nine or earlier. Read **here the relevant facts** about Muhammed and his marriage to a nine-year old girl. Other Asian cultures also practice early marriage for minors.

Without doubt, throughout history, the abuse of minors has often been tolerated, sometimes unofficially encouraged, or even regarded as the norm. Many ‘civilized’ cultures denounce such practices, of course, but those are *not* fundamentally related to pedophilia. Clearly, though, humanity has a long way to go before it can claim to be fully humane.

So: just what is pedophilia? **One online dictionary** states it’s a psychosexual disorder “in which an adult’s arousal and sexual gratification occur primarily through sexual contact with prepubescent children.” A more detailed overview can be read **here**. An **online reference site here** provides similar information.

The most telling information, to me, is that the root causes of pedophilia are still unknown. Research continues, but nobody has definitive answers. Moreover, the incidence of pedophilia has little to do with childhood abuse in potential predators; nor are there any specific connections with celibacy. So, those who shout about the need to allow Catholic priests to marry – presumably women – are off base.

Which means the Catholic Church will continue to have a tough time of it: which also means the guardians at the Vatican must be having daily nightmares: and which is a good thing, from my perspective. (No – I was never abused by a priest; only by a local, perverted thug when I was seven or eight.) If Condon were alive, he’d probably be able to write another blockbuster satirical thriller; although, I understand **that prolific author, Andrew Greely** has written a novel called *The Priestly Sins*, published in 2004, which tackles the issue (I haven’t yet read the novel, however).

Given the pervasiveness of child abuse, in many forms and in many cultures, it’s almost axiomatic to suggest that the incidence of pedophilia will continue within the Catholic Church and other religious organizations. What can be done? What, for example, *should* the Catholic Church do now to tackle this issue?

Well, for my money, it should *not* be limited to the most recent stance **as described here**.

What it needs to do is: *first*, whatever psychological investigation and testing has been the practice in the past, it should be beefed up for all seminary students; that’s not too difficult given the Church’s almost fabulous financial resources and dwindling numbers of students. *And, second*, whatever it’s already spent – if anything – on investigating the causes of pedophilia, that budget should be doubled or tripled by many millions more. Simply throwing money at problems won’t fix them, of course: what’s needed is *complete* transparency about the research and the results, as a starting point. Both suggestions will take years, for sure; but they’re needed, if the church hopes to maintain any sense of moral authority over millions of unfaithfully-abused faithful.

Finally, and most controversially, I'd suggest that those priests who offend should always be tried in criminal court so that justice will be seen to be done; moreover, if convicted, the usual punishment should be imposed, including the use of pedophile watch lists.

Too draconian? Well, nothing effective has been done for centuries – except, of course, the disbursement of hush money to victims and their heirs. Well, we all know that money just doesn't talk – it screams, doesn't it?

Pity that most of the guardians are deaf to the screams of those victims, though, until it's way too late. That *must* change or heads should roll, starting with the top where the buck should always stop.

Copyright © 2010, Roger J. Burke, www.rogerjburke.com. All rights reserved.