

Panel 1 – Structure, Governance and Culture.

Discussion Notes

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1. A failure to understand the complex pathology of the pedophile. An example has been the insistence that sexual abuse is the outcome of a climate of moral dissent in the 1970's and 1980's within the Church. Such claims short-circuit analysis of the crisis. Sexual abuse does not emerge from a culture of moral dissent within the Church.
2. Nor is sexual abuse sourced simply in the requirement of celibacy, itself – even if mandatory celibacy may exacerbate pre-existing pathology. Sexual assault is not the behaviour of the sexually starved. The overwhelming majority of sexual assault is engaged by those who do not profess celibacy, who are married, and who are sexually active. It is the outcome of the dynamic of power, not sexuality.
3. Celibacy is a way of being in relationship. But celibacy in the Church has often not been presented in an affirmative way, truncated, rather, to being equivalent to “no sex/no sexual feeling”- i.e. a ‘negation.’ The concept of holiness becomes linked to “not being/feeling sexual.” Because asexuality is not humanly possible, dangerous compartmentalization can occur. Celibacy is in fact, if practiced properly, is a way of living out one’s sexuality (the human instinct for completion in relationship) in a deeply rewarding way.
4. Sexual abuse, however private its exercise, is never entirely personal. Nor is abuse an isolated incident. Whether it occurs within a family, or within an institution, sexual abuse occurs within both a concrete social context and specific patterns of relationship. The experience of sexual abuse emerges from a dysfunctional milieu which is constituted by the interplay of varied factors, some of which are more immediately apparent, others which are even subliminal but nonetheless powerful in their influence.
5. Abuse in the Catholic Church occurs in the intersection of the dysfunctional elements of three matrices: the theological, the psychological and the social. To address the current crisis, each of these three matrices must be attended. To deal with one, to the exclusion of the other two, comprises an inadequate and short-term response to the experience of sexual abuse.
6. **Dysfunctionality in the Theological Matrix**
Attitudes and behaviours that are consequent of theological frameworks which, whilst being heterodox in themselves, nonetheless work themselves into a cultural consciousness within the Church. These are frameworks which, from a genuinely Christian perspective, have inadequate or distorted conceptions of God, the Church and human eros/sexuality. Such frameworks construct a certain theological imagination that underpins ways of relating to others and works to sustain unhealthy and abusive patterns of relationship.
7. **Dysfunctionality in the Psychological Matrix**
 - Religion does not immunize a person from pathology. It is clearly recognized now that abusive behaviours emerge from pathologies that must be treated beyond a simple moral appeal to the will. In the case of those who have offended, psychological pathology is obvious. However, it is important to examine less apparent factors within the personality which, whilst not causative of abuse, may nonetheless pre-dispose an individual to abusive patterns of behaviour in ministry.
 - Religious experience, particularly that which formulates a vocational motivation, is an ambiguous reality and requires a stringent hermeneutic. As the work of Paul Tournier has illustrated, religious experience contains the ability to sublimate an unresolved tension between the emotional needs of dominance and abasement. Such a ‘religious’ sublimation acts as an accessible psychic defence against overwhelming feelings of insecurity or anxiety associated with inadequacy and/or guilt. Spiritualization is one way of transposing this psychic conflict into a safe and respectable zone, i.e. the individual, not necessarily consciously, sublimates the inner tension into religious imagery, constructs, and language. Sexualization is another transposition. When the ‘religious’ adaptation of the tension is no longer experienced in satisfying ways, sexual translation is more prone to occur. Some men have wished to become priests motivated by defensive patterns that cannot be sustained by spiritual sublimation alone.
 - Clericalism is another outcome. Clericalism rests on the principles of exclusion, entitlement and exemption. It is a dependency on a status that has become a fantasy to defend the person from the

vulnerability of intimacy and relationships. Certain ecclesiastical contexts have promoted rather than scrutinized clericalism. Needs for intimacy cannot be quashed, however. They simply seek their expression in covert and distorted ways and can become sexualized.

- Mental health occurs when the demands of one's context is in proportion to one's talent, training and skill. Many clergy and Religious have found themselves in situations beyond their capacity, personally and professionally. An arrested sexual development conjoined to situational anxiety and anger is explosive.

8 Dysfunctionality in the Social Matrix

Those structures in and by which we relate to others and by which clergy and Religious are formed.

- The exclusion of the feminine, particularly in an unhealthy practice of celibacy, creates an hermetically sealed culture in which there is an overdeveloped masculine ethos. In cultures built on a masculine energy not balanced by the feminine there is an incapacity for genuine interior reflection, the inability to relate with intimacy, a dependence on role and work for self-identification, the loss of a humanizing tenderness (often illustrated in architecture and design of living space). Men grow in a forgetfulness of how to relate to peers (men and women) in healthy, adult and truly generative ways.
- By nature, communities are conflictual forums. When there is an expectation that they should be otherwise and when emotional illiteracy abounds in Religious communities the situation is made not just dysfunctional but pathological. Men and women may not be trained in either initial or ongoing formation to deal effectively with the inherent conflictual dynamic in community; they possess little skill to read conflict, to engage and address conflict. Effective communication within most Religious communities is limited. Subsequently, the ground is laid for emotional isolation; intimacy needs once again become infused with aggression; stress abounds. Sexual dysfunction proliferates.
- The situation for many clergy and Religious is exacerbated by the way they themselves may be treated by superiors. The relationship between clergy and bishops, Religious and superiors has itself on occasions been marked by abusive patterns which isolate both leadership and clergy.
- Because of the Catholic idealization of priesthood, there has been little critical evaluation of ministerial integrity until recently. Subsequently, people have been encouraged to trust clergy even when the evidence may have suggested more cautious involvement. Often people have had a misplaced confidence in the moral and spiritual integrity of an ordained minister which emerges from their own infantile confusion between clerical role, competency, integrity and holiness. A man is not rendered holy by ordination. Nor is he given an infusion of maturity or integrity. And yet, many Catholics, somehow perceive this to be the case. There remains the extraordinary (often unspoken) expectation that celibate clergy have somehow been rendered asexual by their professed celibate commitment and that their sexual impulses no longer present with any force.
- Against this primitive idealization of clergy by people who have not been encouraged to be critical in their faith, priests have little accountability in their ministry. Hitherto, the only real accountability that an ordained minister experienced was to one person, his bishop or his superior. The strength of that accountability, of course, has been entirely dependent on the strength of the relationship between the two persons involved, and the bishop or superior's own facility in calling others to account for their actions. This skill cannot be presumed.
- A lack of appreciation, both by clergy and people, of the influential dynamic of "dual relationships" in the life of Catholic clergy: professional and personal relationships easily become blurred in the intensity of Catholic ministry.
- Priests, unlike any other person in the caring professions, are not required to undertake regular professional ministerial supervision or regular performance assessment. Instead, many of them live and work alone, often even without any effective peer support or with only superficial peer relationships which can neither affirm nor challenge. At the risk of repetition, it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that isolation (which is not necessarily the outcome of mandatory celibacy) is profoundly detrimental to the personality, has dramatic implications for sexual dysfunction, and establishes the horizon against which abuse is perpetuated.