

July 10, 2014

## Clergy Sex Offenders

- There is a big gap between what the reality of clerical sexual abuse is and the public debate
- Scientific evidence vs urban myth
- Scientific data can help cut through the moral panic and insidious stereotypes
- Research should never be used as an excuse!
- While perhaps not causal, celibacy is understood in many instances to represent a significant contributing factor, especially where sexuality is not integrated into a priest's identity and sexual feelings often generate feelings of loss and result in resentment and entitlement
- Clergy sex offender typology: functionally immature; chronic emotional loneliness; over-controlled hostility; sexually and relationally immature; submissive personality; addictive behaviours; over-identification with clerical role; and view minors as friends and equals
- Clergy versus non-clergy sex offenders: older; higher IQ; low psychopathology; low criminal history; fewer victims; abuse adolescent boys; more sexually naïve; lower sexual drive; and fewer sexual experiences
- Red flags: absence of peer relationships; childish interests and behavior; excessive time with minors; personal history of abuse or deviant sexuality; excessively passive personality; minors report him as being 'creepy'; and grooming behaviors with minors
- Best practice in the treatment of and intervention with clergy sex offenders support a multidisciplinary team approach
- Risk assessment: no psychological tests exists to identify a sexually safe person
- Risk assessment helps differentiate higher from lower risk sex offenders as well as guide treatment planning and supervision needs
- Risk assessment allows evaluation of sexual re-offense risk over a 5-15 year period
- Risk assessment helps provide warnings of imminent relapse as well as strengths which support abstinence, sobriety and recovery
- Safety planning: goal is to keep the offender and children safe; behavioral contract based

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upon level of risk; clear and enforceable with adverse consequences; ministry restrictions; no unsupervised contact with minors; attend OP sex offender focused psychotherapy; 12-step support group; limited or no access to the Internet; no use of alcohol or drugs; and residence restrictions

- We still have not solved the problem of how to remove offending priests completely from ministry and minors, while assisting them in living a productive and supervised life
- Some church leaders did not understand the broad nature of the problem and treated it sporadically
- Some church leaders placed institutional concerns above the concerns of victims in an effort to protect the faithful from scandal
- The threat of litigation caused many church leaders to adopt an adversarial stance
- Some church leaders failed to comprehend the magnitude of the harm suffered by victims
- Some church leaders were manipulated by offenders and avoided confronting abusive priests
- Canon law in the past made removal from ministry onerous
- Some church leaders feared that public disclosure would force structural change in the church
- Childhood sexual abuse is a global public health problem and a hidden human rights violation
- I don't think we differ very much from what is happening in Europe and America. It's simply that our communities have not reached the level of anger where they would want to report these cases, when they would be proactive.
- Africa is perhaps the test case for answering the question of whether the Catholic Church can strike an adequate balance between recognizing the diversity of local situations while at the same time having a uniform standard of justice in child safeguarding