

# PITY THE BISHOPS!

In the Holy Book, people use their **rooftops** for grieving (Is.15.2, for the period bald from the neck up), worshipping (Zeph.1.5; of celestial objects), & revealing secrets (Mt.10.26-27 TEV: "Whatever is now covered up will be uncovered, and every secret will be made known. What I [Jesus] am telling you in the dark, you must repeat in broad daylight, and what you have heard in private you must announce from the housetops" (L.12.2-3: "...in a closed room will be shouted from the housetops").

According to Peter Jennings' ABC/TV "The Catholic Church in Crisis" last night, the pedophile priests are only the bad guys: the worse guys are the bishops. So accustomed to coverups & payoffs are the bps. that--ABC's national study allegedly reveals--30 priests who've done time for pedophilia are now back as parish priests, with the same access to boys they had when they were nailed (metaphorically, as in [CAMB.DICT.OF AM.ENG.] "We finally nailed the guys dumping garbage in the park"; since in many cases the bishops, in violation of the confessional, have helped the nailing, those priests doubtless feel betrayed, nailed in the crucifictional sense). Jennings suggested ABC.com & Beliefnet.com if you want more (dirt).

And only a few hours later--this morning--TWP (THE WASHINGTON POST) shows a sharp spike in lay-Catholic concern for the future of the church, whose scandals can only deepen & widen unless the hierarchy (meaning, in that utopian phrase concealing the absolute autocracy of the pope, *primus inter pares*, the first [bp.] among equals [bps.]) yields to major systemic & minor doctrinal changes.

And a letter in yesterday's CAPE COD TIMES uses a secular analogy to bring the crime (which it is, & not only a religiomoral scandal) into public light: "What would happen to a principal in the school who merely reassigned a teacher known to molest students and then paid hush money to the families of the victims?" The writer's point is an appeal to Boston's Cardinal Law to resign. Law's stock brush-off exposes the hierarchical heart of the problem: "When the family is in trouble, you [meaning the paterfamilias, here the bp. "father"] don't run away." Couldn't that school principal use this family-model defense to hide within the school family-system & not "run away"? Everybody knows he wouldn't have the choice of running: if he refused to walk, he'd be dragged. In effect, Law believes that bishops should be judged by a lower moral standard than public school principals. Returnee pedophile priests are a scandal: a lawless (or lower-law) bp. named Law is, because a systemic flaw, worse: a shame & corrosive to the Catholic teaching that the faithful can look to their church for moral guidance.

1 Aren't there enough **Catholic bashers** in the RCC without an outsider like me jumping, as in premodern football, on top of the heap? True, this Protestant is not as directly affected as are Catholics. But "they" the Faith's despisers are laughing at me, too, me, for staying with an antique religion the Enlightenment several centuries ago tried to deliver the world from. I don't like being laughed at, it makes me sad & mad; & I like it even less when Jesus is laughed at, scorned for an "all is forgiven" sentimentalism. As for the tinge of Schdenfreude (malicious pleasure at another's woe--we say it in German because so many Germans were happy at what the Nazis were doing to the Jews), is there any more despicable heart-violation of goodwill, neighborlove?

But in hope of being helpful to at least my people, I must say & quote more:

2 As far back as 3.4.02, Ken Woodward (NW 3): "Across the country, the faithful are starting to question a culture that for too long has excused wayward clergy to abuse the kids who look up to them most." Yes, pity the bishops; pity more those priests; but pity most those kids, & pray that the need for pitying any more of them will soon cease. Card.Law doesn't exonerate the bps., but he directs most of the heat at the priests. This from his Good Friday '02 sermon: "Betrayal hangs like a heavy cloud on the church today....a betrayal of trust is at the heart of sexual abuse of children by clergy."

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3 "Child abuse"? Whoever, till very recently, heard of including in that the akedah (Ab.'s offering up Isaac) & the crucifixion (God the Father seeing to the death of his Son)? At least those priests weren't/aren't murdering those/these kids! My point: democracy, esp. since the '60s, has so elevated "the [infinite] value of the individual" that the collective (e.g., autocracies--USSR, Nazi Germany, Rome--which sacrifice the individual to the group) & its legitimate demands tend to yield to societally-anarchic idiocracy, the diametrical sickness. So pedophilia has been culturally denigrated down to near murder, rhetorically "the murder of the child's heart & future." Pity these priests/bishops for this new unanticipatable obloquy.

4 Pity the bishops, again, for becoming unwitting victims of our post-WWII culture of therapy, on which they overdosed (the sin/grace model falling out of fashion, "sickness" replacing sin as the preferred diagnostic). Shrinks told the bishops that pedophilia is curable, so the offending priests were sent off to take the cure (whatever), then returned to parishes when the shrinks pronounced them cured. (How come not a confessing peep out of either APA or shrinks' complicity in the RCC's tragedy?) The Christian religion predisposes its adherents to assume everybody's redeemable from anything, & everybody's worthy of secrecy protection from unwarranted exposure of weaknesses, failings, sins (a notion intensified, in the RCC, by the past millenium's practice of the private confessional). (No, explanations must not pass for excuses.) (The rehabilitative model continues to advance in society, now in criminology taking the form of "restorative justice.")

And, says ex-RCCpriest, now therapist, Eugene Kennedy--whose THE UNHEALED WOUND: The Church and Human Sexuality (St.Martin's/02) is, I think, the best relevant book so far--pity the bishops as victims of (3.29.02 NYT) "the nation's demonic counselors--the lawyers, the insurers and the public relations advisers" who, to protect the church instead of the children, helped the bps. in "the scurrilous and depraved continuation of transferring pedophile priests to new parishes." Union Carbide's coverup of Bhopal; Enron's smoke & mirrors. 3.24.02: the Pope's "naivete about human nature."

5 By Vatican II, coercive clerical celibacy had such an accumulation of discredits that Jn.Courtney Murray predicted its soon death (a beneficent delete deleted by successive popes, who face a 75% decline in priest-enlistment ["vocations"] since). And as early as 1989, the Rev. Andrew Greeley was complaining that the corrupt culture of sexual secrecy, guarded by clerical celibacy, had produced "a complex culture of gay priests" in which "pedophiles are reassigned." The cure? Make clerical celibacy optional.

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