

ASIAN  
HORIZONS  
Vol. 14, No. 2, June 2020  
Pages: 285-288

## *Editorial*

### **Crisis in the Church**

The crisis in the Church due to sexual abuse by the clergy, according to many, is the biggest crisis in the history of the Church. Some others would say that it should be considered at least as the biggest crisis since Reformation. Although the sexual abuse crisis began as an issue in the Western countries, it is becoming clear that no part of the world is immune to this. Reports, especially in the last few years, indicate that cases of sexual abuse of minors and women by the clergy are on the increase in Asia as well. It is doubtful how far the Asian Church has acknowledged this as a serious problem affecting it. Many in Asia continue to consider it as a Western problem, correlated with a loose sexual morality. In addition, many Catholics believe that the abuse scandal, to a great extent, is a media creation, a concerted attack on the Catholic Church.

One of the major difficulties encountered when addressing the clerical sexual abuse in the Asian context is that of the availability of data. Although there is increasing number of cases of sexual abuse by the clergy, there have been no initiatives from the part of the Church to understand the reality through data collection or surveys. We do not know the number of cases of sexual abuse of minors and women by the clergy, the number and percentage of clergy involved in such cases, or the details of the actions taken. As a result, even now we have to depend on media reports when they happen, or some surveys conducted as personal initiatives, but limited some institution/s or a very limited number of persons, but without the technical and organizational support needed for such studies. This lack of data is a serious obstacle in understanding the reality and in planning possible responses and remedies. Moreover, the response of the church hierarchy seems similar to that in the West in the first decades of the abuse crisis.

There are also reports that sexual abuse of women is rampant in the church, especially in some countries,<sup>1</sup> as well as sexual abuse of nuns by the clergy.<sup>2</sup> Although the present crisis in the church is focused on the sexual abuse of minors, when considering the patriarchal context in Asia, it is important to take into account both sexual abuse of minors and of women. They are interrelated.

This does not mean that the Church in Asia has completely ignored the issue of sexual abuse. Attitudes are changing slowly, especially due to some of the recent abuse scandals in which the clergy and religious were involved; there are cases against bishops as well. Moreover, besides the Vatican directives, the law of the land in many countries have made it mandatory that institutions, including those of the Church, have clear policies, guidelines and mechanisms for the protection of minors and vulnerable adults.<sup>3</sup>

Besides the seriousness of the sex abuse itself, it also raises concerns about the administrative system and structure of the Church and ecclesial life. Many have pointed out that clericalism, abuse of power, a system that lacks transparency and accountability, etc. are the real reasons behind the abuse scandal. Besides, we need to reconsider some of the traditional theological concepts and develop a theology for our times.

The focus of this issue is on Asian situation. There are also a few articles from other contexts which help theological reflection on the issue of sexual abuse. We have articles from different contexts. Though they may be discussing only a particular topic, what is important to consider is that the crisis in the Church due to clergy sexual abuse is felt in different countries, and though from a particular perspective only, each author is expressing the same concern. We tried to get articles from more Asian countries, but often the reply was that the data is not available, or that the Church is still reluctant to acknowledge it as a serious problem. This itself proves the continuing attitude of the Church in different countries as mentioned above.

Some of the articles here are mainly analysing the issue of sex abuse and its different aspects from theological perspectives, whereas others

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<sup>1</sup>See for example, "Sexual Abuse of Women in the Church," *Tessera* 12 March 2010, <http://tessera2009.blogspot.com/2010/03/sexual-abuse-of-women-in-church.html>

<sup>2</sup>E.g. Lucetta Scaraffia, "Without any Touching: A Serious Wound," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 01-02-2019, <http://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/without-any-touching>.

<sup>3</sup>A Few examples from India: *CBCI Child Protection Policy & Procedures*, Approved by the Standing Committee Meeting of Bishops, CBCI (23-25 September 2015), New Delhi: CBCI Office for Education & Culture (the document is not yet available on the CBCI website); In 2017 the CBCI promulgated *CBCI Guidelines to Deal with Sexual Harassment at Workplace* (<https://www.cbci.in/Policies/Policy221153016794.pdf>).

describe the issue and give reflections; some are based on interviews conducted. Such approaches also are important, considering the fact that many of the Asian countries are reluctant even now to acknowledge that sex abuse by the clergy is an Asian problem too.

Acknowledging that in the Asian context, the issue of clerical sex abuse is rarely approached, James McTavish reviews the situation in the Philippines and points out that the general cultural silence over sexuality, high esteem for the clergy and the reticence of the Church to investigate allegations continue to prevent an understanding of the situation and adoption of effective measure to prevent abuses. Emphasizing that pastors have to follow Christian moral principles of personal conduct, Scaria Kanniyakonil reflects on ethics in pastoral ministry. Presenting Jesus as model, he proposes care ethics as a model for pastoral ministry. James F. Keenan considers sexual abuse crisis as a call to conversion. According to him, not only clericalism, but also hierarchichalism that makes many bishops dominant and non-accountable is to be addressed. He calls for a deeper understanding of vulnerability to respond more effectively to the abuse crisis. Analysing the issue from the Australian context, and drawing inspiration from Levinas, Daniel J. Fleming argues that the present crisis can be understood as a failure of conscience to attend to the ethical call. He proposes a way forward based on Astorga's threefold process of lament, resistance and kinship.

The following two articles discuss how the sexual abuse crisis has made us aware of the renewal needed in Church administration. Sunny Kalapurackal underscores the need of transparency and accountability in Church administration. Narrating some of the recent cases of corruption in the Church, he argues out the need of forming an uncorrupted Church and society. Evaluating from the Philippine context, Rhoderick John S. Abellanosa considers ecclesiastical elitism as a more serious problem than clericalism. Elitism with its notions of privileges and distinctions is a fertile ground for abuse.

Two subsequent essays focus more on the abuse of women and nuns in the Indian Church. Exploring gendered violence in the Indian society, Jaisy A. Joseph points out how shame reinforces the culture of violence and abuse. As a solution, she proposes solidarity through a preferential option for survivors. In sexual abuse of women and nuns in particular by the clergy, Kochurani Abraham identifies the unresolved gender question and the consequent power equations that exist between clergy and nuns. She calls for a reconsideration of the traditional concept of priesthood and sacramental power.

The following five articles deal with developmental issues and seminary formation in the backdrop of the abuse crisis. After delineating some of the developmental issues that may lead to abusive behaviour, Konrad J. Noronha underscores the importance of integrity in the life of the clergy. Katarina Schuth points out the need of addressing clericalism during the seminary formation itself. According to her, more attention has to be given to the development of affective maturity in seminarians, especially by evaluating behaviours that exhibit an attitude of clericalism, and seminarians should be trained to “discard any sense of being in a privileged and distinct clerical caste.” Based on a survey among seminarians in Indonesia, FX. Eko Armada Riyanto discusses sexual problems faced by seminarians, and emphasises that greater attention is to be given to formation for sexual maturity. Gabriel Mathias reflects on the implications of the abuse scandal and proposes steps to be taken for formation for an integrated celibate living. Jeevaraj Lourdhu underlines the need of holistic human formation. Outlining different models of formation, he calls for a paradigm shift in formation that focuses on psycho-sexual integration and affective maturity.

Shiju K. Lavy elaborates upon the ecclesiastical legislations – of the universal Church and Indian Church – for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons from sexual abuse, and their development and limitations. He points out failures in implementing the legislations and proposes a few remedies. Based on a qualitative study, Ma. Leah Ann C. Espina reviews factors that led priests to abusive behaviour and proposes prevention strategies and appropriate rehabilitation programs. She underscores the need of an approach based on justice and compassion both for victims and perpetrators.

There are two articles on other relevant topics. Kenneth R. Himes, on the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, undertakes an ethical evaluation the bombing. On the basis of the revised history of the event, and utilizing the just war theory, he argues that the decision to attack those cities was morally flawed. However, unfortunately, many Americans continue to uphold military practices that violate basic ethical norms, Himes points out. The same may be the case regarding many other countries, and hence this essay calls for an evaluation of the continuing practices of war. Jojo M. Fung offers a theological reflection on COVID-19 and its implications for the care of the earth, for the Church and for our relationship with God.

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