

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners,

I think the essay below which appeared in the *National Catholic Register* has some important things to say about the crimes some members of the clergy have committed. The author, Msgr. Charles Pope, is pastor of Holy Comforter-St. Cyprian Church in Washington.

With my prayers,
Father Conley

Active Homosexuality in the Priesthood Helped Cause This Crisis by Msgr. Charles Pope

"...in the past two decades — and now, once again — the reputation of the priesthood and episcopacy has been sullied by the deeply sinful, unchaste, unnatural and unconscionable acts of some priests and bishops. They have harmed many victims and disgraced the priesthood. They have engaged in great evils, often repeatedly and with no accountability. But they will answer to God for what they have done.

Add to this the cover-ups, secret payments, the neglect to follow up on many complaints and the seeming refusal to look to the real roots of the problem, and the result is a total collapse of any credibility or moral authority that bishops and priests need to have in order to effectively preach and teach the faith.

I know that words cannot really describe the anger, grief and disappointment of our lay faithful, many of whom have tried to defend the Church, the Bride of Christ and our Mother whom we love.

As a priest of Jesus Christ, I am angry and dismayed that the honorable Sacrament of Holy Orders has been so besmirched and dishonored by the actions of some. I know I do not need to tell most of God's good people that the majority of priests and bishops have been faithful and are zealous and generous servants. I had insisted until recently that the number of malefactors is very small. But frankly, I must say that, while still a minority, the number is far more extensive than I thought.

And while I have at times wanted to insist that the percentage of clerical offenders is the same or lower as other groups of men, I must also say that whatever the percent, the crime is far worse. This is because people entrust to us the most precious and necessary thing they need for salvation — their faith. For any of us to mislead God's faithful or strip them of the trust they need to attain deeper faith is the worst sort of malpractice. And there are clerics up to the highest ranks who have done this, here and throughout the world. For clergy to go so far as to seduce others to sin is a horrific crime.

Jesus said of these who do not repent of such seduction and malpractice: *Scandals will inevitably arise: but woe to him through whom they come. It is better for him that a millstone be hung about his neck, and that he be cast into the sea, than that he should scandalize one of these little ones.*

(Luke 17:1-2)

Whatever new policies some wish to suggest, let's be clear that we already have a policy. It's called the Sixth Commandment. The policy is also set forth in many other clearly worded texts from the Scriptures that forbid homosexual acts, adultery, fornication and other lewd conduct. The Sixth Commandment is clear — there is a universal call to chastity, and no one is exempt. There is simply no provision for sexual intercourse or sexual touching outside of valid

marriage, and those who are married live chastity by complete fidelity to one another. No one is ever permitted under any circumstances to engage in sexual acts with anyone to whom they are not validly married. There are no separate rules for heterosexuals or homosexuals. There is to be no sexual intercourse or touching outside of valid marriage.

And this of course leads to the most-avoided topic related to this scandal — the problem of active homosexuality in the priesthood. An *honest* discussion of this current crisis cannot avoid addressing the issue — shouts of homophobia, intolerance, bigotry and scapegoating notwithstanding.

It is evident that the vast majority of the cases involving both the sexual abuse of minors and of adults involve male victims. The 2004 John Jay Report (which was commissioned by the U.S. bishops themselves, found that 81 percent of the victims were male and 78 percent of all victims were post-pubescent. Thus, though legally still minors, they were sexually mature in the physical sense. So, the large majority of cases involved attraction by homosexuals to young men who, though legally minors, were physically and sexually mature males, not little children. This is not pedophilia. It is homosexual attraction. Regarding the sexual abuse and harassment of seminarians or priests by bishops or other clergy, obviously 100 percent of those victims were male.

In summary, the large majority of the cases involve sexual misbehavior by priests with same-sex attraction.

We should be clear that most people with same sex attraction do not commit sexual crimes or seek to seduce or sexually abuse younger men. Many people with same-sex attraction do live chastely and follow the teachings of the Church. This is not a sweeping characterization of all people with same-sex attraction.

But the statistical evidence of the recent scandals shows a highly disproportionate level of homosexual involvement. The numbers are well-demonstrated in both experience and in the John Jay Report.

All this demonstrates that seminaries and the priesthood are not good places for those with deep-seated same-sex attraction. It does not take an anthropology or psychology degree to figure this out. Putting a man with same-sex attraction in a seminary is no more advisable than putting a heterosexual man in a woman's dormitory where he shares shower facilities and close quarters with women. A man with same-sex attraction is going to face temptations in all-male settings that would test the strongest.

Add to this the possibility that other men of same-sex attraction are there and soon enough a subculture sets up where temptations are fierce, and compromises and liaisons soon emerge. And this is what we have seen in the "gay" subculture that is demonstrably existent among a significant number of clergy in the Church.

An honest discussion of the recent crisis needs to include a clear setting forth and analysis of these facts. Ignoring them and staying silent through political correctness is malpractice at this point. We must speak charitably and clearly about this. We must not allow charges of intolerance, homophobia and scapegoating to suppress a frank discussion and analysis of the link of much of this misbehavior to active homosexuals, and a subculture among some of them that tolerates and promotes behavior which God forbids.

Pope Francis recently reiterated the policy that the Catholic Church cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those

who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called “gay culture.” The Pope indicated that these acts or deep-seated tendencies can lead to scandals and can compromise the life of the seminary, as well as the man himself and his future priesthood.

This story was underreported, likely because it does not fit the narrative the press wants to create regarding Pope Francis. Nevertheless, any conversation that seeks to find real traction or solutions is going to have to include the connection to homosexuality — not as a single cause, but as an essential and highly important one. And honest discussion must also include analyses of institutional problems such as secrecy, unaccountability, abuse of power, and so on.

In short, it is time for a truthful conversation free from political correctness and forbidden topics. If our bishops are not willing to engage a full and honest airing of all the causes, the anger of God’s people will only increase, and the credibility of the bishops and the Church will sink from near zero to absolute zero.

The Church should be self-correcting, but we have not been so. Too often it has taken a secular state and threats of severe legal action to compel us to be more inwardly accountable....

Pray for a necessary house-cleaning, an honest conversation about all the causes of this crisis, and the purification the Lord wants for his Church. The episcopacy, the priesthood and the very credibility of the Church hang in the balance.

“Jesus Christ; Priest, Prophet and King” is the subject of our next faith formation class. **The class will begin on Thursday, September 13.** The subsequent classes will be on September 27, October 11 and 25, November 8 and 29 and December 13. This DVD series will be presented by Bishop Robert Barron. He is a very popular speaker and has many presentations on YouTube.

We will continue our usual format on Thursday nights for this seven part series. The cost is just \$10 for the series to defray some of the food costs. You may sign up in the foyer or by contacting Fr Conley at frconley@comcast.net

Mark Your Calendars now-Retreat Day on Divine Healing on Saturday, October 6 from 930a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The day will focus on Healing Prayer with presentations on praying for physical and inner healing. The retreat day will conclude with the evening Mass and opportunities to receive Prayer for healing and the Sacrament of Anointing. More details will follow.

IGNITE MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GROUP –

6th, 7th and 8th grade - We'll have our 2nd Annual trip to River Valley Ranch in Manchester, MD, for their Fall Youth Retreat. The trip was a huge success last year, and we're looking forward to another great experience in nature, in Christ and in each other.

We'll leave SMB on Friday, September 7th at 4:30, and return to SMB on Sunday afternoon, September 9th. We'll attend Mass Sunday morning at St. Bartholomew in Manchester. Cost is \$150 per camper, which includes programs, meals, activities, and housing accommodations. We'll need a \$50 deposit by August 20th. Please contact Karen Krechman at karen.krechman@gmail.com or 301- 751- 3200 for more information.

CCD REGISTRATION will be held on the weekends of September 8 & 9, and September 15 & 16, after all the Masses in Sue Wolfe's office, and next Monday – Thursday from 10AM – 5PM in her office.

Middle School starts on Wednesday, September 19th from 7-8:30, and Elementary School starts on September 23rd following the 10:00 Mass.

OUR CHOIRS NEED YOUR HELP!!!

We are now asking SMB members to consider joining our 10 AM or our noon choirs. Our music ministry provides beauty, joy, comfort, inspiration, and prayer. This is possible only with the generous sharing of the time and talent of our committed choir members. If you can carry a tune and want to join a group of loving, caring Christians, please consider joining us! If interested, please call Kaye Oliver at 240-254-2463.

ALTAR SERVERS are needed for our weekend Masses. Parents with children who are interested should contact Karen Bray at 301-274-4469. Servers must be in the fourth grade or above to be servers.

RELIGIOUS GOOD STORE WILL BE HAVING SELECT ITEMS ON SALE FROM 50 -70% OFF ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, AFTER ALL THE MASSES.

THERE WILL BE NO MORNING MASS THIS THURSDAY, AUG. 30.

Please support our advertising sponsors. This week we recognize Timber Creek Nurseries, LLC

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THIS WEEK:

SUN: 8am Jessie Chlysta, 10am Maurice Long, Sr.,

12N: Parishioners, **MON:** 8am Mary Theresa Bowen,

TUES: 8am Helen Wells, **WED:** 8am Jessie Chlysta,

THURS: 8am Anna V. Garity, **FRI:** 9:30am Larry Wood,

SAT: 9am Jessie Chlysta, 4pm Paul Istvan.

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR DAILY PRAYERS:

Stephen Balenger, Mary Bowes, Deacon Gene Burroughs, Brenda Callahan, Frances Card, Joe Cross, Agnes Curtis, Chuck Davis, Susan Welch Day, Kendall Farrell, George Fassel, Arlene Gandolfi, Martha Gehring, James Gibson, Zynae Green, Judy Istvan-Windsor, Irma Johnson, Regina Kijesky, Marie Knobel, Lillian Komar, Susie Logan, Jim Middleton, Mary Emma Middleton, Larry Miller, Joseph Mona, Wayne Mullings, Ryan Myers, Joseph Quade, Mary Reeves, Sylvene Savoy, William Leon Savoy, Edna Sweeney, Eva Washington, Beth Weise, Pat Werner, Brice Zimmer.

OFFERTORY COLLECTION LAST WEEKEND:

\$9,234.56. The unidentified donations totaled \$489.00. We received \$50.00 for our School Support.