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by Christopher White

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As U.S. Catholics await the release of the Vatican's report on former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who was laicized by Pope Francis for serial sexual abuse, a new podcast chronicles the scourge of clergy abuse that has plagued the Catholic Church for more than seven decades.

"Crisis," released on Sept. 9, is produced by The Catholic Project, an initiative of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Among the more than three dozen individuals interviewed for the series — which includes firsthand testimonials from abuse survivors, priests, bishops, lawyers and accountability advocates — is Tom Roberts, longtime editor for NCR.

Roberts recounts how NCR was the first news outlet to dare to report on clergy abuse in the Catholic press, dating back to the 1980s. Now, more than 30 years later, the 2018 revelations about McCarrick, former archbishop of Washington, D.C., and the release of a Pennsylvania grand jury report that chronicled seven decades of abuse of more than 1,000 victims at the hands of 300 priests ushered in a new wave of Catholics repulsed by decades of cover-up, says Roberts.

"The idea of clerical culture being at the heart of this, especially hierarchical culture, was beginning to take hold," he states in the debut episode. "What has kept this really disturbing the Catholic community is the cover-up."

Podcast host Karna Lozoya, executive director of communications at Catholic University, said that although she's worked in Catholic media for nearly two decades, in creating the podcast over the last year, she was surprised by how much she didn't know about the history of the sexual abuse scandal.

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"As you get into it, you realize there are so many more layers to it," she told NCR.

Lozoya said that her approach to the topic was to "get away from the media headlines and to talk to the top experts who are addressing this issue in so many different areas," adding that one encouraging finding was how many individuals

there are working in this issue, including psychologists, sociologists and academic researchers, and the collaborative nature of their work.

In 2019, America Media released "Deliver Us," a similar podcast in which host Maggi Van Dorn considered "Will the Catholic Church's sex abuse crisis ever end?" Over the years, scores of books have been published on clergy abuse, along with the 2016 Academy Award winning film "Spotlight," which captures The Boston Globe's groundbreaking reporting on the issue in 2002.

Lozoya said that based on early reaction to the podcast, she believes "people are still looking for answers as to how the sexual abuse crisis could happen in the Catholic Church." As Catholics wait for the Vatican's findings on McCarrick and how he ascended the ranks of church leadership without being held to account for his actions, "now is almost the perfect time to bring up the sex abuse crisis again," she said.

"This is a great time to revisit everything that happened in 2018 and to look at that summer from the vantage point where we've had two years to think about this and to really analyze what the sexual abuse crisis is to the Catholic Church and how we as a church are going to respond in a very decided and decisive manner," she said.

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