

## Vatican seeks 'transparency' but we see through that

Eugene Cullen Kennedy | May. 3, 2010 | Bulletins from the Human Side

Last week, within three days, bishops from three different countries -- Germany, Ireland, and Belgium -- resigned because of being involved, passively or actively or actively and passively in the sex abuse crisis.

Vatican spokesman, Fr. Federico Lombardi announced that the church wanted 'truth, transparency, and credibility.'

Fr. Lombardi must have chosen a safe place to stand lest lightning should strike him as he unveiled a trio of goals you would need the Hubble telescope to find in the Vatican's handling of its greatest sadness since the sixteenth century.

Catholics see right through this call for sudden and unaccustomed virtue in church dealings. This is deathbed repentance after the near death experience of sex abusing clergy being exposed for exposing themselves all over the world.

One feels sorry for Pope Benedict XVI, who seems unsure of where to step on his travels and avoids kissing the earth as his predecessor did, perhaps fearing that it is seeded with the land mines of more bad news. Anne Burke, now a justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, served on the first lay commission to whom, with transparent briefness, the bishops entrusted the investigation of the sex abuse in 2002. She describes then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as the best prepared and most receptive of all the hierarchs with whom its members dealt. Why then does this man with a good head and a great heart still seem flustered about dealing with and bringing this crisis to an end?

He cannot see what lay people see in the resignation of bishops from different countries and the revelations of clerical abuse even in remote places and different hemispheres, the shameful revelations about slapping and sexually abusing students in elite Catholic schools in Europe, and the questionable handling and/or cover ups of sexual abuse by prominent hierarchs. Everyday Catholics see that the hierarchical church is falling apart in chunks all around the world.

The pope has spent much of his career inside the Eiffel Tower-like hierarchical structure of the temporal Church and, with his eyes fixed on Trent, he cannot see what is transparent to believers -- that the hierarchical system was the Petri dish for the incubation and growth of the foul scandal and that it cannot treat or contain the infection that it bears within itself.

Pope Benedict is uncomfortable as he tries to ride out the tremors of the sex abuse scandal by clinging to the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica. He cannot see that hierarchical design contains all the elements found in sex abuse: the division of people into higher and lower categories with lay people on the bottom; the division of the sexes; one with power and one without; the establishment of an all male assembly in which triumphing over other men is the way to success and power, and how membership in this clerical version of the World Wrestling Foundation gives a man unearned and unquestioned claims on the trust of others along with privileges that deliver both social preference and public protection. The hierarchical code uses secrecy to delay, obscure, or

cloak over if not cover up the crimes, mistakes, or blunders of sex abusing clergy and bishops.

Hierarchy resembles the Eiffel Tower not only because of its three levels but as a creaking structure of another century strange things grow in the dark damp places between its joints and fretwork. Engraved on its front is the live-by, die-by mantra, "For the Good of the Church" that confers a threadbare nobility on cover-ups, closed mouths, and rampant craziness on the part of the clergy.

The poor pope is unsteady because he is doggedly trying to refurbish a system that does not match the human person. Catholics can easily see through its decaying lattice work. Hierarchical settings are transparent and to try now to cover them with the bunting of virtue accentuates rather than shields their fault lines.

Catholics see that there is something seriously wrong in the official way of dealing with a scandal too deep for the tears that have been shed by the innocent. It is only a question of time before everybody sees through the defenses of the hierarchical style by which its clerical supporters try to prop it up. With sadness spreading like a plague from the almost daily diagnosis of heartbreaking problems Catholics should not accept a newly invoked form of transparent hypocrisy.

If bishops want to help the beleaguered pope, let them lead the way back to the collegiality that was the original structure of the church instead of criticizing the media for reporting the tragic story whose end is not in sight. Collegiality is healthy, it preserves the pope at the center of the church, and recognizes its members to be a People of God in this world. That kind of health is the only cure for the corrupt style now calling in a cracking voice for truth, transparency and credibility.

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