

Cardinal Burke links sex abuse to disrespect for canon law

Thomas C. Fox | Sep. 2, 2012 NCR Today



Cardinal Raymond Burke, addressing a Kenyan canon law convention

Aug. 28, linked the clergy sex abuse scandal with a failure by priests to respect canon law.

Burke, Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the Vatican's highest court, said: "It is profoundly sad to note, for instance, how the failure of knowledge and application of the canon law, which was indeed still in force, contributed significantly to the scandal of the sexual abuse of minors by the clergy in our some parts of the world."

Burke's remarks appeared on the CatholicCulture.org [1] website.

"The years of a lack of knowledge of the Church's discipline and even of a presumption that such discipline was no longer fitting to the nature of the Church indeed reaped gravely harmful fruits in the Church," Burke said. Going on to say:

For example, I think of the pervasive violation of the liturgical law of the Church, of the revolution in catechesis which often rendered the teaching of the faith vacuous and confused, if not erroneous; of the breakdown of the discipline of priestly formation and priestly life, of the abandonment of the essential elements of religious life and the devastating loss of fundamental direction in many congregations of religious Sisters, Brothers and priests; of the loss of the identity of charitable, educational and healthcare institutions bearing the name of Catholic; and the failure of respect for the nature of marriage and the time-proven process for judging claims of nullity of marriage in ecclesiastical tribunals.

"The 'hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture,' which has tried to hijack the renewal mandated by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, is marked by a pervasively antinomian culture, epitomized by the Paris student riots of 1968, and has had a particularly devastating effect on the Church's discipline," he was reported to have said.

"From the above considerations," he concluded. "it should be clear that the knowledge of and respect for canonical discipline is indispensable to the Church's response to the call to a new evangelization."

Burke has argued on more than one occasion that lack of obedience to canon law is the prime cause of today's church problems.

It was in this light -- a failure of obedience -- he recently criticized the Leadership Conference of Women Religious for straying away from true church authority.

He warned that "the rogue organization" could be shut down if it fails to implement the reforms demanded by the Vatican.

"If it can't be reformed, then it doesn't have a right to continue," Burke said.

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[1] <http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=15426>