

**From the U.S. CATHOLIC, an excerpt from a promised article by Bishop Fritz Lobinger, retired bishop of Aliwal, South Africa.**

Mmusong is a small but vibrant Catholic community of about 700 high in the mountains of South Africa. On Sundays the simple church building is full, but most of the time not for Mass, only for a service of the Word. Mass is something rare in Mmusong. The priest of the distant parish center serves nine communities, and he is able to celebrate Mass in Mmusong only once a month.

That distant community of Mmusong is by no means desolate. There is no Sunday when they would feel lost. They have several teams of trained leaders who prepare themselves during the week to conduct a lively and meaningful Sunday service. The people will thus hear a well-prepared sermon every week, even when there is no priest.

There are teams of others who conduct funerals wearing liturgical garb, signifying that what these leaders do is the liturgy of the church, not a private prayer. Similarly there are trained catechism teachers, youth leaders, and leaders of gospel-sharing groups. The priest of this parish has helped each of the nine communities in his care to become a self-ministering community.

As the bishop of the diocese, I would visit Mmusong once a year, listening to the community and solemnly blessing its leaders. Each time I went home with the same painful question in my heart: "Why can I only give a blessing to those leaders? Why can I not ordain some of them? When will the day come when I can ordain the proven leaders of our communities?"

I know that if The Church continues to only admit celibate, university-trained candidates to ordination, there will be no hope of ever overcoming the scarcity of sacraments. I equally know that the early church indeed did ordain local leaders who were married, had only received brief local training, were chosen by the local community, but had proven their worthiness over some time.

I am not alone. There are hundreds of bishops who feel that renewing this ancient tradition is the only solution. There are hundreds of other bishops, however, who feel that ordaining local leaders would be dangerous. They fear it might solve one big problem by creating even bigger ones.

The ordination of married candidates would unavoidably raise questions: Why could some priests be married while others had to remain celibate? Why did some have to go through university education while others could be trained on weekends? Are we not creating two classes of priests? Others fear a kind of clericalization of the laity, whereby one pious person could forever dominate a congregation.

It is indeed a complicated question whether the shortage of priests could perhaps be solved by ordaining proven local leaders. The question will not become easier if we keep silent about it. If discussed by many, it will become more apparent that certain proposals will not work while others will ...

**This article will appear in its entirety in an upcoming U.S. CATHOLIC.  
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**From the Post.ie**

### **Vatican guilty of unholy compassion for paedophiles**

December 20

By Vincent Browne

In 1922, the Vatican promulgated an instruction to do with what it called *crimen sollicitationis* (the crime of solicitation within the confessional) and what it called the “worst crime” - the sexual abuse of children. The document was issued in Latin. No authoritative version was produced in English.

The document was circulated only to bishops and under terms of strict secrecy.

A new version of the guidelines was produced in 1962, but this, according to the Murphy Commission, was unknown within the Dublin diocese until some time in the 1990s.

Desmond Connell, the former archbishop, told the commission he had never seen the 1962 document, nor had he met anyone who had seen it.

John Dolan, the chancellor of the diocese and a monsignor, whose job is to ensure that the administrative records of the diocese are kept safe, said he didn't know that “lurking in the very end, at the very back [of the decree *crimen sollicitationis*], was a little paragraph on the “worst crime”.

He was unaware of the 1962 document until an Australian bishop discovered towards the end of the 1990s that it was still valid. Until then, he did not know of any guidelines by the Vatican on the issue of clerical child sexual abuse.

The Murphy Commission commented on how “unusual” it was, “whereby a document setting out the procedure for dealing with clerical child sexual abuse was in existence but virtually no one knew about it or used it”.

In 1996, victims of clerical abuse hounded the bishops into devising a ‘framework document’, setting out guidelines for dealing with allegations of abuse. John Dolan said: “They [the authors of the framework document] did not feel Rome was supporting them in dealing with this issue ... they were meeting an onslaught of

complaints, and Rome was pulling any particular solid ground that they had from under them”.

The 1922 and 1962 Vatican instructions on dealing with allegations of clerical child sex abuse demanded absolute secrecy in the conduct of investigations. The secrecy was so pervasive that, to some, it seemed to demand that the complaint also be kept secret from the state authorities.

Cannon 1341 states that the bishop is to “start a judicial administrative procedure, for the imposition or the declaration of penalties, only when he perceives that neither by fraternal correction nor reproof, nor by any methods of pastoral care, can the scandal be sufficiently repaired, justice restored, and the offender reformed”.

The Murphy Commission notes: “This canon was interpreted to mean that bishops are required to attempt to reform the abusers in the first place.” In Dublin, efforts were made to reform abusing priests by sending them to therapeutic centres. But, according to the commission, “the archdiocese seems to have been reluctant to go beyond the reform process, even when it was abundantly clear that the reform process had failed”.

But, more tellingly, the commission stated they “could find very little evidence, particularly in the early decades of the commission’s remit, of any attempt by church authorities to restore justice to the victims”.

It says the question of harm to the victims never seemed to have been considered by the archdiocese.

In considering whether a person is guilty of the “worst crime”, canon law states a person must have “deliberately” violated the canon law. In considering the issue of guilt under canon law, the Canon Law Society of Britain and Ireland has commented: “Among the factors which may seriously diminish their imputability (guilt) in such cases (cases of clerical child sexual abuse) is paedophilia ...

“Those who have studied this matter in detail have concluded that proven paedophiles are often subjected to urges and impulses which are in effect beyond their control ... because of the influence of paedophilia (the abuser) may not be liable, by reason of at least diminished immutability (guilt) to any canonical penalty or perhaps to only a mild penalty, to a formal warning or reproof or to a penal remedy.”

The commission says it “finds it a matter of grave concern that, under canon law, a serial child abuser might receive more favourable treatment from the archdiocese or from Rome, by reason of the fact that he was diagnosed as a paedophile”.

What all this says is that the issue is not just a matter of negligence or complicity in clerical child sexual abuse on the part of individual bishops - it is the culture of the Catholic Church, a culture shaped by the church authorities in Rome and transmitted and refined in dioceses.

A culture that hides the Church’s own guidelines concerning what it itself rhetorically

said was the “worst crime”; that caused the Vatican authorities to pull the ground from priests who were trying to draft guidelines on abuse; that prioritises the abusers over the abused; that has been essentially indifferent to the harm caused to abuse victims; that regards paedophiles as objects of sympathy and compassion.

A few more episcopal resignations, with a presumption that these settle the matter, is just a continuance of the culture of denial of the Catholic Church’s institutional and cultural complicity in the criminality of clerical child sexual abuse. ...

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### **This letter to the editor appeared in Delaware Online.**

Catholic Church has been taken over by extremists

I’ve been following the editorials and letters regarding the Catholic Church’s stand on the priest abuse scandal and abortion. One article asked if the Catholic Church is now a one-issue constituency. As a practicing Catholic, I can tell you, yes, it is.

Sadly, the church I grew up in, the church that taught social justice, workers’ rights, that opposed war, has been hijacked by right-wing extremists.

Several election cycles ago, the Christian right, which had always derided Catholics as not being Christian enough, embraced Catholics in order to further their own political agenda. As a consequence, liberal Catholics like myself are no longer welcome in the Catholic Church.

The priest abuse scandal and cover-up are reprehensible. Yet, the church leaders have given only tepid mea culpas for the abuse scandal.

And none of the pedophile priests was ever denied communion. Indeed, they were allowed to say Mass and distribute communion. The church hierarchy and right-wing Catholics are obsessed with abortion to the exclusion of all other social and life issues.

Carolyn Matkowsky  
Wilmington

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### **Another letter to the editor from [Independent.ie](http://Independent.ie)**

#### **Dubious past of Catholic Church**

The Vatican has excommunicated and defrocked the Roman Catholic archbishop Emmanuel Milingo for supporting married priests and appointing bishops.

Pope Pius XII has controversially been moved closer to sainthood, despite the protests of Jewish organisations and the fact that the secret Vatican archives from 1939 to 1958 are not due to be opened until 2014 at the earliest.

Pope John Paul II is being moved towards sainthood with unprecedented speed, despite presiding over an organisation which harboured and protected paedophiles internationally.

With a history like this to be interpreted, it is no wonder that the Roman Catholic Church wants to retain its current control of education in Ireland.

*David French*  
*Wroclaw, Poland*

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**Please send articles and your comments to [tony@tonyercolano.com](mailto:tony@tonyercolano.com)**