

Just one article on the story of the week. As the Church faces the international issue of the sexual abuse of minors, the Vatican responds by accusing the press of bias. This article, by E.J. Dionne Jr., appeared on the Washington Post Web site on March 26.

### **How the Catholic Church could end its sex scandal**

How in the name of God can the Roman Catholic Church put the pedophilia scandal behind it?

I do not invoke God's name lightly. The church's problem is, above all, theological and religious. Its core difficulty is that rather than drawing on its Christian resources, the church has acted almost entirely on the basis of this world's imperatives and standards.

It has worried about lawsuits. It has worried about its image. It has worried about itself as an institution and about protecting its leaders from public scandal. In so doing, it has made millions of Catholics righteously furious and aggravated every one of its problems.

So instead of going away, the scandal keeps coming back, lately in a form that seems to challenge Pope Benedict XVI himself. It was sickening to read Thursday's New York Times story reporting that Vatican officials "did not defrock a priest who molested as many as 200 deaf boys, even though several American bishops repeatedly warned them that failure to act on the matter could embarrass the church."

The priest, the Rev. Lawrence Murphy, worked at a Wisconsin school for deaf boys from 1950 to 1974. He died in 1998.

In Germany, the pope's home country, more than 300 victims have come forward in recent weeks, and Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose party has Catholic roots, called the scandal "a major challenge for our society."

In the case of Murphy, the Vatican did what every institution does in a scandal: It issued a statement putting the best face on its decisions.

"In light of the facts that Father Murphy was elderly and in very poor health, and that he was living in seclusion and no allegations of abuse had been reported in over 20 years," the Rev. Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, said, "the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith suggested that the Archbishop of Milwaukee give consideration to addressing the situation by, for example, restricting Father Murphy's public ministry and requiring that Father Murphy accept full responsibility for the gravity of his acts." Murphy, he noted, "died approximately four months later without further incident."

The statement is representative of what's wrong with the church's response. It is bureaucratic and self-exculpatory, even asking us to feel for this priest because he was "elderly" and "in very poor health."

The spokesman called the case "tragic," but tragic does not do justice to the outrage here. Yes, the statement included an acknowledgement of the "particularly vulnerable victims who suffered terribly from what [Murphy] did," and that he had violated his "sacred trust." Is this the best Father Lombardi could do?

During his visit to the United States in 2008, Pope Benedict started moving toward a better approach. He seemed genuinely pained and angered by the scandal. He repeatedly apologized and said he was "deeply ashamed" of the abusive priests who had "betrayed" their ministry. But while this was a step in the right direction, apologizing for the misbehavior of individual priests will never be enough. The church has been reluctant to speak plainly about the heart of its problem: In handling these cases, it put institutional self-protection first.

The church needs to show it understands the flaws of its own internal culture by examining its own conscience, its own practices, its own reflexives when faced with challenge. As the church rightly teaches, acknowledging the true nature of our sin is the one and only path to redemption and forgiveness.

Of course, this will not be easy. Enemies of the church will use this scandal to discredit the institution no matter what the Vatican does. Many in the hierarchy thought they were doing the right thing, however wrong their decisions were. And the church is not alone in facing problems of this sort.

But defensiveness and institutional self-protection are not Gospel values. "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it."

The church needs to cast aside the lawyers, the PR specialists and its own worst instincts, which are human instincts. Benedict could go down as one of the greatest popes in history if he were willing to risk all in the name of institutional self-examination, painful but liberating public honesty, and true contrition.

And then comes something even harder: Especially during Lent, the church teaches that forgiveness requires Catholics to have "a firm purpose of amendment." The church will have to show not only that it has learned from this scandal, but also that it's truly willing to transform itself.

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**Thank God that there remain many different expressions of the Roman Catholic priesthood. Clifford J. Levy writes for the New York Times.**

### **A Flock Grows Right at Home for a Priest in Ukraine**

RUDNO, Ukraine — Let the rest of Europe be convulsed by debates over whether the celibacy of Roman Catholic priests is causing sex abuse scandals like the one now unfolding in Germany. Here in western Ukraine, many Catholic priests are

married, fruitful and multiplying — with the Vatican's blessing. The many feet scampering around the Volovetskiy home are testament to that.

The family's six children range from Pavlina, 21, to Taras, 9. In the middle is Roman, 16, who wants to be a Catholic priest when he grows up. Just like his father.

Dad is the Rev. Yuriy Volovetskiy, who leads a small parish here and whose wife, Vera, teaches religious school. The Volovetskiys serve in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which believes that celibate priests are not necessarily better priests.

Ukrainian Greek Catholics represent a branch of Catholicism that is distinct from the far more prevalent Roman Catholic one. The Ukrainian church is loyal to the pope in Rome, and its leader is a cardinal and major archbishop.

But it conducts services that resemble those in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. In religious terms, it follows the Eastern Rite, not the Latin one that is customary in Roman Catholicism.

Historically, the Vatican appears to have tolerated the traditions and attitude toward celibacy of the so-called Eastern Rite Catholics in order to retain a foothold in regions where Orthodox Christianity has dominated. But this exception suggests that the Vatican view on celibacy is not as rigid or monolithic as it might otherwise appear.

And so home life with the Volovetskiys offers this portrait: a father who is a Father, wearing a Catholic clerical collar, doting on his children like any other parent, even organizing an impromptu family musical recital. ("I will sing for you!" said Irena, 13, while she plucked the strings of the bandura, the Ukrainian national instrument).

Ukrainian priests, while reluctant to criticize Pope Benedict XVI over his unyielding stance on the celibacy requirement, said permitting them to raise families enriched their ability to tend to parishioners' needs.

"It is important when a priest has an understanding of not only himself," said Father Volovetskiy, 45, who entered a seminary when he was in his 20s. "Having a family gives a priest a deeper understanding of how to relate to other people and help other people. It is more natural, it makes more sense, for a priest to have a wife and children."

The Rev. Roman Kravchyk, 50, a senior Ukrainian Greek Catholic official, said he was often asked by seminary students whether they should try to have a family or remain celibate (sexual relations outside marriage are not an option). He said he

did not strongly encourage either, though he pointed out the advantages of marriage.

“It seems to me that when a priest is not married, it is difficult for him to explain things to parishioners,” Father Kravchyk said. “Because he has not lived through them.”

He added that celibacy would seem to go against human nature.

“Having a sexual life, no one can escape that,” he said. “We are all living people. We are not stones. Though there have to be limits.”

Father Kravchyk and Father Volovetskiy, who were interviewed here in western Ukraine before the scandal broke out in Germany this month, declined to address the issue of whether sexual abuse by priests was connected to celibacy.

The Vatican has rejected such a link. Senior church officials have said that if celibacy was the cause of these scandals, then there would not be problems of child sex abuse outside the priesthood. Still, whether or not a link exists, publicity about the German cases has touched off a renewed debate over the issue.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which has roughly five million adherents in Ukraine, is one of a small number of Eastern Rite Catholic churches. Others also recognize the pope’s leadership and permit married priests. These churches account for only about 1 or 2 percent of all Catholics.

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic leader, Cardinal Lubomyr Husar, is celibate, as is typical among the leadership of Eastern Rite Catholic churches. The cardinal has not spoken out in recent days on the issue of celibacy, though he has said that he does not think that ending the requirement would help the Vatican confront the declining number of men who want to become priests.

But Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Vienna, suggested this month that in response to the German abuse scandal, the Vatican should question its policies, including celibacy. His spokesman later clarified that Cardinal Schönborn was not calling for abolishing the requirement.

Here in Rudno, a suburb of Lviv, the largest city in western Ukraine, Father Volovetskiy has a small church, St. Volodymyr the Great, that hints at a melding of Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. Inside, there are depictions of Jesus Christ similar to those seen on Russian icons, as well as photos of Pope John Paul II.

At his home the other day, it was clear how Father Volovetskiy's life diverged from that of a Roman Catholic priest. Mrs. Volovetskiy, 44, was teaching religious school on the first floor to 20 or so young children, including their youngest, Taras.

Upstairs, Pavlina, their eldest, who is studying to be an archivist and a religious school teacher, was making lunch. The others, including Yuriy, 18, and Khrystyna, 10, showed off the house. On one wall was an old wedding photo — Father Volovetskiy carrying his bride, Mrs. Volovetskiy.

The children said they were proud that their father was a priest, though they acknowledged that it was a challenge always having to set an example.

“People may not know you well, but they know who your father is, and they are watching you in the street and in the school,” said Roman, the 16-year-old. “It’s a little like being a target.”

Father Volovetskiy said having children changed how he approached his calling.

“It helps me to view the world through the eyes of others,” he said. “And it helps people trust me more. They see that there is a priest who has a family, and they see how we live. We are part of society.”

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**Have a blessed Holy Week and Passover.  
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