

Church and Pedophilia

Don't let the children go to them



Federico Tulli

1st Edition

Why Only Now?

After decades of silence, and despite a code of silence adopted by the catholic church hierarchy, the scandal of pedophile priests has broken out in Europe as well with great virulence. Dozens of thousands of verified victims testify an alarming vast, distressing phenomenon. What else could we call what happened in Ireland and surfaced in 2009 at the end of two long, very thorough government investigations?

The Ryan Report - five volumes by the Commission to Inquire into CHild Abuse, published in May 2009 - includes the results of nine years of investigations that covered fifty years, 1930's thru 80's. The Ryan Reports collects testimonies by about 2,500 victims, who are however deemed to be 30,000, with over 100 catholic institutions involved. The offenders are about 800, between priests and nuns, but their offenses are barred by the statute of limitations and their names are to remain secret forever under an agreement with Dublin's government. Top Irish catholic church prelates have imposed an oath of secrecy over the whole period of time subjected to the inquiry. According to investigators, the bishops knew about what was going on in their dioceses, but had regularly covered the culprits of those violent actions by defining them as 'rituals'.

Also the Irish government hasn't come of well. It has in fact been verified that the Department of Education has either ignored or dismissed reports of child abuse, thus showing its total indifference towards an awful condition the children were forced in. In their reports covering the Forties, inspectors give accounts of pupils beaten up to the point of breaking their bones, and even then no action was taken to protect them.

At the end of November 2009, a new government investigation, known as the Murphy Report, definitely undermines the Irish church credibility. At first sight the new scandal appears to be smaller than the one disclosed by the Ryan Report.

The government Commission in fact examines only the cases involving the Dublin diocese, by verifying the guilt of 46 priests who abused 320 victims between 1975 and 2004. In the following months, the pope receives the resignations of four Irish bishops, a shock for the public opinion in deeply catholic Ireland. Some quantify possible damages to be paid to the victims in the amount of 1.1 billion dollars, a little less than the amount of money that at the beginning of this millennium led the US catholic church on the verge of bankruptcy because of similar scandals. Pope Benedict XVI then begins to promise to shed light.

In the meantime, in February 2010, a "Germany" case breaks out. Forgetting numbers, we can sum it up with the words of Trier's bishop, Stephan Ackermann, assigned by the German Conference of Catholic Bishops to inquire into hundreds of sexual abuses involving the dioceses of Munich, Essen, Mainz and Ratisbon. In an interview with *Rhein Zeitung* in March (March 16, 2010), Ackermann said:"Yes, according to what we have learned so far there has been a cover-up. In several cases, in which there has been no real intention to clarify, and culprits were simply moved from one place to another, we must admit there has been a clear cover-up activity." And that's not all. In the following few weeks, many reports came out about child abuse cases perpetrated in the past century by priests of the church of Rome in

Austria, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, England. Different dioceses, but identical behavior: code of silence by top prelates, protection of pedophiles, silence about the victims.

The phenomenon of pedophile priest crimes shouldn't let us forget that child abuse often, too often occur within families.

Now let's consider Italy. According to dry numbers, investigators don't seem to inquire a lot into the clergy child abuse phenomenon. In the last two years, 73 were the cases of child abuse and more than 235 were the victims of priests or religious members. The number of alleged child rapists goes up to 130 if we consider also investigations and trials that are currently under way.

Certainly an even worse tragedy has been hidden, as it emerges from a 2007 report by the *Bambini Ancora onlus*. It is one of the few analyses that is available, because of the Observatory for the Contrast of Pedophilia and Child Pornography, a ministerial body established in 2007 that should update the data, is still being defined at the Ministry of Equal opportunities. The *Bambini Ancora onlus* has verified that every year 41.000 new cases of child abuse occur and that at least one out of six boys will experience some form of sexual abuse during childhood or adolescence. However, only one out of a hundred cases will be reported, in fact over 90% of these crimes are committed within family circles.

It is also important to remember the international, widespread phenomenon of the so-called "sex tourism" and online child pornography: inhuman crimes that fuel other inhuman crimes, first of all the child trafficking, which spares no population in the world.

According to the latest UN report, 2.7million people are the victims of human trafficking in the world, 80% of them are children, and most of the latter are subjected to sexual abuse. Italians contribute to fueling this heinous phenomenon. According to ECPAT (*End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking*), there are between eighty and one hundred thousands regular tourists visiting poor countries wanting children and young people for rape. In Kenya, 30% of pedophiles from abroad are Italians.

These dreadful numbers, data and statistics have been long denounced. Yet it is only after the latest pedophile scandals in the Catholic Church that something new can be perceived: a new attitude to total indignation by public opinion seems to emerge from the way the media have reported news involving the Holy See, as well as from the strong reaction of the public opinion. What has changed? What has, for instance, changed compared to the years between 2001 and 2006 when in the United States they began to inquire into the dimension of the plague of pedophilia? John Jay Study's researchers in New York, on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Bishops, have verified that between 1950 and 2002, 4.3% of diocesan priests living in the U.S. - that is 4329 clergy - have been accused of alleged child abuse. Four hundred eleven more clergy added to that number in 2004. A scandal that, until 2006, cost 2.6 billion dollars paid by the U.S. churches in compensation to the victims as a result of final judgments, but that did not raise much international attention, in any case.

And what has changed since 2008, when the news of systematic massacres - going on for over a century mainly picking on children and women by members of the Catholic Canadian Church with the local institutions' code of silence and complicity - received minimal media coverage, with only a paragraph by ANSA news agency and scattered articles limited to the

foreign affairs pages? As Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper admitted the day of his formal apology, between 1890 and 1996, at least 150.000 aborigines of the so-called First Nations, Inuit and Metis, mainly women, were raped, brutalized, murdered and buried in mass graves, some of which are still unknown. The Canadian Holocaust was perpetrated in 132 Indian residential schools, where aboriginal children were shut up after taken away from their families, in compliance with the Indian Act of 1874, drafted with the contribution of a Catholic commission. They were forced to speak only English, forget their culture and abandon their faith and replace it with the Christian or Catholic doctrine. At least 50.000 of them suffered physical and sexual violence, and went through electroshock and sterilization treatments. Many of them died in consequence of all that violence. Starting in 1969, the Indian residential schools have been progressively closed, however the last one was only closed in 1996. And after opening an investigation, the government began to admit its responsibility, and in September 2007, it finally decided to allocate two billion dollars in compensation to more than 90.000 aborigines who had reported the brutalities they had suffered. Several thousand more cases are still being examined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a government body established in June 2008, whose duty is to reconstruct the full history by examining case by case.

Finally, talking about the current Pope, what has changed with respect to 2005, when very few national papers -including daily *Corriere della Sera* and weekly *Left-Avvenimenti*- covered the story about a civil lawsuit in Texas against Benedict XVI, accused of conspiring to cover up the molestation of three boys by a seminarist?

The charges brought against Pope Ratzinger originated from a document, the *Crimen Sollicitationis*, released in 1962 by the Saint Office -currently named Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. The *Crimen Sollicitationis* decreed the exclusive competence of the Congregation itself with regard to some serious crimes including “violating the Sixth Commandment (you shall not commit adultery) committed by a member of the clergy on a young person under 16”. While the Vatican’s self defense stated the *Crimen Sollicitationis* had expired, on the contrary, a letter dated from May 18, 2001, *De Delictus Gravioribus*, signed by cardinals Joseph Ratzinger and Tarcisio Bertone, respectively Prefect and Secretary of the Congregation, described the *Crimen Sollicitationis* as a document “still valid to date”. After appealing to President Bush, Benedict XVI was immune from suit as the head of a foreign state, thus avoiding a trial that continues to be at a standstill. However, not even a frown or a sign of perplexity could be registered outside of the United States.

To conclude, hundreds of thousands of verified victims, billions dollars paid for damages, “rigged” trials have filled the reports in early 200 years. And yet one had to wait until 2009-2010 to register strong adverse reactions by the public opinion, as also proven by an unprecedented strong attention by the media. What can justify this new trend? After all, no new developments. For instance, what happened in the U.S. and in Ireland highlights some gruesome resemblance. Has maybe the common mentality changed? If this is the case, can we assume a cultural revolution is now in progress?

In order to answer all these questions, this book analyzes the history of the thought upon which this criminal behavior was based on, and that guaranteed impunity to pedophiles. This essay begins by analyzing the cultural roots of pedophilia, a crime that in the Western world

has been perpetrated for 2500 years, enjoying a cultural cover-up which began with Plato, Socrates and Aristotle. A culture and a way of considering a child -that is, a human being- that marked twenty centuries of Catholicism, and that in the twentieth century found new poisonous sap in Sigmund Freud, the father of that violent, absolutely gourndless line of thought that build up the theory abut infantile sexuality. And on and on up to more recently, when according to an idea flourishing in 1968, a child, after all, likes being abused physically and psychologically by an adult. Foucault stated this, exactly when Pope John XXIII, in great secrecy, authorized the *Crimen Sollicitationis*. And some Italian and foreign intellectuals and politicians have turned out to be in accord with the French philosopher's criminal theory.

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Bibliography

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Brief

Why has the scandal of Catholic pedophile priests broken out in Europe in 2010, after decades of silence? Why has the civil society finally been able to express all its indignation through the media with regard to the unacceptable apology to the victims as prepared by the Vatican propaganda?

While stressing the close relationship that always existed between the Catholic Church and pedophilia for centuries, this book traces the history of that crime back to its origin, and analyzes the cultural roots of a wicked theory, according to which a pedophile act is not to be a violent act because, lacking in rationality, a child is not a human being. A theory that, beginning with Plato and Aristotle, later revised by Paul of Tarsus and Augustine of Hippo, has found support in modern times in the Enlightenment first and in Freud and Foucault later.. It has then become evident that the phenomenon of pedophilia has never been thoroughly analyzed, and at the back of the impunity of the rapist priests -protected by a code of silence of the Catholic Church hierarchy, as also recognized by Benedict XVI during his pastoral visit to Great Britain- there is a clear complicity among apparently incompatible ideologies.

With a clear, effective journalistic style, and making use of the opinion of experts, and after studying quite a number of texts and documents, the author of his book advances his hypothesis: is it possible that a new cultural, scientific paradigm is coming forward and striking root in the common thought, thus prompting a new way to understanding birth, a child, the human being.

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