

a richer understanding of Catholic culture today. As Massa stated in his introduction, he hoped to help illustrate "how we started there and ended up here," and this book has done so wonderfully.

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SEX, PRIESTS, AND POWER: ANATOMY OF A CRISIS

A. W. RICHARD SIPE, BRUNNER/MAZEL, 1995.

Reviewed by Benny Morten

While *Sex, Priests, and Power* by Richard Sipe may seem like a book that is published to take advantage of a recent news-grabbing crisis, it has been on bookshelves for over 7 years. Sipe lays out his arguments throughout the book with startling detail, strengthening his claims with the support of his own experiences. An ordained Roman Catholic priest resigned from active ministry, Sipe has accumulated information from interviews with priests, psychiatrists, and historians for over 25 years. The book begins with some graphic stories of sexual abuse across all levels of the priesthood. Sipe captures the reader's attention through storytelling, quoting Fr. Andrew Greeley on the use of stories to strengthen his position:

Stories have always been the best way to talk about religion because stories appeal to the emotions and the whole personality and not just to the mind. Jesus told parables; the authors of David and Joseph cycles and the Song of Songs in the Jewish scriptures, for example, also told stories. (p. 54)

The stories of abuse from priests and bishops against children, men, women, and other priests attempt to support his claim that 50% of ordained priests violate the vow of celibacy. While that number may seem high, the accuracy cannot be altogether disregarded as more in the book is revealed:

One religious superior who holds a doctoral degree in psychology was incensed at the claim of a 50% celibate practice and insisted that 95% of priests practice celibacy at all times. He also asserted that "one or two lapses in the course of a year do not constitute being sexually active." ...Similarly a priest could impregnate two women in the course of 1 year, and using the criterion that one or two lapses do not count, he would still not be considered sexually active. (p. 61)

These ludicrous statements lead Sipe, and any Catholic for that matter, to ask, "Why has the church been so sensitive and proactive in response to questions of dissent from sexual discipline (married priests, ordination of women) and so blind, defensive, and reactive when it comes to questions of frank sexual abuse?" (p. 30)

Sex, Priests, and Power might irritate and anger Catholics, but how could one not have strong feelings toward the leaders of the Catholic Church? Today, with priests and bishops trying to lessen the severity of the situation with kind words and apologies, many people want answers and action. Sipe would acknowledge this attempt at smoothing things over, but he also points out the confusion among some of the Catholic clergy, especially when comparing confidentiality and secrecy.

Confidentiality is a private, personal, and privileged communication that must be protected at great sacrifice...because it is in the service of...personal transformation and growth. *Secrecy* is a stance that reserves access to knowledge in the service of power, control, or manipulation. (p. 27)

The strategy that focused on secrecy was so detrimental to the Catholic Church, because, essentially, everyone is mistreated by a system that fosters or tolerates abuse. Sipe points out that "if religion was taught anything by the German holocaust of the Jews it is that standing by silently does not absolve one from guilt" (p. 45).

As one might stress that communication is essential in working out a problem, Sipe also emphasizes the openness needed by the members of the Catholic Church, especially its leaders. "The celibate/sexual structure of the church must be discussed—openly, freely, energetically—and reevaluated" (p. 46). This discussion is currently approaching its summit, with more and more people coming out with accusations and stories of abuse.

Victims and survivors of clerical sexual abuse have produced the most powerful witness to the inner workings of the celibate/sexual power system. Facts that were only whispered in confessionals are now spoken out loud and in public. Abuse victims who had reported offenses to church officials and been rejected and sometimes ridiculed and persecuted took their stories—often as a last resort—to the courts and the media. (p. 36)

Whether or not the issues raised in this book will be addressed in our current time the way Sipe wished, the sexual abuse issue is not going away. It has had an enormous impact on all priests, not just those guilty of these crimes. Pastors must be careful with the level of interactions they can have with students and adults alike. Educators face this same dilemma when in a school setting. The bonds that are formed with students can be life changing for them, with a pat on the shoulder adding so much to a statement of praise

and recognition. Unfortunately, that small gesture can be taken the wrong way for the wrong reasons.

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