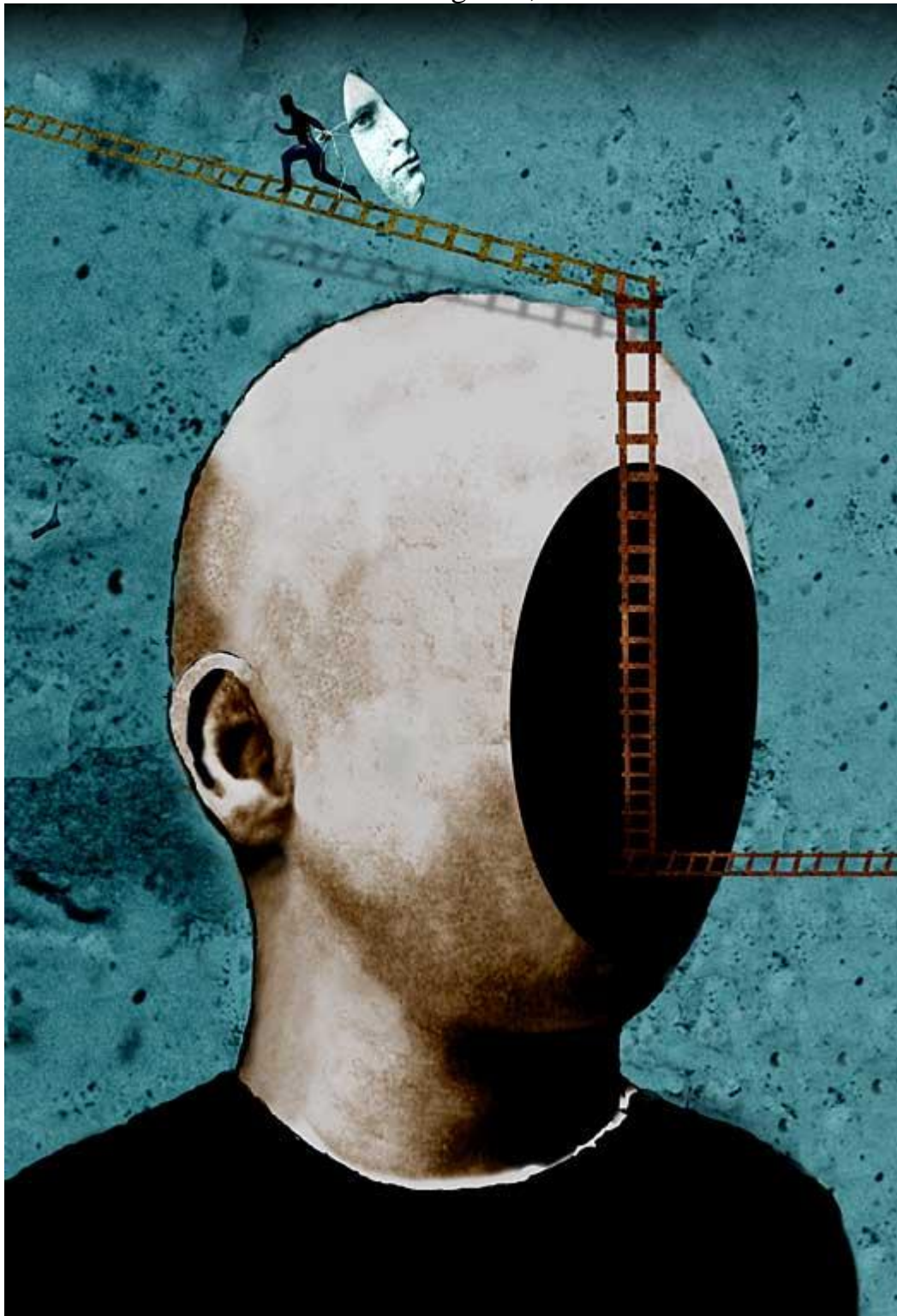


**UNSPEAKABLE DAMAGE  
THE EFFECTS OF CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE:**

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Mickey Morey an Oregon lawyer who has litigated many priest sex abuse cases across the country introduced me to **SAD TRIPS**—an acronym that refers to long-term consequences of sexual abuse of minors. He does not remember who devised it and I have been unable to find the originator. However, I have found it a reliable outline to explicate those effects, namely: interference with Sexual development; Anxiety; Depression; Trust issues; shattered Relationships; Identity problems; Personality paralysis; and Self destructive behaviors. I hope that this is of use to those aiding victims.

These severe and long-term consequences of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy are being validated and explained by an increasing number of studies.<sup>1</sup> SAD TRIPS results are so common either in combination with other factors or singly that they are predictable in some form or other or to one degree or another in victims of clergy abuse.<sup>2</sup> These elements have been identified from extensive research<sup>3</sup> and observations of men and women survivors who were abused as children.<sup>4</sup> I validate my observations as a result of the experience of counseling over 1,500 adults who have been abused as children, 500 of them by Catholic clergy or religious.<sup>5</sup>

1. **SEXUAL FOOTPRINTS:** The consequences of abuse are both psychological and physical, but the vehicle of the damage and trauma is sexual. The abuse forms the basis for, and invariably causes sexual dysfunction of some kind: impotence, sexual aversion, hyper sexuality, the development of paraphilias—frequently pornography, voyeurism, fetishes—or the perpetuation of abuse into a new generation. Studies demonstrate 20

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Paddock, “Child Abuse Causes Lifelong Changes To DNA Expression And Brain” Medical News Today. February 23, 2009. Also McGowan et al. Neuroscience.

<sup>2</sup> Molly L. Paras, et.al. “Sexual Abuse and Lifetime Diagnosis of Somatic Disorders: A systematic Review and Meta-analysis” Journal of the American Medical Association. 302, No. 5. Pp.550-561. August 5, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> “Childhood Abuse Associated with Onset of Psychosis In Women” Fisher et al. Gender differences in the association between childhood abuse and psychosis. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 2009; 194 (4): 319

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Shanta R. Dube et.al. *Long Term Consequences of Childhood Sexual Abuse by Gender of Victim*. 2005. Am J of Preventative Medicine, pp. 430-438) also (Finkelhor, D. 1986. *A Source Book on Child Sexual Abuse*, Newbury Park CA, Sage Press)

<sup>5</sup> Cf. AWR Sipe. *A Secret World*, 1990.

percent of men who were abused become abusers; and 80 percent of abusing men were themselves abused.

The life histories of many victims demonstrate some the consequence of molestation. Early promiscuity and sever sexual inhibition can both be consequences sequentially in the same victim resulting in a lifetime disruption in normal development and satisfaction. Some victims are able to enjoy sexual release, but they cannot incorporate the satisfaction into a close emotional relationship. They remain emotionally divided.

Confusion about one's sexual identity is one of the first and most painful penalties a male victim pays in the aftermath of sexual abuse by a priest. Sexual functioning, even if it does not get mired in paraphilias, is often impaired and crippled for normal functioning. The confusion of sex with violence that results in sadomasochistic behaviors and rape are among some of the dire social consequences of abuse beyond personal tragedy.

Freud originally taught that premature sexual exposure and abuse was the genesis of all neuroses. He later modified his theory to state that actual abuse was not necessary, but that even infantile fantasies of sex with the forbidden could cause the same psychic result and trauma. One of the reasons for Freud's change of heart was because of the sheer number of the accounts of early abuse he heard. It was not popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to believe children when they contradicted or countered elders. This attitude plagues assault victims even today. Also, the social status of the family members who were the alleged abusers made Freud's conclusion impolitic and "doubtful." Nonetheless, Freud's original observations and conclusions, in spite of him, have withstood the test of time. <sup>6</sup>

Freud was not alone in observing that premature sexual exposure was extremely detrimental to children and minors. Although this is commonplace knowledge in 2007, the harmfulness of early sex has been know for decades by educators, counselors, and informed adults. The Child Welfare Movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the child protective laws enacted mid-century are results of that broad awareness.

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<sup>6</sup> (Cf. S. Freud. *The Aetiology of Hysteria*. 1896, Standard Edition, Vol. III.) also (J.M. Masson. *The Assault on Truth*. Ballantine; 2003 ed.)

No acknowledged or respected scientific expert proposes the idea that early sexual experience of a child with an adult is beneficial to the child. Also common wisdom of parents and educators have held for generations that children should be protected from sexual seduction and have instituted many safeguards in monitoring schedules, grade interaction, dress codes, and curfews, and common sense warnings to insure protection. Ironically religions, including the Roman Catholic Church throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, have been first and foremost in insisting on the sexual abstinence and virtue of the young.

Even currently many people find it difficult to believe the enormous psychic consequences from what they would consider a “minor sexual infraction” or a minimal event of sexual touch. Freud as early as 1893 wrote, *For we very often find that the content and determinants of hysterical phenomena [read emotional reaction] are events which are in themselves quite trivial, but which have acquired high significance from the fact that they occurred at specially important moments when the patient’s predisposition was pathologically increased.*<sup>7</sup>

2. THE LEGACY OF ANXIETY: Anxiety overwhelms the victim. A host of addictive behaviors involving alcohol, drugs, sex or other acting out, out-of-control behaviors are endemic among many men and women who have suffered abuse. These are among the means victims use to mollify their confusion, the pain of trauma, and unconscious.

If child sexual abuse is not promptly and effectively treated, long-term symptoms can continue into adulthood. A whole range of emotional and behavioral problems can be traced to early abuse. The most common being anxiety or PTSD, sexual anxieties and disorders mentioned above, low self-esteem and poor body image, depression and thoughts of suicide.

These anxieties can lead specifically to phobias, generalized anxiety, panic episodes, obsessions, compulsions, and irrational anger perpetuated by the inability of their young personalities to absorb and master what has happened to them.

Seminarians traditionally learned about *Scrupulosity* when they were studying to hear confessions. People with scruples are tortured by unwanted

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<sup>7</sup> (Cf. S. Freud, *The Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena*. Standard Edition, Vol. III, p.38)

thoughts (or impulse driven repetitive actions). These people often turned to a priest to counsel or absolve them of the thoughts, images, or desires they found troublesome or abhorrent. Frequently the ideation had to do with forbidden and intolerable sexual images or ideas.

Today this condition would be diagnosed psychiatrically as *Obsessive-Compulsive* disorder and its etiology is often tied up with early sexual abuse, because abuse impairs a child's sense of self-control and opens a person to addictive patterns of tension reduction.<sup>8</sup>

Sexual abuse by an adult, no matter how kindly cloaked is an assault. Inevitably most victims will experience sex with an adult as a genuine *Trauma*, because the occurrence does not fit into the psychic or social reality of the minor. The discordance of the relationship and exchange cannot be absorbed.

We have all learned a great deal about PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) from treating war veterans who after coming through battle conditions, life threats, death or injury to companions (often seemingly unscathed) they have recurrent, distressing recollections, dreams, and emotional reactions. Unpredictable sights, sounds, or thoughts can reignite the trauma.

Some victims of clergy abuse have distressing reactions at the sight of a roman collar, a church, rosary, etc. or anything that may trigger a memory of abusive events. Diagnostically Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a well-defined psychiatric condition that plagues countless victims of childhood abuse, in fact, studies indicate that between one third and one half of childhood victims of abuse develop symptoms of PTSD.<sup>9</sup>

3. A LIFETIME OF DEPRESSION: Depression is a common affliction in the modern world. Some studies say there is a 50 percent chance of one lifetime incidence of major depression among the American population. But the abused have distinct and added burdens that propel them toward

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<sup>8</sup> (Cf. *Obsessive Compulsive Related Disorders*. E. Hollander, the American Psychiatric Press, 1993) also (*The Obsessive Personality*. L. Salzman, Aronson, 1973)

<sup>9</sup> (Cf. Finkelhor, D. "What's wrong with sex between adults and children?" In *Ethics and the Problem of Sexual Abuse*. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 49, Pp. 692-697. 1979)

depression that tend to be recurrent and sustained: In the abused, the loss of innocence, the loss of confidence, the loss of faith, the loss self esteem, and the loss of their youth lay down deep roots to inevitable periods or long term states of depression that condemn the victim to a host of physical disabilities.<sup>10</sup>

One, among many of the health threatening effects common in women who have been molested as youngsters is over-weight—often, morbid obesity. Therapy frequently reveals that the unconscious determination of this problem that has so many medical complications (diabetes and heart attacks chief among them) is a defense against being “attractive,” and again made vulnerable to abuse. A host of physical problems can be traced to early molest and other medical conditions are exacerbated by abuse.<sup>11</sup>

The use of drugs and alcohol are also frequent means of self-medication for the victim, struggling to reduce the pain of the early trauma and in the process increasing the cycle of depression and compounding the physical health complications. It is a frequent and costly pattern.

4. TRUST-BETRAYED FOREVER: Betrayal so deep and so fundamental is the experience of a minor violated by the trusted that the incident(s) becomes a life-altering condition long after the real threat of abuse has past. Certainly this severe result prevails when the abuser is a parent who represents the whole world of security for a child; when the abuser is a parental figure that also represents God, the spiritual world, and the eternal the betrayal leaves the victim nowhere to turn. All supposedly secure and trustworthy persons and institutions become suspect.

This is what the minor victims experience—fundamental abandonment and aloneness. How can persons revive trust when they have been wounded so vitally at a stage in their life when they were intrinsically able to give themselves without reservation to trust an elder only to be unspeakably violated? Many can't ever recover confidence and trust in a world that betrayed their existence. They needed trust—as we all do—for a sense of survival. When the abusing elder is a parent, or even more spectacularly a representative of God, the loss of trust is nearly irretrievable.

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<sup>10</sup> (Cf. *Treating the Lifetime Health Effects of Childhood Victimization*. Kendall-Tackett, Ph.D., 2003)

Beyond loss of trust in the outside world, abuse betrayal attacks self-trust in a fundamental way—the loss of trust in one’s memory and mind. A disruption of cognition and memory can occur during and after childhood abuse.<sup>7</sup> Cognitive and neurological mechanisms that may underlie the forgetting of abuse have been scientifically identified.<sup>12</sup>

5. RELATIONSHIPS IN RAGS: The person who has been abused in childhood is unable to weave her or his relationships out of whole cloth. The fibers of their personalities have been torn; their ability to establish solid relationships is in tatters. Most times they don’t understand why they can’t connect with other people in meaningful ways. They “beat themselves up” repeating over and over again destructive liaisons, or they remain alone. They can become abusive in some way to the friend they wish to be close with. Or they can repeat a burdensome dependency, constructed but unresolved in their childhood. No one can meet their needs because their needs are the deficits of a childhood lost. They are the phantom, wounded children in the skin of adequate appearing adults. At times these wounded people appear “fine,” but they are psychic zombies who occupy a different world than those around them. Others constantly disappoint and mystify themselves and everyone else who could have meaning to them. Divorce, separations, alienation, antipathies, and hollowness mark the world they inhabit with family, friends, and co-workers.

Clinicians have come to recognize the severe damage that abuse does to the possibility of establishing sound and long lasting relationships. Some have identified this consequence as *Affect Phobia*.<sup>13</sup> “When people are unable to use or respond to their affects in healthy ways, they can develop symptoms and/or engage in patterns of maladaptive behavior. This inability to respond adaptively to affect is usually unconscious, and is often referred to as “Psychodynamic Conflict,” but a key point of our work is that it can also be thought of as an “Affect Phobia.” Experience with victims of sexual abuse by clergy demonstrates clearly and painfully that relationships, no matter

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<sup>7</sup>(Cf. Freyd, J. et. al. “*The Science of Child Sexual Abuse*,” *Science*, 4, 22, 2005.)

(Freyd, Jennifer, *Betrayal Trauma: The Logic of Forgetting Childhood Abuse*. Harvard University Press, 1996)

<sup>13</sup> McCullough, Kuhn, Andrews, Kaplan, Wolf, & Hurley. *Treating Affect Phobia*. Guilford Press. 2002

how desirable, are approached as lethal. The fear leads unavoidably to psychic isolation.

6. **NONE SO ISOLATED:** The survivors of abuse have a lonely core that isolates them from themselves and everyone else. That core is unassailable because it is entrapped in an unspoken and unimaginable secrecy. They can't share because the secret is often hidden from them. Even if they have memory traces they cannot put them together in any coherent way that will make sense to anyone. Even if the memories are clear, indelibly burnt into their mind and heart, many men and women have no way to scale the wall of guilt and shame that surrounds their childhood secrets.

Victims, in their isolation, think that they are the only victim.

With their secrets they are isolated from anyone they could hope might understand what they have been through. They don't understand themselves. How can they believe what happened to them in secret when their experience of their whole world—family, school, friends, church—appear so unaware and oblivious of their darkness and trauma.

The survivors guard their secret even if it makes them ill. Unto death some victims hug their secret because they promised to keep it. Some children defend their abuser because the abuse is bound up with the promise of security and the feeling of being loved and special in spite of contrary evidence.

It takes victims of childhood sexual abuse years to straighten out their trauma experience. The mixed feelings of premature excitement, guilt transferred from the aggressor, the challenges of separating fantasies from reality are tasks far beyond the ego capacity of most minors. It takes the average victim of abuse 25 to 30 years to bring them to the realization that they were not at fault. The guilt they feel is not rightfully theirs but the property of the abuser. The anger they experience is justified. It takes time to learn that they have rights and power even in face of opposition from men and institutions they once considered invincible and infallible.

7. **PERSONALITIES PERVERTED:** *Perverted* may seem to be a strong word to describe the effect on the personality development of young persons who have been sexually abused. But the word is precise. Abuse twists the normal progression of personality growth and development.

Over and above the distortions of perceptions and reactions that anxiety and depression impose on the developing child, the behavior of an adult who acts in ways that are socially abhorrent and morally wrong challenge the child's conscience and judgment beyond reconcilable bounds. The clergyman presents himself, and is accepted, as a public moral arbiter. Yet this civic and religious leader draws the youngster into acts that are socially and morally unacceptable. And must remain hidden. The bond of secrecy forms a noose that chokes maturing expression.

The "poor little good child" frequently becomes the object of the adult predator. The child's malleability, need to please, and the satisfaction the child gets in giving pleasure makes the youngster vulnerable to the adult who preys on minors. The abusing adult (priest, teacher, coach, or scout master) is skilled in establishing a friendship with the serious and dutiful child.<sup>14</sup>

But the relationship is essentially conflicted and confusing. The child is seduced into a seemingly loving secure relationship that actually separates him or her from peers and family. The seducer grooms the child into a position of specialness that makes age appropriate friends and normal activities less attractive and inaccessible.

What is real? What is pretense? What seemed to be love and care turns out to be selfishness and exploitation. One who appeared to be giving and generous was actually self-seeking and hateful. The abusive bond of childhood can become the model for adult interactions predisposing one to a Schizoid-like personality pattern of interaction.

A child's conscience is formed not simply by education, but by adult example, experience, and relationships with others that have been meaningful to him or her.

Many abusers, even if they are clergymen, can be, and are deficient in their quality of conscience. We use to call these people "sociopaths." It is still a good descriptive word and goes to the heart of the priest with such a personality. (Now if a diagnostic term is used that person is identified an *Antisocial Personality*)

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<sup>14</sup> (Cf. Karl Menninger, "Poor Little Good Child" *A Psychiatrist's World: The Selected Papers*. New York: The Viking Press. 1959)

People are usually loath to judge their minister antisocial, because clergy do so many good and helpful things in the ordinary services they provide. In spite of that seemingly mitigating circumstance I prefer to understand many priests and bishops who abuse minors by the word *Sociopath*. It defines a person who fails to conform to lawful behaviors; he is a man who is often impulsive; who lacks remorse; lacks empathy because he is adept at conning others for his own pleasure or profit; he feels entitled, above the law; he can have a reckless disregard for the safety and welfare of others.<sup>15</sup>

Priest sexual abusers are con artists. They are pretenders. Frequently they offend in financial ways also. The priesthood provides them with a mask of moral rectitude and sanity. This personality type represents itself in every rank of the priesthood and propagates itself in many ways including through violating young boys and girls who learn their lessons too well. The progeny of these sociopath priests can express themselves in going on to abuse another generation of children, lie, steal or cheat their way into prison, or assume their own respectable masks to hide their real self—like their mentors

One of the most disastrous personality distortions is what is now termed the *Borderline Personality*. These people have a pervasive pattern of unstable interpersonal relationships. They fluctuate between idealizing and denigrating others, often to the extreme. They are saddled with an unstable self-image. They can mutilate themselves and threaten harm or suicide. They find themselves in the middle of outrageous angry outbursts. They feel “hollow;” at the same time, and perhaps because of their emptiness, they create havoc all around them.

These people have been psychically injured during the earliest years of their development. Their early basic insecurity makes them particularly vulnerable to multiple kinds of psychic and physical injuries as they grow up.

Clergy pedophiles and abusers of minors prey on the vulnerable. Vulnerable families (the poor and dysfunctional), vulnerable circumstances (death or illness) or (the overly pious and dependent) can provide opportunities for

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<sup>15</sup> (The classic, and most excellent description of this personality is found in *The Mask of Sanity*, Hervey Cleckley. C.V. Mosby, St. Louis, first published it in 1964. It is still in print in a 4<sup>th</sup> edition.)

clergy entrée into the homes and lives of the trusting-needy, making them targets for abuse.

The PERSONALITY OF THE PRIEST PREDATOR: A man with any type of personality, certainly including psychotic, can sexually abuse a minor.

No one has yet proposed that there exists one set type of person or priest who turns out to be an abuser of minors. There is no test able to predict future sexual abuse of a minor.

We have now, however, enough experience with clergy abusers that clinicians are able to outline a sketch of the priest who has abused.<sup>16</sup> He tends to be *Narcissistic*. That is he tends to have a sense of self-importance and entitlement; he sees himself as special; he tends to exploit others for his own gratification. Since his needs and pleasure comes first he lacks empathy for the feelings of others.

The priest predator is an *Angry* man often with the face of a calm and gentle pastor.

Outward grace, superficial interaction, and social charm frequently cover the *Isolation* and friendlessness that an abuser feels. Of necessity (except when predators ban together to share their sexual predilection) a child sexual abuser has to hide his activity and his real self.

Sometimes the abusing priest may have been abused himself, and not rarely by a priest.

The hidden life of the priest abuser requires that he split his life into two parts: the acceptable and even exemplary public life has to be separated from (and reconciled with) the socially reprehensible and morally defective secret life he pursues.

A priest perpetrator is a torn man; his stated ideals and social presentation are diametrically opposed. He can make himself feel comfortable despite the fundamental contradiction. Priests who profess celibacy publicly yet privately abuse minors know what they are doing. No matter how constrained or compelled, they make a choice. They are *Doubling*. Their priesthood, their way of life, all the benefits and security of their profession

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<sup>16</sup> These three psychological traits are most commonly recorded in the treatment of priest abusers.

hang on their promise to be celibate. If they publicly renounce celibacy they lose everything. These men try to adapt a celibate requirement with their irreconcilable sexual urges. They pose good motives while participating in evil behavior.<sup>17</sup>

The rationalizations are legion. Here follows a sample of some justifications I have heard, recited by men with a straight face and a conviction that they really were celibate: “I work hard and I deserve it...Sex is natural...It doesn’t hurt any body...I’m showing God’s love...This child needs love...I loved him/her...I am giving good instructions in sex...Priests are only human...I’m only giving them what they were asking for...She/he seduced me...etc.

Since the darkness of the doubling can’t withstand the light of examination the split-priest often has to struggle with paranoid fears that he will be found out. He has to isolate himself ever more carefully from adult scrutiny and discovery.

8. **SELF DESTRUCTION:** Suicide is the ultimate act of self-destruction and there are untold numbers of men and women, violated as minors, who resort to this ultimate act of desperation. But there are other behaviors of self-torture and slow death that are the result of being sexually attacked and abused by a priest when one was a minor.

Here are some examples of the disastrous effects inflicted on the abused:

- Persons who can’t continue their studies because the injury to self esteem is so fundamental that they simply are unable to muster the energy or confidence necessary to master tasks that are easily within their natural potential. Interference with education also limits earning potential.
- Persons who plunge into the world of crime because the abuse makes them feel that that is where they belong.
- Persons whose unconscious guilt over their sexual involvement (abuse by a priest or bishop) makes them feel that they are the

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<sup>16</sup> (Robert Jay Lifton describes this psychological dynamic that parallels what many priests employ. Cf. *The Nazi Doctors*, Basic Books, 1986).

ones who deserve punishment, so they unwittingly devise ways to defeat and humiliate themselves. They do not deserve success.

- Persons who get caught in their addictive self-medication to the degree that they run afoul of family, work, law, and impair their health and life.
- Some persons who overdose, who end up in fatal car accidents, who contract incurable diseases like AIDS, who get themselves murdered do not leave suicide notes, but their fate was sealed by their abuse. They are completing what the abusive priest or bishop began—the death of their sense of self-preservation.

Many bishops, religious superiors, and priests, abusers or not, tend to minimize the effects of abuse by a clergyman. “What’s the big deal?...It was only a touch...It happened just once...They had sex with others...They knew what they were doing...Why can’t they get over it?...They should just forget it...It was at least partially their fault...Christ stands for forgiveness...Why can’t they forgive?...etc.” I have heard every one of these justifications and more. None of these rationalizations diminish or remove the actual consequences of the inappropriate approaches and sexual interaction with a minor by a representative of religion. What is more, these attitudes demonstrate the ignorance—and blatant disregard of victims—of men in power. An unforgivable sin.

Auxiliary bishop of the Chicago archdiocese Ramond Goedert testified in a deposition made public in July 2009 that, "I knew the civil law considered it [sexual activity of a priest with a minor] a crime, I simply would not talk about [the cases] to anyone except those who had a right to know because of their position in the diocese." He also said that most of the priests he confronted with the allegations admitted them. Goedert was talking about abuse that occurred between 1970 and 86 and his testimony demonstrates the clear pattern and practice of secrecy, concern for avoiding scandal, disregard for victims, and placing Church concerns above civil law<sup>18</sup> that were confirmed in Grand Jury reports of twelve dioceses.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> CBS Chicago, July 21, 2009

<sup>19</sup> Prominent among them Rockville Center, Boston, New Hampshire, Philadelphia.

Sexual abuse of a minor is rightfully called *Soul Murder*. Many bishops, religious superiors and priests still refuse to accept the full significance of the real consequences of molestation by clergy and persist in relegating all the disastrous effects of abuse to the category of “sin”—a willful defiance of moral laws so easily forgiven under the guise of virtue.

Roman Catholic church officials have cooperated in the process of abuse. They have selected and trained the perpetrators and protected them precisely because they minimized the effects of celibate violations, and by their neglect and inaction justified priests betraying the trust of their people.

Even today the church does not take celibacy or its violation seriously in action. Documents, apologies, and words remain empty when not translated into action. Who is accountable? When St. Peter Damian in 1051 addressed Pope Leo IX about the sexual abuse of boys he held superiors responsible for their subordinates’ behavior and the harm done—he spoke a truth that prevails today.

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