

Letters on "Why the epidemic of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church?"

5 April 2002

Hello,

Just wanted to tell you that I found your article "Why the epidemic of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church?" [March 29, 2002] interesting, enlightening and well written.

Thank you,

LD

Costa Rica

31 March 2002

Dear David Walsh,

Thank you for your article on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. I read your article with interest. There's a question I've been wondering about lately, though, but it's one you didn't address: What did the Pope know and when did he know it? It's incredible to think that during all the time so many priests were being transferred from diocese to diocese, the Pope never asked anything and was never told anything. This continuing scandal must have been common knowledge at the highest levels of the Church.

The issue of the abuse of the individual children is often written about, but there's a wider issue too, involving abuse of a whole community's trust.

There must have been many men within the Church who understood that keeping the abuse secret was wrong, and they must have fought to be allowed to deal with the matter appropriately. But I'm sure that's a story we'll never hear.

Sincerely,

PJ

29 March 2002

Dear Mr. Walsh:

Just a short note. Obviously there has been a great deal of media coverage about sexual abuse by priests. No doubt part of this attention is due to the claim of the Church to moral authority. After all, it isn't that clear whether all of the alleged incidents of abuse are true or whether the incidence of genuine abuse is greater than in the society at large. The alleged incidents often relate to events which were said to have occurred many years past.

This having been said, I write to you for another reason. Catholic doctrine is extremely diverse and has varied significantly over the centuries. Furthermore, it has inspired many writers both directly, as in the case of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, or indirectly, as in the case of Marx's Manuscripts. The doctrine continues to inspire new interpretations such as that of liberation theology whose value has been recognized by Castro. The notion of Original Sin, reflected in the Jewish Book of Exodus, inspired Freud's

recognition of the intergeneration repetition of patterns.

In other words, I object to your taking Catholic doctrine and stuffing it in a thimble. I doubt that there is an easy ideological explanation, which is not to say that I do not join you in expressing concern for the manner in which the Church has addressed these questions.

In any event, I do appreciate your views and am a reasonably avid reader.

Best,

TM

29 March 2002

Dear WWS,

Your article "Why the epidemic of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church?" by David Walsh, of 29 March 2002, forgets that priestly marriage is allowed by Rome for the so-called Eastern Rites (e.g., the Maronites, who are in full communion with the Holy See). This of course can be explained inasmuch as it has been and is a part of a Vatican strategy to maintain a foothold in lands that otherwise would be fully dominated by the Orthodox branches of Christendom.

Notwithstanding, to forget such an important exception, which illustrates that celibacy is not part of permanent Catholic dogma but a policy acknowledged by Rome itself to be subject to possible albeit not obligatory change, makes the article less informed than is to be desired. Many Maronite priests are married, this is fully in accordance with Vatican regulations, and these priests are indeed subject to the authority of Rome through their Patriarchs.

It is very true that: "Celibacy and chastity (...) are bound up with the anti-rational, mystical construction of Catholic doctrine". But because WWS pretends to offer the opposite, i.e., a rational construction of history and world events, it is disappointing to witness that its articles sometimes leave out crucial facts that should allow the reader to have a more nuanced interpretation of relevant affairs.

CE

Buenos Aires

29 March 2002

A good article. It seems to me that the core reason why there is such rampant sexual abuse in the Catholic Church does stem from its celibacy requirement, but as noted in your article, "None of this explains why the Catholic Church remains so adamantly committed to priestly celibacy today. After all, rationality would appear to be on the side of allowing priests to marry. An estimated 20,000 men left the priesthood in the US from 1970 to 1995, and

an estimated 100,000 worldwide, mostly to marry. A 1990 US study of young Catholic men found celibacy to be the most significant obstacle to adopting the priestly life.”

It looks like the heterosexual priests choose to leave the priesthood to marry while it would seem the homosexual priests stayed in the church to continue their pedophilia. I see the biggest problem as the Church being viewed by the clergy as being a “safe haven” for pedophilia. My view is homosexual priests are attracted to the clergy because (1) they can hide their homosexual lifestyle, (2) the Church continued to cover up their pedophilia and (3) they could somehow “atone” for their deviant lifestyle and try to keep it under control by being in the Church. I think your article correctly points out that the celibacy requirement in the long run takes its toll on an individual and results in exacerbating the problem. Celibacy is a detriment to healthy living for all humanity—that is not natural.

RP

29 March 2002

Dear Mr. Walsh,

As a member of society who wishes to see a closure of the gap between rich and poor, and an end to the systematic oppression imposed by capitalist imperialist nations, I’ve become a frequent visitor to the *World Socialist Web Site*. I normally find the articles on WSWS to be unique and insightful.

However, as a Catholic, I was thoroughly upset, disheartened, and personally offended at your comments about the Catholic Church in your article, “Why the epidemic of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church?” of March 29, 2002. While I accept your comments regarding the hierarchy of the Church and the problems with priestly celibacy as valid arguments, I cannot ever agree with your estimation of the Church as an oppressor. Consider the following paragraph from the article:

“Its corrupt and hypocritical officials, living like kings, preach against sin and vice, oppose birth control and abortion, inveigh against homosexuality, enthusiastically advocate censorship and intellectual repression, universally ally themselves with the powers that be and generally make life miserable for tens of millions of people.”

While some of these criticisms may be true for the most conservative elements of the Church, most of them have been invalid since the Council of Trent. I remind you that it is the Church which helped to liberate the peoples of Latin America. I remind you that, even the pope that the media most associated with anti-Communism, John Paul II, called for the Catholic Church to become the “church of the poor.” I remind you that the Sandinista government had three Catholic priests working in influential positions. I remind you that, in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul II told the world, “workers’ rights cannot be doomed to be the mere result of economic systems aimed at maximum profits. The thing that must shape the whole economy is respect for the workers’ rights within each country and all through the world’s economy.” More importantly, in Jose Marti Square, the Pope also announced that “various places are witnessing the resurgence of a certain capitalist neo-liberalism which subordinates the human person to blind market forces and conditions the development of peoples on those forces.”

If there is any ally that the Socialist has in his work, it is the Catholic Church. Even the apostles—solely examined as historical figures in this case—were some of the first examples of Socialists: “Nor was there anyone needy among them, for all who owned property or houses sold them and donated the proceeds. They used to lay them at the feet of the apostles to be distributed to everyone according to his need.” (Acts 4:32-35) Unfortunately, this same church has become so jaded by conservative elements that Christ’s tremendous desire to throw the money changers from the temple has been lost. Whether you agree or disagree with the religious teachings of the Church, you must agree that Jesus was a revolutionary who wanted to see the hypocrisy in bureaucracy exposed, the creation of a new world for the poor, and an end to domination of the world by those who have the most material goods. It is from within Catholic faith that much Socialism has grown. Consider Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement, or the Liberation Theology idea which transformed the pit of American oppression into a Latin America burning with the flames of revolution. Remember Archbishop Romero, or the Maryknoll missionaries. And, for the “tens of millions” of people you claim the church has made life “miserable” for, you must also account how the Church aided organized labor so as to make life possible for immigrants to America in the early twentieth century.

Though many of your criticisms of Catholic sexual teachings and the problems within the institution of the Church are correct and valid, these faults in an imperfect, human organization cannot be allowed to compromise the tremendous capability for social change offered within Catholicism. I ask you for no more than an apology to the numerous Catholics who practice Socialism as part of their faith.

Sincerely,

KWB

4 April 2002

“There is no reference in the New Testament to compulsory celibacy; in fact, all of the apostles were apparently married.”

In fact, it is most likely that Jesus himself was indeed married, to Mary Magdalene. I can point you to some articles explaining this, but it wouldn’t take much research of your own to convince yourself that this was true. For example, back then being called “Rabbi”, as Jesus was, would imply that he “was” married; just like calling someone a “priest” today implies that that person is not.

BS

San Diego, California

29 March 2002



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact