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The Catholic Church At A Crossroads

5 04 2010



By [Timothy D. Naegele\[1\]](#)

When my father's ancestors first came to America from Rottweil, Germany in 1849, they consisted of a husband and wife who had sixteen children, and were Catholics. Sometime early in the 20th Century, the family moved away from the Church because of tithing—or so I was told—and became Lutherans.

On my mother's side were Scots, Irish and English, many of who were Catholics too. My mother was an Episcopalian and my father sang in a Lutheran choir in Minneapolis where they met in grade school, but I grew up with kind feelings toward the Catholic Church. My first two girlfriends were Catholics, which has been true of others since.

Fast forward to April of 1983, and I met a lovely Irish woman in Dublin, and we spent many years together. She had attended Catholic schools, but would not set foot in a Catholic church in Ireland because of what she had witnessed as a young girl, and because of what she described as the “hypocrisy” of the Church (e.g., a high ranking Church official had a “wife” and child). Later, I met another Irish woman whose closest friend had been impregnated by the local parish priest, and she had given birth to his child.

When the reports of pedophilia and other child abuses began to surface dramatically in the US and Ireland, I was not surprised. Obviously the victims had suffered more than any of us can fathom. I discussed the issue with someone who was much more knowledgeable than I was; and the person emphasized that being a Gay priest was different than being a pedophile. Also, nuns committed child abuses in large numbers, certainly in Ireland.

One of my close Catholic friends pointed out some years ago that the Church had taken steps to remove pedophiles from its ranks, which was long overdue. Also, I believe the Church-made rule of celibacy has outlived its usefulness and should be jettisoned. The earliest Christian leaders were largely married men; and the Church's hierarchy today should include the married and unmarried, both men and women.

Some people argue that the latest crises might bring down a Pope. Surely, the Church has withstood other assaults throughout history, and it will withstand this one too. The Church's supporters will continue, while its detractors and haters will be present too. The larger issue is whether true reform is possible, after the latest "blood-letting" about pedophilia has passed.

In many ways, the Church is like a giant oil tanker or aircraft carrier that cannot be turned on a dime. In a sense, this is good because it is not blown off course by the societal trends or scandals of the moment.^[2] As the enormous worldwide force that it is, the Church makes changes incrementally, not dramatically or overnight. Pedophilia and child abuses of any kind must be condemned and never happen again. The task today is to rectify the wrongdoing and bring the wrongdoers to justice, and to institutionalize lasting reforms.

The hard-earned monies of parishioners should not be used to pay the Church's legal fees or legal settlements with the victims. Instead, the monies should come from the Church's vast coffers and resources worldwide, which are invested in office buildings, other real estate and the like. When I attend Catholic churches regularly—which I do, even though I am not a member of the Church—I see Hispanics and other devout worshippers contribute what little money they have. To use such monies to address the Church's wrongdoing seems morally wrong and repugnant.

Next, there are vast numbers of child prostitutes in the US and throughout the world^[3], who are victims of human trafficking^[4]. Just as pedophilia must be stopped in its tracks, so too must human trafficking of all types, and child prostitution and pornography^[5]. The Catholic Church can take a leadership role worldwide with respect to all of these issues—which is long overdue. Its moral obligation to do so is clear.^[6]

Lastly, one's religion is very personal, and mine certainly is. I do not want anyone telling me how to worship or what is important; and most people feel exactly the same way. Any thoughts I have about the Church represent an effort to move beyond the scandals of today, and to seek a brighter future.

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Columbia and California bars. He served as a Captain in the U.S. Army, assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency at the Pentagon, where he received the Joint Service Commendation Medal. Mr. Naegele is an Independent politically; and he is listed in Who's Who in America, Who's Who in American Law, and Who's Who in Finance and Business. He has written extensively over the years. See, e.g., www.naegele.com/whats_new.html#articles

[2] I have been drawn to the Church more and more over the years because among the American churches, at least it stands for issues in which I believe, such as the sanctity of life and family values. We live in a society today that is guided too much by secular values, with which I do not agree. If it feels good, do it—or so many people believe. God has been driven out of our children's classrooms and elsewhere in society. and I do not agree with that.

Until Ronald Reagan focused public attention of the right to life as opposed to abortions that were often a matter of convenience, I had never given much attention to the issue. If anything, I just went along with the idea that abortions were OK, as well as a woman's right. Then, I saw a film about the birth of a human being, from almost the moment of conception to when it emerged from the womb. How it was filmed, I do not know, but I will never forget it. At about the same time, I read an op-ed piece in the Los Angeles Times (as I recall), written by a doctor who had performed lots of abortions, many of them late-term. He gave up his medical practice because he was having nightmares and other reactions, and I was stunned by his words.

I defy anyone to define with precision when a human life begins, and when an abortion constitutes something other than the taking of a human being. For me, life begins with conception; and thereafter, I believe this life is taken if an abortion occurs. Should that act be criminalized, or does a woman have the right to have it done? These are heady issues, with respect to which people disagree, sometimes violently. I side with the Catholic Church, and feel that adoptions are preferable to abortions. A cousin of mine and his wife found it almost impossible to adopt in the U.S., and were forced to adopt two children from Asia, whom they love unconditionally. Clearly, there are many loving American couples who would welcome the chance to adopt someone else's child.

[3] See, e.g., <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/ceos/prostitution.html>




[4] See, e.g., <http://naegeleblog.wordpress.com/2009/12/28/human-trafficking/>

[5] See, e.g., <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/ceos/childporn.html>

[6] Former President George W. Bush took a leadership role in dealing with the issue of human trafficking; and the Catholic Church must do the same. See, e.g., <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/ceos/trafficking.html>

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One response

5 04 2010



Frankie Pintado (13:29:17) : [edit](#)

On abortion:

I agree with you about when a life begins, and I am completely against abortion as a form of birth control. Adoption is a much more responsible choice. While I personally feel that it is never right to abort a pregnancy out of convenience, there are certain extreme circumstances when even I would consider it, incest for example, or rape.

As much as I feel that 99% of abortions are simply taking a life out of convenience, I believe that it should be kept legal. History has proven that people will have abortions, whether they are legal or not. So to me, it is a question of which is a lesser evil, a properly preformed abortion? or a black market abortion?

When it comes to their own bodies, humans will make their own decisions regardless of law. Look at Eve and the forbidden fruit, or the "war on drugs".

What I propose is a fairly lengthy class, educating women on abortion, fetal development and anything else that would make them reconsider. That, at the very least, should be a mandatory condition of receiving a legal abortion. Maybe there should even be some financial incentive to keeping the child. And here's the part that people may find pretty controversial: I think that If a woman wants to abort a healthy fetus, then as a condition they should also receive a hysterectomy.

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