

Bishop John Kinney Welcomes ISTI Conference Participants

The Most Reverend John F Kinney is the Roman Catholic Bishop of Saint Cloud Diocese, Minnesota, and founding chair of the United States National Catholic Conference of Bishops' (NCCB) committee on clergy sexual abuse. His welcoming address to the participants of the ISTI National Conference in Collegeville on 13, 14, 15 June, is printed in its entirety.

Fr Stephen Rossetti, the current President of St. Luke's Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland, in his 1991 book, *Slayer of the Soul*, very aptly describes the crisis that brings us here together at this conference: sex and the abuse of power in religious systems. It is nothing less than "a devastating event for all involved." He continues that "perpetrators become marked persons who must suffer the ridicule and disdain of an entire society, as well as the more punishing reproach that they can often inflict upon themselves."...

"The damage caused to the victims is equally severe," leading victims often into a spiral of depression, anxiety, uncontrollable fears, suicidal thoughts, eating disorders, and may even lead some to become abusers themselves (*Slayer of the Soul*, p 185).

Rosetti goes on to say that "the damage it has caused, and will continue to cause, to our community of faith is also great." He points out that it has taken literally hundreds of years and the devotion of countless people to build up a community of faith centered upon a bond of trust. He is right in concluding that the crisis that our religious systems, both here in the United States and abroad as well, have had to face in these past 10 years is "one of the most serious scandals that the Church has ever had to face because it destroys the one element that is essential for ministry: TRUST" (*Slayer of the Soul*, p 185).

In our own response to this horrible crisis, the Catholic bishops of the United States took as our theme: Restoring Trust. For the past six and a half years we have undertaken a number of initiatives to stem the crisis and to begin to rebuild our faith communities. But for us, these have been difficult years: "years of facing shame and sorrow, hurt and sadness," as the bishops of Ireland described it in their "Framework for a Church Response." Almost every religious system that I can think of has had to go through this "dark

night of the soul." There were weeks when it seemed every day saw a new revelation of sexual abuse. Our confidence was shaken. Our resources were wholly absorbed in resolving the "most recent crisis."

I am happy to be able to say that some of that has changed. From our own experience on the Catholic bishops* ad hoc committee on sexual abuse, I have seen a shift from utter crisis management to a more systemic approach to these challenges. That does not mean that the crisis is over. Nor does it mean that at a given moment a local congregation or diocese may be plunged back into crisis mode. But I do see that at a national level, at least, we are less in the medical triage model, and instead are moving toward a more systemic approach to this crisis. This will allow us to look more deeply into its root causes. It will also allow us to study more closely not only individual aspects of this crisis, but also those aspects which might be described as the corporate, or organizational aspects of this reality, which can promote, aid, abet, tolerate, or ignore the warning signs of this problem in the future.

I am reminded of a story about a person walking alongside a river who sees someone drowning. The person jumps in, pulls the victim out, and begins artificial respiration. While this is going on, another person calls for help; the rescuer jumps into the water again and pulls the new victim out. This process repeats itself several times until the rescuer gets up and walks away from the scene. A bystander approaches and asks in surprise where he is going, to which, the rescuer replies: "I am going upstream to find out who*s pushing all these people in and see if I can stop it!"

While our efforts to attend to individual victims and manage individual perpetrators are critical to our overall pastoral care and our desire to "restore trust," we have to move to more than downstream helping to prevent these abuses in the future. We all need to go upstream and see if we can stop it! In order to accomplish this kind of prevention, we must have a systemic approach. We must not only look at the profile of perpetrators and victims, but of the human, societal religious systems in which these individuals interact. This ISTI conference which we are about to begin has clearly taken this systemic approach, and I applaud it!

As chairman of our committee we have tried to move in this more systemic way. But first we had to face the crisis and layers of denial, anger, and sadness. It was a genuine moment of death and dying marked by Dr. Kubler-Ross* famous five stages. Today I am able to report that 100% of our Roman Catholic dioceses in this country have established policies and procedures to

address issues of sexual abuse. Of course, we must maintain vigilance so that we can guarantee that these policies and procedures are effective.

In the past few years we have seen a number of efforts developed toward the healing of victims. Individual dioceses have established protocols to attend to individuals and families. Other efforts, such as Dr Elizabeth Piasecki's "In Search of Higher Ground" project in Milwaukee, have begun to provide effective models for healing. We have also benefitted from the fine work of Nancy Myers Hopkins, who is on the roster for this conference, in her work toward the healing of congregations, and the unique role of the "after as or." We have also begun a review of models for healing presbyterates from which perpetrators have been removed, as well we offered some healing opportunities for bishops themselves. We know there is still much more to do. In many ways we have only just begun. But we will never seal any final healing until we can also look at and heal, where needed, the very religious systems within which we come together.

With regard to working with perpetrators within our religious systems, there seem to be a variety of responses. Speaking from the Roman Catholic tradition, we have had to wrestle with a number of factors: victims' rights, priests' rights as guaranteed by the Code of Canon Law, and so on. These are complex issues. For example, we have had to seek derogations from our own Code of Canon Law so that we can comply with the American legal system. We have to wrestle with whether or not we can ever return a priest perpetrator to ministry, and if so, to what kind of ministry. Finally, we have had to face the fact that in some cases, a priest may never be able to return to the active ministry. This has led us to seek permanent removal from the clerical state for such priests. This, in turn, at the international level, has raised a number of concerns in the area of sacramental theology. In the past few years, while a bishop may have had to act in a crisis mode, he may have found that he resolved the particular crisis to the satisfaction of the victim or the law here, only to find that it did not meet the satisfaction of the authorities in Rome. We are now able to address these issues in a more reflective way than we were able to do just a few years ago.

We have begun to move from crisis management to strategies for prevention. A year ago I was able to address the rectors of Catholic seminaries in the United States. We continue to try to improve screening and admissions for seminaries. I am particularly grateful to Nils Friberg and Mark Laaser for their contributions in this area. The concept that seminary screening is a continuous effort across a person's career in the seminary is critical. Observation of the candidate's intimacy skills, ability at friendship, clamor or

status, and so on will help us, as best as possible, to identify candidates who pose a future risk. The inclusion of boundary education and professional ethics throughout the seminary curriculum are a step in the right direction. I am grateful to the staff of the Archdiocese of St Paul-Minneapolis, and to the National Organization for the Continuing Education of Roman Catholic clergy, for their work in developing materials for this boundary education.

There is one other issue that has emerged for us in this area of prevention. It requires much further investigation. As I have listened to victims of clergy sexual abuse over these past few years, I keep hearing in their stories what I can only call "an entitlement attitude." It is revealed in statements like: "He acted like he had a right to me." "He treated me like his plaything. I was supposed to be available for him when he wanted it." And from reports by police officers at the scene of an arrest: "You can't arrest me, I am a priest."

I was particularly intrigued when I saw the focus of this year's ISTI conference: sex and the abuse of power in religious systems. I was intrigued because I am convinced that this "entitlement attitude" of which I speak seems rooted, or abetted, by the use of power in the religious system. It is essential, therefore, that we begin some serious study of our religious systems overall. We want to know the profile of the perpetrator. We need to know the profile of the victim. But we also need to get a real fix on the values, codes, internal climate, and principles of behavior that mark the life of our religious systems (Egan and Cowan, *People in Systems*, pp 1-18, 122).

The Conference which we are about to begin is a significant step toward this more systemic way to review our Church life. The various keynote speakers, and the workshops, and the interaction among the participants here can contribute greatly to helping us understand ourselves better as actors in our own religious systems, and I am convinced that this is the most effective way to move toward the reduction of abuse, the healing of victims, and to the restoring of trust.

I welcome each of you to this conference, to Saint John's Abbey, and to the great state of Minnesota. I thank the monks of St John's, and Abbot Timothy Kelly OSB and Fr Roman Paur OSB in particular, for their commitment to the work of ISTI, and for their hospitality in hosting this conference. Thank you for your kind reception of me here today. My hope is that these days will be fruitful for you and will be a blessing for each one of the religious traditions represented here.

Thank you. JK

