

# THE CHURCH IN BELGIUM AND THE WORLD

Sister Maureen Paul Turlish SNDdeN  
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maturlishmdsnd@yahoo.com

**Clericalism has often been described as the pursuit of ecclesiastical power at the expense of the laity. It is viewed as an elite caste unaccountable to the People of God.**

**It is this mindset peculiar to bishops and priests that renders otherwise ordinary good men so insensitive to the moral depravity present in some of their fellows that they will go to any lengths to enable, protect and cover up for them even years after the fact and in the case of ordinary priests renders them incapable of challenging Church leadership in the face of such evil.**

**Failing to protect the innocent from childhood sexual abuse all those decades ago and enabling further abuse by becoming complicit in covering up for perpetrators makes one wonder whether or not church leaders believe the words of Jesus in the Gospel.**

**Or is it rather that some do not consider Jesus' words binding if following the words of the Lord embarrass one, causing him to lose stature and authority in the church? Is it a choice between arresting one's advancement in this highly clericalized system and speaking truth to power?**

**Is it for all of these reasons and more?**

**This latest example of the abuse of power and authority in the Roman Catholic Church by Cardinal Godfried Danneels, the former leader of the Belgium Church, puts the lie to statements made not so many years ago by members of the hierarchy that the sexual abuse of children by clergymen was uniquely an American phenomenon.**

**Probably not the half of what has been going on in the Belgium Church is really known at this time. This in a country that is approximately the size of the state of Maryland in square miles.**

**Here in the United States previously sealed depositions that church authorities never expected to be made public support the fact that attempts at containment know no national boundaries.**

**Crimes against humanity?**

**No question.**

**As such they should be brought before the world court. After all, the Holy See is a signatory to the United Nations**

**Convention on the Rights of the Child even though it has submitted none of the periodic compliance reports beyond the initial one.**

**Will the institutional Church take ownership for the complicity of its leadership in covering up for the actions of those who have preyed on the young and their own actions in putting so many more children in harm's way?**

**Doubtful.**

**To date, have any complicit bishops in the U.S. been sanctioned for their actions?**

**Rewarded? Yes.**

**Sanctioned? No.**

**The crisis continues worldwide while in the U.S. bishops and state Catholic Conferences continue to viciously oppose legislative reform in any state where bills addressing it have been introduced. New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland and Colorado are but a few examples.**

**Certainly not what one expected when the bishops promised Accountability & Transparency in 2002.**

**Can the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church be blind to the fact that its actions in continuing on its present course are speeding up an already unprecedented erosion of credibility among the ordinary faithful who want to cling to the belief that church leadership is capable of telling the truth and being accountable for its failures in protecting children?**

**Is it not this hubris of leadership, this horrific abuse of power that has created the rough seas, that perfect storm in which the Barque of Peter now finds itself floundering?**

**Or did Jesus' words mandating the protection of children, the most vulnerable among us, include the caveat that his words were binding only if in protecting the children the cost was not too high?**

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**Sister Maureen Paul Turlish SNDdeN  
Advocate for victim/survivors & legislative reform**