

ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE CHURCH

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COMMENTARY

Published in the Rutland Herald
Rutland, Vermont
August 20, 2008
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Pedophile priest Edward Paquette is an archetypal figure, a product of the clerical system that spawned him or at least enabled and protected him. He speaks to the tragic need to change all states' inadequate childhood sexual abuse statutes for the protection of everyone.

To even consider that Paquette would really remain a priest even though removed from ministry because the church teaches that there is an indelible priestly character taken on by the soul during ordination ceremonies is appalling.

It is insulting to the priests I know, especially those I have met across the country who attempt to minister to two and even three parish communities in rural areas of Colorado, Iowa, Louisiana and Minnesota.

Sexual abusers like Paquette and his ilk are men of unrelenting depravity and as such have abrogated any claims to such an appellation by the perfidy of their actions in the sexual abuse of numerous children, young people or vulnerable adults of either sex.

However, the more important reality is not that Edward Paquette or those like him retain forever some indelible priestly mark. Rather, it is that most of them can never be criminally prosecuted for their alleged crimes. They are either dead or beyond the law as it stands.

They will never be listed on any state sexual predators' list and why?

Because their enablers, their bishops, did not put our children first; they did not have the integrity to do what they were morally bound to do in the first place, and that was to call the police. Instead, they transferred them from parish to parish over many decades where they continued to savage children.

This reality is much harder to stomach, and it is the reason why every state in the nation should be passing new legislation that will open a civil window of at least two years to get some of these sociopaths and their records into a civil, if not criminal, courtroom where they belong.

How can accommodations in law, such as the arbitrary statutes of limitation that virtually bar victims of childhood sexual abuse from pursuing justice, be permitted by any state?

Justice and charity are what Jesus taught. He never said it was contingent on the price tag.

The people of every state deserve better laws that protect our children more than they protect child abusers, molesters and rapists.

Accountability and transparency in the present and future offers neither justice nor forgiveness for the crimes and sins of the past. The individual enablers, leaders of the institutional church who knew and covered up or facilitated such heinous crimes against children must be held accountable by society.

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