



## Introduction

Speaking about abuse within the Church is not easy. It touches sensitive fibers, stirs deep wounds, and justly awakens indignation in many. But it is also a duty. To remain silent would be a form of silent complicity; to look the other way, a betrayal of truth and of the victims. In this article, we approach this painful subject from a theological, historical, and pastoral perspective, seeking not only to inform, but above all to heal, guide, and renew hope. For where sin abounded, grace may—and must—abound all the more (*cf.* Romans 5:20).

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## I. The History of a Wound That Cries Out to Heaven

Sexual, power, and conscience abuses within the Church are not a new phenomenon, but in recent decades they have come to light with harrowing starkness. The *John Jay Report* in the U.S., investigations in Ireland, Germany, Chile, and other countries, as well as heartbreaking testimonies from victims, have revealed a systematic reality—and even worse, one often covered up by those who should have acted with justice and mercy.

For a long time, the institutional instinct was to protect the Church’s “image” rather than vulnerable people. This clericalism—denounced by Pope Francis himself—contributed to a climate of impunity and silence. As the prophet Isaiah once wrote: *“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil”* (Isaiah 5:20).

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## II. Theological Relevance: The Mystery of Sin in the Church

This scandal places before us a painful mystery: **the Church is holy, yet made up of sinners**. The Catechism teaches that the Church is “at once holy and always in need of purification” (*cf.* CCC 827). Christ has made her His Bride, but she must be constantly renewed through the conversion of her members.

The scandal of abuse is not only a human tragedy—it is also a wound in the Body of Christ. Every act of violence against an innocent is a new scourging of Christ in His most vulnerable members (*cf.* Matthew 25:40). And at the same time, every step toward truth, justice, and reparation is an act of communion with the Redeemer, who never abandons His Church, but purifies her.



## Why Does God Allow This?

We cannot fully answer the mystery of evil. But we do know that God, in His infinite wisdom, permits scandal so that the truth may be revealed, idols may fall, and the Gospel may not be preached from a place of power, but from humility and the cross. As St. Paul says: *“We hold this treasure in jars of clay, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us”* (2 Corinthians 4:7).

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## III. What Does the Bible Say About Abuse and Justice?

Scripture does not shy away from sin, even when it is committed by those in spiritual authority. In the Old Testament, the prophets harshly denounce unfaithful shepherds (cf. Ezekiel 34). Jesus Himself did not mince words with the Pharisees who imposed heavy burdens without lifting a finger to help (cf. *Matthew 23:4*).

The Gospel is clear: whoever causes one of the little ones to stumble, *“it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea”* (Mark 9:42). This is not about revenge but understanding the gravity of the harm spiritual, sexual, or power abuse can inflict when committed by a sacred minister.

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## IV. A Church That Learns, Converts, and Acts

From acknowledging the harm, many dioceses and religious orders have begun reform processes: protocols for the protection of minors, formation in affectivity and power dynamics, collaboration with civil justice, and the creation of offices for reporting and accompanying victims.

Pope Benedict XVI—with firmness and humility—began a path of purification. Pope Francis has continued it with documents such as *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, which establishes concrete procedures to report and sanction those responsible, even bishops.

However, juridical measures are not enough. **Pastoral conversion** requires a profound transformation in how authority is exercised, how seminarians are formed, how celibacy is lived, and how mission is conceived. A less clerical and more evangelical Church is



needed—one in which power is understood as service, not domination.

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## V. Theological and Pastoral Guide: What Can We Do?

This issue is not just for bishops or canon lawyers. All the faithful are members of the Body of Christ. Each one, from their place, is called to:

### 1. Know the Truth

- Inform yourself using reliable sources—avoid both sensationalism and naïveté.
- Read documents like the *Letter to the Catholics of Chile* (2018) or *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (2019).

### 2. Do Not Remain Silent in the Face of Injustice

- If you know of a case of abuse, report it—to civil authorities and, if possible, to Church authorities.
- Breaking the silence is an act of charity toward the victim and toward the whole Church.

### 3. Accompany the Victims

- Listen without judgment. Believe those who speak from a place of pain. Often, the community’s silence is more painful than the abuse itself.
- Support healing initiatives: retreats, psychological and spiritual accompaniment, counseling.

### 4. Live the Faith Authentically

- Pray for the conversion of abusers, but also for justice and reparation.
- Do not become so scandalized that you drift away from Christ. He remains the Truth, even when His ministers fail.

### 5. Educate the New Generations

- Teach children and youth about respect, dignity, and affectivity.
- Train them to discern true spiritual authority from manipulation.



## VI. The Hope of a Renewed Church

The wound is real, but it is not the end. Christ promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church (*cf.* Matthew 16:18), and His promise still stands. Purification is painful, but it is also a grace. The Church of tomorrow will be humbler, more evangelical, more compassionate.

Many priests and religious live out their vocation with generosity and total self-giving. Let us not forget that most of them are good shepherds, also wounded by this crisis. Accompanying them, praying for them, and encouraging them is part of the path to healing.

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## Conclusion: A Call to Holiness from the Cross

Faced with this scandal, some walk away, others remain silent, and still others lash out in anger. But there are also those who—with broken hearts—cling to Christ more than ever. He alone can heal these wounds. And He does so not from power, but from the cross.

Let us remember the words of St. Paul: *“Where sin abounded, grace abounded all the more”* (Romans 5:20). May this overflowing of grace move us to live with greater commitment, to build healthy and safe communities, and to become a Church that does not cover up, but consoles; that does not protect privileges, but protects the little ones.