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Anniversary of the election of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Chair of Peter

The Church is Immaculate and Indefectible

After each campaign of attacks against her, the Church always emerges stronger and more splendid than before

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The barrage of reports which, in recent weeks, has attempted to stain the Catholic Church, using the abuses of children committed by a portion of Catholic priests as a pretext, has reached an inconceivable climax. Bent on fanning the flames, various agencies of social communication have delved into the past, in search of new allegations involving the Vicar of Christ on Earth, Pope Benedict XVI, in which, however, they have roundly failed.

That there are disordered and unworthy priests, no one can deny; that horrible abuses have been committed, and certainly even in a number greater than recorded, must be acknowledged. But to use the very grave, yet isolated offences of a minority of clerics to tarnish priests at large, is an injustice. And to employ this as a guise to attempt to overthrow the Church is diabolical.

However, the more the Church is infiltrated by the libertarian, relativistic and neo-pagan spirit of our age, the more it may be feared that crimes of paedophilia will occur. From this stems the need to implant a rigorous selection system in seminaries, so that only those who do not have a propensity to conspire with the world, but who want to teach the practice of Catholic doctrine in all its purity and to serve as an example may be admitted as candidates to the priesthood.

The present publicity campaign against the Church undermines a truth of which history provides an unequivocal testimony: it was the Catholic Church that freed the world from immorality, and it is because the world is rejecting the Church that it has once again sunk into the mire from which it was rescued.

The pagan world was a veritable hell

The majority of Western population tends to take it as a given that the world has always cultivated the values to which we are accustomed. The most sacrosanct of these values continue to be cherished, although they have suffered a generalized decadence in the last 50 years, heightened since the beginning of the new millennium. These include the traditional family, protection of childhood innocence, sense of modesty, good manners, decency of dress, honour, mutual respect, a spirit of charity, human dignity, and solidarity.

However, such standards were not always prized by humanity. Before Our Lord Jesus Christ preached the Good News of the Gospel among men, the world was submerged in a prolonged and terrible night, in which moral licentiousness, egoism, cruelty, inhumanness and oppression reigned, as history illustrates.¹

From this picture, it cannot be surmised that all Romans, Greeks, and “barbarians” were profligates. There were minorities at variance with that situation, and they were prepared to receive the evangelical preaching with the eagerness of a castaway who finds a lifeline. Hence the rapid expansion of the Catholic Church through the Roman world, and, finally, the conversion of the Empire in the year 313 of the Christian era.

Degrading religions

That which is held in horror today by the sound portion of Western public opinion, was, in the world dominated by paganism, par for the course. It suffices to recall what Grecian-Roman mythology says of the various gods of its pantheon.

These gods formed a fearful and violent band of miscreants. They were adulterers, liars, thieves, oppressors and murders guilty of patricide, matricide and fratricide. They were cruel, selfish, treacherous, slothful, false, shameless and incestuous, and included fornicators, degenerates, and paedophiles. Zeus (the Jupiter of the Romans), the chief deity of this crew, was not only a brute who practiced cannibalism, devouring one of his daughters and murdering other close relatives, but he was also an uncontrollable adulterer who victimized many single and married “gods”, violated his sisters and daughters-in-law, ravished his own daughter and even his mother, and who, moreover, kept a young boy whom he had abducted as a lover.²

1 It is necessary to hold the Jewish people exempt from this observation. However, even some practices of the Chosen People were mitigated by Our Lord Jesus Christ or later modified.

2 Cf. E.g. ARISTIDES, *Apologeticum* (written between 123 and 127 B.C.); JUSTINUS, *Apologia Prima*, (between 153 and 155 A.D.); ARNOBIUS, *Disputationum Adversus Gentes*, (between 304 and 312 A.D.).

Accounts of these infamies were retold in texts used for the instruction of children in grammar, rhetoric, and poetry in the schools of that era, as pointed out by Christian apologists in their epoch.

The pagan religion, therefore, exercised a malefic dominion over society, proposing the iniquities of the gods as examples to be imitated. On the other hand, society influenced religion so that the myths reflected the customs then in vogue.

Immorality, cruelty and oppression

In that pagan environment, the situation of women was appalling. In general they had almost no rights, and were practically considered slaves of their husbands, that is, when they had the privilege of being married.

The religions themselves, even the most elevated ones, led women — and naturally men as well — into great depravity. That of the Chaldeans, for example, was sinister and corrupt, featuring lubricious practices in the temples. The Phoenician religion also incited the degradation of women.

Herodotus is among those who furnish us with information on the “sacred prostitution” practiced in the temples of Babylonia, Assyria, Greece, Cyprus and in other places.³ The “priestesses” frequently entered the temple while still very young, given over by their own parents. The famous “Code of Hammurabi,” promulgated by this king of Babylonia (circa 1793 to 1750 B.C.), dedicates some passages to the regulation of this practice.⁴

The cult of Cybele and Attis, which originated in Phrygia and spread to Greece and Rome, led to scabrous practices in public. Since Attis had mutilated himself, losing his masculinity, his celebrations included the auto-mutilation of many men carried out in the midst of a delirious multitude that danced and howled while deafening music was played on flutes, cymbals and drums.⁵

Greece had numerous temples dedicated to Venus, but not one consecrated to legitimate love between spouses. Once a year, Athens and other cities held an event in which an enormous phallic sculpture was borne in procession. Men and women went through the streets, singing, leaping and dancing around this idol.

3 HERODOTUS. Book 1, “Clio”, n. 181; n. 199. In Kitson, J., *Herodotus Website*, www.herodotus-website.co.uk, 2003.

4 *The Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon, About 2250 B.C.*, English translation by Robert Francis Harper, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1904, n. 181, 182.

5 MARTINDALE, C. “A religião dos romanos”, in *Christus – História das religiões*. São Paulo, Saraiva, 1956, v. II, p. 560-561.

Oppression of women

Feminine honour was being damaged by the custom of polygamy which was generalized in many regions, while, in other places, polyandry was in force.⁶ Equally degrading was incest, especially common in Persia,⁷ but also in Greece.⁸

In India, among the cruel pagan practices spanning millennia, custom demanded that the widow be burned alongside the body of her husband.⁹

The Code of Hammurabi is replete with norms that reflect the state of the oppression of women in ancient civilizations; women were often punished with death, slavery or repudiation.¹⁰

Even in Rome and Greece, ancient laws with regard to woman were inequitable,¹¹ and even persons such as the austere Cato favoured grave injustices in this respect.¹² In Athens, to prevent partiality toward daughters in questions of inheritance, the law fell into an even greater aberration in encouraging incest to resolve such problems,¹³ even demanding the destruction of two already constituted homes, if need be.¹⁴

In Rome, during the era in which the Good News of Jesus Christ was being preached, the institution of the family found itself in a grave crisis. Abortion and child abandonment reached shocking proportions. The birth-rate decreased. Wealthy men preferred to remain single and surround themselves with innumerable slave women rather than subject themselves to the inconveniences of marriage.¹⁵

The situation of children before the all-powerful state

There was no individual liberty in Greece and in Rome as their admirers would have us believe: the citizen lived in virtue of the State. In his Republic, Plato himself professed an all-powerful State, and even Aristotle considered it the supreme ideal.¹⁶

6 PSEUDO-CLEMENT. *The Recognitions*, c. 24.

7 *Ibid.*, c. 27.

8 COULANGES, Fustel de. *La Cité Antique*. Paris: Flammarion, 1984. p. 78, 81, 82.

9 PSEUDO-CLEMENT. *The Recognitions*, c. 25.

10 Cf. *The Code of Hammurabi*, *op. cit.*, n. 110, 132, 141, 143.

11 COULANGES, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 81-82.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 82.

15 DANIEL-ROPS, [Henri Pétiot]. *A Igreja dos Apóstolos e dos Mártires*. São Paulo, Quadrante, 1988. p. 126-130.

16 KOLOGRIVOF, Ivan (Dir). *Ensaio de suma católica contra os sem-Deus*. Rio de Janeiro: José

The Greco-Roman family was also totalitarian from certain perspectives. Thus, Roman law gave a dictatorial power to the pater familias.¹⁷ In Greece, similar laws were in vigour. The father had the right to reject his newborn son, or to sell him as a slave.¹⁸ He could also condemn his wife, son, daughter, or any other dweller in his house to death — the sentence being executed without delay; the State authorities did not interfere.¹⁹

In Sparta, comments Coulanges, “the State had the right not to tolerate that its citizens be deformed or ill-constituted. It therefore ordered the father to whom such a child was born, to make it die.”²⁰ According to the same author, this law was equally found in the ancient codes of Rome and even Aristotle and Plato included this practice in their legislative proposals.

In Carthage and Phoenicia, children were offered in sacrifice to the idols; in Rome and Greece they were used in divination rites.²¹ In various places, children and adolescents could be punished with death for a misdeed committed by the father.²²

At the same time that the State gave the father unlimited power at home, it tyrannically controlled him in the education of his sons. Among the Greeks, the State was the absolute master of education, and Plato justifies this, since “the parents should not be free to send or not send their sons to masters that the city chooses, because children belong less to their parents than to the city.”²³ The State considered that the body and soul of each citizen belonged to it, and assumed the child when it had completed seven years of age.²⁴

Pitiless and widespread slavery

Slavery was such an accepted institution in the ancient world that slaves commonly made up the majority of the population. In Rome, in the time of Augustus, more than a third of the population was constituted of slaves.²⁵

The owner of a slave had over total rights over him. A slave was not, properly speaking, a

Olympio, 1939. p. 380-381.
17 JOLOWICZ, Herbert Felix; NICHOLAS, Barry. *Historical Introduction to the Study of Roman Law*. London: Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 119; Cf. COULANGES, *op. cit.* p. 99.

18 JOLOWICZ, NICHOLAS, *op. cit.*, p. 114; COULANGES, *op. cit.*, p. 100-101. See also, *The Code of Hammurabi*, *op. cit.*, n. 117.

19 JOLOWICZ, NICHOLAS, *op. cit.*, p. 119; COULANGES, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

20 COULANGES, *op. cit.*, p. 266.

21 JUSTINUS, *Apologia Prima*, c. 18: PG 6, 370.

22 DANIEL-ROPS, *op. cit.*, p. 162; *The Code of Hammurabi*, *op. cit.*, n. 210, 230.

23 COULANGES, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

24 COULANGES, *Ibid.*; MARROU, Henri Irénée. *A History of Education in Antiquity*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982, p. 20, 23, 31.

25 DANIEL-ROPS, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

man; he was a thing, *res mancipi*.²⁶ The owner not only had the right to cohabit with the wife of his slave without committing adultery, but also to do as he wished with his children, and if he wounded or killed them he committed no wrong.²⁷

In Roman law there were clauses concerning slaves that sparked great cruelties. In the time of Nero, for example, a high-standing magistrate was assassinated by one of his slaves. “The Senator, after long discussion, decided to apply the old law to all the servants of the house, which condemned, to the torture of the cross, all of the slaves who had not had the shrewdness to protect their master. There were such popular protests at this terrible sentence that the 400 condemned had to be executed under army guard.”²⁸

There have always been one or another slave-owner who treated his slaves humanely or – more rarely – with respect, but it would be naive to think that this was the typical attitude.

Bloody Savagery

In Antiquity, killing was viewed with indifference, as being a natural happening in the life of peoples. The massacre of a population of a city caused neither surprise nor indignation.

The proclivity for bloody sacrifices was linked to various rites of paganism. In Greece, the old religion considered it fitting to offer human holocausts in payment to the gods. These sacrifices, common among the Greeks of distant eras, later decreased, but did not completely disappear. In the second century of the Christian Era, human lives were still sacrificed in Arcadia, in honour of Lyceum Zeus.²⁹

In Rome, the spectacle most prized by the people was that of men dying, and the gladiator fights in Rome were occasions of pitiless slaughters. “In the morning, says Seneca, men are thrown to the lions and bears; after mid-day, they are thrown [at will] to the spectators. The end for all fighters had to be death, and they set themselves to work with iron and fire, until the arena was emptied.”³⁰ In these “sessions” which began at mid-day, those condemned to death were compelled to mutually execute each other until the last one. Both this custom as well as that of feeding beasts with human flesh helps us “to understand the pleasure-seeking ferocity with which the Romans vented themselves in anti-Christian persecutions,” observes Daniel-Rops, and concludes: “As re-

26 JOLOWICZ, NICHOLAS, *op. cit.*, p. 133-138, 277.

27 WEISS, Juan-Bautista. *Historia Universal*. V. 3. Barcelona: Tipografia La Educación, 1928, p. 390-391.

28 DANIEL-ROPS, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

29 HUBY, J., “A religião dos gregos”, in *Christus – História das Religiões*. São Paulo, Saraiva, 1956, vol. II, p. 514.

30 WEISS, *op. cit.*, p. 658-659.

volting as we find these scenes, in which Christians would also be victims, they were normal in Rome. And rare, very rare, were spectators who manifested their disapproval.”³¹

Panem et circenses became known as the ideal formula to appease the multitude and also feed its growing thirst for blood. It was, equally, one of the causes of its deterioration.

The scourge of paedophilia

What is denominated by today’s press as paedophilia was largely practiced in the ancient world, under the protection of law, through the influence of the pagan religions.

In Greece, the sexual corruption of boys, more precisely called pederasty, was carried out as a legalized practice.³² Every adult male who was not a slave, had the right to practice it. Such was the custom in Persia and in other places, where it was maintained for centuries. Rome also became contaminated by the Grecian evil, to the point that many emperors procured male adolescents as lovers.³³

Boys who were considered comely, if they had been made prisoners of war or who had been abducted or sold by their parents, were mutilated for the purpose of feeding the trafficking of eunuchs.³⁴ Not even sons of the nobility escaped.³⁵

In Greece — especially Athens — the victims of pederasty were not only prisoners of war, the abducted, or slaves. Any boy could become the target of the infamous desires of adult men, and the custom was to yield. If a father, endowed with a remnant of moral sensibility, desired to spare his sons this tragedy, he had to act before it happened, employing slaves, who would watch over the son like hawks.³⁶ But, says Aeschylus, many parents desired to have beautiful sons, even though they knew that this would make them the target of predators.³⁷

The schools — the highly acclaimed Academies — were places where students, from the age of

31 DANIEL-ROPS, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

32 DEMAUSE, Lloyd. *Foundations of Psychohistory*. New York: Creative Roots, 1982, p 50-53. As the author demonstrates, Rome was not free of this problem.

33 An example of this was Hadrian, whose unhealthy attachment to a young boy is romanticized by Marguerite Yourcenar in “Mémoires d’Hadrien.”

34 HERODOTUS, *op. cit.* Book 3, “Thalia”, n. 92; Book 8, “Urania”, n. 105.

35 *Ibid.*, Book 3, “Thalia”, n. 48; Book 6, “Erato”, n. 32.

36 AFARY, Janet; ANDERSON, Kevin B. *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005. p. 148.

37 WOHL, Victoria. *Love Among the Ruins: The Erotics of Democracy in Classical Athens*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 6.

12 or even younger,³⁸ became the prey of the masters.³⁹ The Athenian laws went so far as to protect and encourage this practice, even regulating flirtation and “love-making” between men and boys.⁴⁰

Greeks such as Solon, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Xenophon, Thucydides, Aeschines and Aristophanes,⁴¹ famous in the world of literature, the arts, philosophy and politics, practiced and extolled pederasty.

Greek philosophy reached the point of debating this infamous practice, without ever completely condemning it. Even Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were not exempt from this evil.⁴² In *Charmides*, Plato refers to an adolescent of this name, as a lover praising his beloved, speaking of his attractiveness and of the emotions that he produced. In the *Symposium*, the character Phaedrus waxes lyrical in describing a happy and successful army, entirely composed of men-lovers and boy-beloveds.⁴³ Nevertheless, finally attracted by more elevated ideas, Plato progressed from his conditional approval of pederasty in his early dialogues, to the formal condemnation of this vice in his last work, *The Laws*. In the meantime, his attempts, like those of some stoics, to propose a “chaste” pederasty were received with sarcasm by the people, and remained without result. In effect, “platonic love” is very difficult to practice, since with regard to chastity, man is not able to remain permanently on the middle term.⁴⁴

The Greeks stooped to consider the natural relationship between man and woman as inferior to the relationship between man and boy. In a society in which this type of conduct influenced even the ideal of the State, the woman would have been despised,⁴⁵ relegated to the role of mere reproducer.

A historical-philosophical work such as *Erotes*, from the second or third century A.D, attributed by many to Lucian of Samosata presents a dialogue between two Greeks who seriously discuss which type of love is superior...Similarly, Lucian approaches this theme in the tenth Dialogue of the *Courtesans*. Plutarch, in *Erotikus*, with all seriousness analyses which attraction — for woman or for boys — is most interesting for an adult man. Fortunately, contrary to *Erotes*, he concludes that the ideal is truly monogamous marriage.

38 DEMAUSE, *op. cit.*, p 51. The author cites Plutarch, who refers to the existence of the same evil in Rome.

39 WOHL, *op. cit.*, p. 150; AFARY, ANDERSON, *op. cit.*, p. 148; MARROU, *op. cit.*, p. 26-37.

40 WOHL, *op. cit.*, p. 226; AFARY, ANDERSON, *op. cit.*, p. 148-149; MARROU, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

41 WOHL, *op. cit.*, p. 87, 226 *et passim*; AFARY, ANDERSON, *op. cit.*, p. 4, 148. MARROU, *op. cit.*, p. 366, praises the silence of Homer regarding pederasty, which constituted an honourable exception among the writers of the time. It seems that he “decided to ignore a well-known institution of his time.”

42 MARROU, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

43 WOHL, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

44 MARROU, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

45 WOHL, *op. cit.*, p. 8, 48; AFARY, ANDERSON, *op. cit.*, p. 144, 145, 150, 151.

In Rome, girls could also be the victims of sexual violence. This can be gathered from the words of Saint Justin, in his Apologetics, where he vituperates the custom of rejected children — boys and girls — **being made slaves for prostitution**: “And as the ancients are said to have reared herds of oxen, or goats, or sheep, or grazing horses, so now we see you rear children only for this shameful use; and for this pollution a multitude of females and hermaphrodites, and those who commit unmentionable iniquities, are found in every nation. [...] And there are some who prostitute even their own children and wives, and some are openly mutilated for the purpose of sodomy.”⁴⁶

This is the world, without the presence of the holy Church of God. The picture presented here, although incomplete, is sufficiently tragic to expose the maladies of pagan Antiquity and give us a notion of the shock that ensued at the time in which the message of the Gospel began to hold up opposed, well-ordered and holy values.

The shock of Gospel values with worldly counter-values

The message of Jesus Christ threw the worm-eaten ancient world off balance. It censured libertinism and cruelty, and upheld the freedom to practice the good, chastity, virginity, innocence, conjugal fidelity, love of enemies, charity, abnegation, goodness toward the weak, and dignity for all human beings, created in the image and likeness of God.

A particular horror of the sin of paedophilia was instilled in souls by our Divine Master, with words of extreme severity: “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depths of the sea” (Mt 18:6).

Paganism could not remain indifferent in face of the sublimity of the Gospel. Only two reactions remained to it: that of becoming enchanted by and submitting to the gentle yoke of God, or of hating and persecuting. Not a few converted. Many, however, remained stuck in the mire, and in their hatred, brought many millions of Christians to martyrdom.

Nevertheless, the blood of the martyrs began to be the seed of new Christians, according to the celebrated affirmation of Tertullian.⁴⁷ The spectacle of men and women, the elderly, adults in the prime of life, vigorous youths, virgins, children — all confessing faith in Jesus Christ and stepping resolutely toward death — drew admiration from many spectators, resulting in an ever-growing number of conversions.

46 JUSTINUS, *op. cit.*, 27: PG 6, 370. See also DEMAUSE, *op. cit.*, p. 52-53.

47 *Apologia*, 50,13.

Paganism needed, then, to make use of another weapon to try to reverse the situation: defamation and calumny. As the Christian apologists of those first centuries observe, the pagans began accusing the Christians of the very wrongs committed by paganism.

It is noteworthy that one of the accusations was that of paedophilia aggravated by incest.⁴⁸ Saint Justin comments: “The things which you do openly and with applause, [...] these you lay to our charge.”⁴⁹ And Arnobius upbraids the pagans: “How shameful, how bold it is to censure, in another, that which the accuser himself practices — taking advantage of the occasion to insult and accuse others of things that can be turned back against himself!”⁵⁰

This is to say that those pagans acted like thieves who, in the act of stealing, cry out, “stop thief!”

A civilization governed by the Gospel

The Catholic Church finally won out, by virtue of the intrinsic strength of the good. And, little by little, aided by divine grace which never fails, she took the Greco-Latin decadents and the Germanic barbarians, converted them and educated them, and inspired the building up of a brilliant civilization whose apex, hitherto unattained, occurred in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

In this epoch, according to Pope Leo XIII, “States were governed by the philosophy of the Gospel.” Then, “the power and divine virtue of Christian wisdom had diffused itself throughout the laws, institutions, and morals of the people, permeating all ranks and relations of civil society.” The harmonious relation between religious and temporal power, “bore fruits important beyond all expectation, whose remembrance is still, and always will be, in renown, witnessed to as they are by countless proofs which can never be blotted out or ever obscured by any craft of any enemies.”⁵¹

It was during this time that the Church developed scholasticism, built the Gothic cathedrals (with their stained-glass windows and monuments), created the universities and the hospitals, encouraged the sciences and technical progress, perfected international relations between states, abolished slavery, advanced social progress, raised the condition of women, in such a way that, in the fourteenth century, Europe had far surpassed all the other continents.

As a scholar of medieval technical progress of that epoch illustrates, “it was the building, for

48 MINUCIUS FELIX, *Octavius*, cap. 9; LECLERCQ, Henri, P. Verbete: “Accusation Contre les Chrétiens”, in *Dictionnaire d’Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*. V. 1, 1^e partie. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1924. Cols. 274, 275.

49 JUSTINUS, *op.cit.*, c. 27.

50 ARNOBIUS, *op. cit.*, l. 2., n. 70.

51 LEO XIII. Encyclical *Immortale Dei*. 1/11/1885, n. 21.

the first time in history, of a complex civilization which rested, not on the backs of sweating slaves or coolies, but primarily on non-human power.”⁵²

The greater the advances made by historical and scientific studies on this material, the more this truth will come to light and unmask the myth that the Middle Ages was a backward era of oppression. Specialized literature in this field is multiplying.⁵³

Why accuse only the Church?

Notwithstanding, there are always minorities at odds with the dominion of virtue, of truth and of good, so that, periodically, the Church sees itself the victim of new onslaughts.

One of the preferred procedures continues to be that of accusing the Church of precisely the wrongs that the world itself is not ashamed to commit. Who are the principal destructors of childhood innocence today? Who promotes an unstoppable pornography, which respects neither age nor dignity, and which incites all types of sexual crimes? Who are the ones exerting generalized pressure on schools to initiate children in immoral practices? Who pushes for changes to the law so that Christian influence may be abolished and substituted with the paganism of old? These questions beg answers; it is a theme worthy of a future study.

Let us consider the accusation of paedophilia. As specialists affirm, based on the latest research, the majority of these crimes are committed in the family home itself, and the abusers are principally the stepfathers, who are followed, sadly, by biological parents, other relatives and by the boyfriends of the relatives of victims.⁵⁴ Curiously, never has an adversary of the Church requested

52 WHITE, Lynn. *Medieval Religion and Technology*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of Los Angeles Press, 1978, p. 22.

53 See, e.g., WOODS, Thomas E. *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization*. Washington, DC: Regnery, 2005; STARK, Rodney. *The Victory of Reason. How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Sciences*. New York: Random House, 2005; PERNOUD, Régine. *Pour en finir avec le Moyen Âge*. Paris: Seuil, 1977; SWEENEY, Jon M. *Beauty Awakening Belief*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2009; JAKI, Stanley L. *Patterns or Principles and Other Essays*. Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1995; JONES, Terry. *Medieval Lives*. London: BBC Books, 2004; GRANT, Edward. *God and Reason in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; LINDBERG, David C. (editor). *Science in the Middle Ages*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

54 There is abundant literature available on this subject. See, for example, CARROLL, Janell L.; WOLPE, Paul Root. *Sexuality and Gender in Society*. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1996: “In fact, just having a stepfather is one of the most powerful predictors of sexual abuse” (p.553). FINKELHOR, David. “Child Sexual Abuse”, in ROSENBERG, Mark L.; FENLEY, Mary Ann (editors). *Violence in America. A Public Health Approach*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991: “Several other factors have emerged from the community studies as being consistently associated with a higher risk for abuse: (1) when the child lives without one of the biological parents, (2) when the mother is unavailable to the child either as a result of employment outside the home or because of disability or illness, (3) when

a serious study on the relationship between the degradation of the family — the main cause of the existence of millions of stepfathers — and the crimes of paedophilia, or demanded an investigation on the dangers of bringing boyfriends into the house where minors reside.

In passing, it can be noted that the mass of paedophiles is made up of married men. It is also noteworthy that all religions have members involved in cases of paedophilia, and some in gigantic proportions. Why, then, raise an international campaign only against the Catholic Church?

Unmistakable proof of the sanctity of the Church

We emphasize once again: it was the Catholic Church who, ever faithful to the teachings of her Founder, ended the practice of paedophilia in the West and inspired a horror of it.

Therefore, those who attack the Church in this regard are using against her, a value that is her own, thereby implicitly recognizing that she is unassailable from the standpoint of the counter-values of the world.

In other words, the opponents themselves are providing evidence that the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church is substantially holy.

The Catholic Church censures the world because it is corrupted. She calls for a high standard of chaste and pure conduct. The thick and fierce onslaught of the enemies consists in accusing

the child reports that the parents' marriage is unhappy or full of conflict, (4) when the child reports having a poor relationship with the parents or being subject to extremely punitive behaviour or child abuse, (5) when the child reports having a stepfather" (p. 85). According to various studies, girls who live with a stepfather comprise the highest risk group. For this reason, Finkelhor, a respected authority in this material, thinks that families in which there are stepfathers should be the focus of policies to prevent abuse. (FINKELHOR, David; and associates. *A Sourcebook on Child Sexual Abuse*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1986, p. 77-79). In the same vein, Vatican Radio, in its 5/4/2010 issue of *Radiogiornale*, expressed its surprise with the paradoxical campaign against the Church, recalling that, according to official data, the principal group guilty of the sexual abuse of children is not priests. This is also demonstrated by a report of the American government, from 2008, according to which "more than 64% of abuses are perpetrated by parents, relatives, or other persons living in the same house; therefore, within the ambit of family relationships. In US schools, almost 10% of youths suffer abuse. Regarding the Catholic priests involved, they are estimated to be less than 0.03%." Recent studies carried out in other countries indicate that the data referring to the United States repeats itself, with slight variations, throughout the West. One statistic published by the "Children's Portal" of the Secretary of State for Human Development of the State of Paraíba, Brazil, shows that 90% of paedophilia cases occur within the home, with the most frequent incidents occurring in the following order: father, step-father, brother, uncle, grandfather, godparents and neighbours(<http://crianca.pb.gov.br/contador/?p=479>). The Brazilian magazine *Veja* (18/3/2010) reports that, in the Brazilian middle class, in 37% of paedophilia cases, the abuser is the stepfather, and in 34% of cases, it is the biological father. In addition, in classes C and D, 74% of victims are of separated parents.

her of not practicing the morals that she herself implanted in society. This is the essence of the current publicity campaign with respect to paedophilia.

But how to implicate the Church for the misconduct of a minority of its members? One of the most authoritative studies regarding the problem of paedophilia, by Philip Jenkins, analyses the journalistic techniques that are used to emphasize, not the offenses of individuals, who happen to be priests, but rather their institutional context as giving rise to their behaviour.⁵⁵ Suggestive titles, plays on words, and well-studied terms are used, such as, for example, giving a book the attention-grabbing title: “Lead Us Not into Temptation.” In turn, television programs about cases of paedophilia present a background of liturgical ceremonies, Gregorian music and priests in cassocks, so as to stigmatize the Church as a whole, and to produce a visual association between that which is distinctly Catholic and the stereotype of lascivious and shameless priests.⁵⁶

Although doctors, teachers, nurses and other professionals rank high in number among perpetrators of paedophilia crimes,⁵⁷ would anyone be so absurd as to accuse all members of these professions, and debase the entire group, because of the crimes of a minority?

Meanwhile, this is what is being done in the case of Catholic priests. The shock that the sexual offences of a priest causes in public opinion — a shock which is warranted, since the Catholic Church is the only institution that expects its members to be spotlessly pure and its priests to be saints — is something that the adversaries know well how to exploit.

The substantial sanctity of the Church

The question remains as to how the Church can maintain her holiness in face of evidence that some priests have committed these grave crimes.

In reality, the strongest argument against the Catholic Church has always been the lives of bad Catholics. However, the presence of unworthy members within the Church of Christ should not cause surprise. Jesus Himself compared His Church to a net that catches good and bad fish (cf. Mt 13:47-50); to a field where the weeds grow together with the wheat (cf. Mt 13:24-30); to a wedding feast, at which one of the guests appears without a wedding robe (cf. Mt 22:11-14).⁵⁸

Nevertheless, the Church will always remain stainless, as Saint Paul emphasizes: “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendour, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind — yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish” (Ef 5:25-27).

55 JENKINS, Philips. *Pedophiles and Priests. Anatomy of a Contemporary Crisis*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. p. 55.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 56.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

58 TRESE, Leo. *A fé explicada*. São Paulo: Quadrante, 2007. p. 147-148.

The same does not apply in other earthly institutions. Since they are merely human, the failures of their members may tarnish them. The Church is the only institution that has a divine dimension. Therefore, despite the faults of its human dimension, its substance always remains pure. She is holy, because her Founder is holy: she is the Immaculate Spouse of Christ. Only men within the Church are sinners; Holy Mother Church cannot sin.

“She is therefore holy,” Paul VI points out, “though she has sinners in her bosom, because she herself has no other life but that of grace: it is by living by her life that her members are sanctified; it is by removing themselves from her life that they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity.”⁵⁹ Therefore, this rule applies to any member of the Church, including those who belong to the clergy: they only err when their love for the Church diminishes and they slacken in their commitment to her.

“In this perspective,” says Cardinal Biffi, Archbishop Emeritus of Bologna, “it becomes clear that all of our faults — small or great — not only constitute an infidelity to the love that links us to the Father, belittling the redeeming work of Christ, and resisting the sanctifying action of the Holy Spirit, but they also outrage and inflict suffering upon the Church. Every contradiction with our baptism is always an ingratitude against she who brought us forth in baptism; it is an attack against her beauty as Spouse of the Lord; beauty that, in human eyes, becomes obscured through our reprehensible act. [...] But we, at least, though we sin almost as they, are accustomed to daily asking for the pardon of our dear Mother for all that we have thought, said or done in a spirit that is not fully ‘ecclesial.’”⁶⁰

Sinners do not belong to the Church by reason of their sins, says Cardinal Journet, “but for that which still remains in them of gifts from God, by reason of sacramental character, faith, theological hope, their prayers, and their remorse. They are linked, so to speak, to the just. They are found in the Church provisionally, to be, one day, either definitively reintegrated or separated from her. They are in the Church, not in a salvific manner, but as paralyzed persons in respect to her more elevated and significant activities.”⁶¹

Clearly, the Church “does not expel sinners from within her bosom, but only their sin; she continues to maintain them in the hope of being able to convert them. She fights within them against the sins they have committed.”⁶²

Emphasizing the sanctity of the Church which is not stained by the sins of her children,

59 PAUL VI. *Sollemnis Professio Fidei*, 19: AAS 60 (1968) 440.

60 BIFFI, Cardinale Giacomo. *Meditazione Gesù di Nazareth, la fortuna di appartenergli*. Giubileo Diocesano dei Catechisti, Cattedrale di San Pietro, Bologna, 29/10/2000.

61 JOURNET, Charles. *Il mistero della Chiesa secondo il Concilio Vaticano II*. Brescia: Queriniana, 1967, p. 84-85.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Cardinal Journet calls attention to her intimate relationship with each of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity: from all eternity, the Catholic Church is known and loved by the Father. She is founded by His Son, who came to redeem us by the Cross. And she is vivified by the Holy Spirit, who came to establish His dwelling in her. “The entire Church thus appears as a people united, in the image of the oneness of the Father, Son and Spirit, de unitate Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti plebs adunata.”⁶³

The relationship of the Mother of God with the Holy Church is another factor of her sanctity. Knowledge of the true doctrine on Mary will always be a key to understanding the mystery of Christ and of the Church. The Sanctity of Our Lady is reflected in the Church; her virginity, her purity, her openness to the will of God. The angels and the blessed in heaven also preserve the Church in sanctity, ennobling her worship of God.⁶⁴

All of the works of the Church have the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God⁶⁵ as their goal. However, she could not realize this finality if she were not holy. Thus, even if, on this earth, she be governed by and composed of sinners, she is indefectibly holy, as is proven by the abundant fruits of sanctification that she has produced.⁶⁶ One outstanding sign of this sanctity is the voluntary observance of the evangelical counsels, by which hundreds of thousands of men and women renounce everything that they could legitimately have in this life – family, possessions, freedom to make their own decisions – to totally imitate Jesus Christ.⁶⁷

The Church has the courage to demand that all of her children combat sin. Many souls say “yes” to this appeal; however, the good that they practice generally remains hidden. Evil receives much more publicity in this world, since its boldness grabs everyone’s attention. Be that as it may, men and women of extraordinary sanctity are never lacking to the Church,⁶⁸ and as an instrument of sanctification, she undergoes a continual renewal.⁶⁹

It is, therefore, a grave error to propose modifications to the ecclesial structure. When “people start to question the value of the priestly commitment as a total entrustment to God through apostolic celibacy and as a total openness to the service of souls,” noted Benedict XVI during his trip to Brazil, “and preference is given to ideological, political and even party issues, the structure of total consecration to God begins to lose its deepest meaning. How can we not be deeply saddened by this?”⁷⁰

63 *Ibid.*, p. 31. See also: VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 4.

64 JOURNET, *op. cit.*, p. 91-95.

65 VATICAN COUNCIL II. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 10.

66 ARANGÜENA, José Ramón Pérez. *A Igreja. Iniciação à eclesiologia*. Lisboa: Diel, 2002. p. 110.

67 JOURNET, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

68 KEMPF, Constantino. *A santidade da Igreja no século XIX*. Porto Alegre: Barcellos, Bertaso & Cia., 1936. p. 11-12.

69 VATICAN COUNCIL II. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 15.

70 BENEDICT XVI. *Speech. Meeting with the Bishops of Brazil*. Catedral da Sé, São Paulo,

A pastor solicitous for his flock

Some newspapers have tried to implicate Pope Benedict XVI in the concealment of crimes, during his tenure as prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and some strident voices have gone so far as to suggest his imprisonment.

From our viewpoint, this is the greatest error of the adversary in the current campaign against the Church. Its insolence is what has most caused a generalized indignation, even helping to rouse and stimulate the fervour of sleeping Catholics.

The injustice of the accusers becomes more flagrant when facts prove that it was Benedict XVI, who, while still a Cardinal, did the most to eradicate this problem, a zeal which he has increasingly shown in his occupancy of the Chair of Peter.

The Pastoral letter which he sent to the Catholics of Ireland shortly before Easter, to be read in all the pulpits of the country, is emblematic. In an unprecedented gesture, the Holy Father apologized directly to the victims and their families, expressing his profound dismay for the sinful and criminal acts of the abusers. Addressing himself to the Bishops, he highlighted the “grave errors of judgement” and “failures of leadership” on the part of the Hierarchy. Finally, he emphasized that the Church should resolutely set to work to correct the wrong that was done.

Of equal note is a letter sent in May 2001, by the then Cardinal Ratzinger to the Bishops, ordering that they send him all new and old accusations against clerics. With this initiative, the Holy See took upon itself the investigation of abuses and the punishment of the guilty. From that point, various of the accused had to undergo a complete canonical process, many were dismissed from the clerical state, or voluntarily resigned, while others suffered administrative and disciplinary penalties, including the prohibition to celebrate Mass.

Contrary to what certain sources have rumoured, the letter in question does not prohibit anyone from communicating with the police to denounce possible abuses. In fact, Bishops the world over — including those from the United States, England and Canada — have already adopted procedures for communicating with police authorities, as soon as a case of abuse has been confirmed.

On the other hand, the Vatican has published norms for a more rigorous selection of seminary candidates. Furthermore, it has carried out initiatives such as the Year for Priests which is still in progress, and the International Theological Convention held in Rome at the close of March, with sights on a renewal of the clergy and the elimination of erroneous ideas about the priesthood, caused by a “hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture,”⁷¹ in face of the Second Vatican Council.

11/5/2007.

71 BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*, 22/12/2005.

We hope that this breath of renewal will bring some consolation to the victims of these horrible offences committed by men, who, as representatives of God, should be the primary protectors of children and youth. We sympathize with them and share their suffering and frustration, offering our prayers for them. The tragedy that overshadows them has us painfully recall, once again, the countless children, who in Antiquity, were victims of cruel paganism.

From each persecution the Church emerges strengthened

Looking back at her own history, the Catholic Church can say with Cicero: “Alios vidi ventos, alias prospexi animo procellas.”⁷²

As in previous attacks, she will emerge fortified from the present melee. Countless reactions throughout the world are already anticipating this outcome. In Ireland and Spain, churches were filled during Holy Week — something that has not happened for many years. In the United States, England and other countries of the West, the number of conversions has increased. Various journalists, many of whom are non-Catholics, took up the defence of the Church. Is it necessary to point out that persecutions are indispensable for the glorification of the Spouse of Christ and essential to her renewal? Thus, St. Paul says: “Nam oportet et hereses esse ut et qui probati sunt manifesti fiant in vobis.” (“For there must be also heresies: that they also, who are approved, may be made manifest among you” 1 Cor 11:19).

To accentuate the perpetuity of the Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church, Saint Augustine has left us this wise reflection: “The Church will totter if its foundation shakes; but how can Christ be moved? Since Christ cannot be moved, the Church will remain intact until the end of time.”⁷³

Let us remember that “God is master of the world and of its history.”⁷⁴ It was He himself who decreed that “the gates of Hell” would not prevail against His Church (Mt 16:18).

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72 “I have seen other winds, I have beheld other storms.” (*Orationes*, In Pisonem, 9).

73 *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 103,2,5; PL, 37, 1353.

74 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 314