



The Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith [CDF] and the Issue relating to Children of Catholic Priests.

“The duty proper to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to promote and safeguard [...] morals throughout the Catholic world: for this reason, *everything* which in any way touches such matter falls within its competence.”¹

Canon 384 states, “he [the bishop] is to attend to presbyters [priests] with special concern...he is to protect their rights and see that they correctly fulfill the obligations proper to their state.”² Thus when a priest has not acted “according to his state” the CDF who are charged with “safeguarding the doctrine on the faith and morals of the church”³ ensure that Bishops recognize their own particular onus whereupon a situation, when a priest has fathered a child and does not properly support that child, arises, as indeed he has acted in a manner contrary to Canon Law.

“The right of the child brought into the world and brought up by his own parents’ is a right which recognized by the CDF; the CDF has condemned “division between the physical, psychological and moral elements which constitute [...] families. The CDF recognizes “the inalienable rights of the person [...] among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard are [...] the child’s right to be [...] brought up by his parents.”⁴ In recognizing this right as “inalienable” the CDF further compound the reasoning behind cohesion in the ‘psychological elements which constitute the family’ and consequently condemn ‘elements’ which conflict

Cardinal Muller, Prefect of the CDF has stated as regards support of victims of abuse, the CDF will “always ask the bishop that he is to [put] the pastoral care of the victim [first], clarifying [to] them, that the Congregation will do everything possible

¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Vatican.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_14071997_en.html

² Confidentiality Agreements and Children of Roman Catholic Priests. Thomas Doyle. <http://www.copinginternational.com/confidentiality-agreements>

³ CDF, *ibid.*

⁴ “Instruction on Respect for Human Life ...” Congregation for Doctrine of Faith. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19870222_respect-for-human-life_en.html

[achieve] justice.”⁵ His Eminence rightly highlights the *principle of subsidiarity*, thus, whereupon a victim does not achieve justice at local or diocesan / congregational level, they are encouraged – as per the principle of subsidiarity - by the CDF to continue up the hierarchical ladder, until such time as justice is met, opening the doors of Rome.

“We need [to create] full respect of the person” notes Cardinal Muller, Prefect of the CDF. In respecting the individual, one recognizes “divisions” that fracture “psychological elements” which “constitute families” thus affecting children, children whom Cardinal Muller refers to as, “the poorest of the poor.” In recognizing this ‘poverty’, the CDF consequently bears witness to the need of sound psychological welfare in children, the child’s environment and all that affect the welfare and environment of children, condemning that which divides such environments, and consequently harming the child. The CDF in recognizing childhood “poverty” as well as their “rights,” indirectly highlight the psychological anxiety that exist when fathers are absent from their families, this would include children of priests also. Cardinal Muller, in referencing ‘children who grow up “without their own parents” as “the poorest of the poor,” signals a loss of something essential and basic on behalf of the child, “the solicitous love of parents who renounce themselves for their [children’s] sake.”⁶ In the instance of children of priests, the priest often renounces the child for their own priestly sake. This would certainly constitute an “element” which “divides families.” In recognizing the fact that the CDF condemns “elements” which create ‘division’ the CDF condemn the actions of said aforementioned priests who “denounce” their own children in favor of adult centred reasons, since said actions divide families and the psychological welfare of children.

To conclude, “the duty proper to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to promote and safeguard [...] morals throughout the Catholic world: for this reason, everything which in any way touches such matter falls within its competence.”⁷ One witnesses the commitment of the CDF, toward the welfare of children (which includes children born to priests) and the moral obligation of the church thereof, in recollecting Cardinal Muller’s reference to children who suffer parental division or alienation as “the poorest of the poor”; the denunciation on behalf of the CDF, of elements which cause “psychological division” within families – this would include children of priests. The CDF is charged with safeguarding morals. The church promotes a direct link between children knowing and being cared for by their own parents, condemning psychological divisions. Bearing in mind Cardinal Muller’s comments on children who suffer parental absence as “the poorest of the poor”, one is heartened by the commitment of the CDF - their

⁵ “The Curia Against the Pope?” Guan Guido Vecchi.

http://roma.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/17_marzo_04/curia-contro-papa-cliche-pedofilia-chiesa-compatta-be8a0456-012c-11e7-b3e3-afa0190eaf5.shtml?refresh_ce-cp

⁶ Cardinal Muller in “Cardinal Muller and the Defence of Sacramental Marriage” by Hickson, Maiké, 2014. <http://voiceofthefamily.com/cardinal-muller-and-the-defence-of-sacramental-marriage/>

⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Vatican.

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_14071997_en.html

recognition of the right of the child to be “brought up by his [or her] parents” – and denunciation of elements which cause ‘division’ consequently affecting children’s welfare. The child of a priest most often suffers when the priest’s needs are put first, such priests would do well to listen to Cardinal Muller who in recognizing the poverty of children, condemns anything which comes before rights mentioned, along with the CDF, and this applies to all children, most particularly, children of priests.

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