

OST Lecture Series  
Spring 2023  
March 15, 22, 29<sup>th</sup>  
Ron Rolheiser OMI

## **Three Difficult Contemporary Questions: *Clerical Sexual Abuse, A Radically Shifting Sexual Ethos, and Suicide as seen with a Faith Perspective***

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### **Outline for the three sessions ...**

1. **March 15<sup>th</sup> – *Clerical Sexual Abuse***
  2. **March 22<sup>nd</sup> – *A Radically Shifting Sexual Ethos***
  3. **March 29<sup>th</sup> – *Suicide as seen within a Faith Perspective***
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### **Session I – Clerical Sexual Abuse**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A pre-apology, given the sensitivity of the topic

#### **II. Some helpful background on the issue of sexual abuse**

1. The distinction between “*pedophilia*”, “*ephebophilia*”/”*hebephilia*”, and “*sexual irresponsibility*”
2. The frequency of sexual abuse within the culture
  - a. Its frequency among clergy
3. The devastating effects of pedophilia and ephebophilia
4. The nature of the disease of “*pedophilia*”
5. What do the victims most want from the church and from us?
  - To hear their story and acknowledge its truth
  - To not run away from their anger
  - To acknowledge the depth of their pain
  - An explicit apology and one that is an actual apology.
6. The past and the present – the “*fault-line*” of 1990

#### **III. Our Response, Individually and as a Church – We Need to Carry this Scandal Biblically**

## Three preliminary comments

- A. This is a crisis of credibility rather than of faith for a “young” church
- B. An “image” within which to understand this crisis and what it is meant to teach the church and its clergy – the “humiliation and purification” of Tobit
- C. “The church is justified, not because her children do not sin, but because they do.” (Chesterton)

## Some Guidelines for the Long Haul

- *“Sometimes all you can do is to put your mouths to the dust and wait!” (Lamentations)*
    1. Name this issue and all that it implies with honesty
    2. Our first and primary concern must be for the victims of abuse – healing, not self-protection must be our essential intentionality
    3. Listen to the stories of the victims and accept the depth of their pain – and accept their necessary anger.
    4. Accept that carrying this crisis is not a distraction to the real work of the church, it is the real work of the church.
    5. Accept this painful humiliation as a grace-opportunity
    6. Do not distance yourself personally from the issue
    7. “Singing a new song!” Practice compassion as God is compassionate, i.e., a compassion that extends to everyone, including the victimizer.
    8. “Ponder” as Mary did
    9. Re-affirm your faith in God.
    10. Wait patiently within the pain
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