

Lecture 5  
**Crisis in Catholicism**

What are the challenges that Catholicism faces since the Second Vatican Council?

I. Blessings and Curses of thinking for oneself

A. Birth Control

1. Death of John XXIII more conservative successor Paul VI
  - a) Many American Catholics think, any time now
2. appoints diverse commission on birth control
  - a) 72 includes 16 theologians, 13 doctors, men and 5 women
  - b) committee of 9 bishops and 7 cardinals
  - c) majority “no intrinsic evil” not all (8 of 72)
  - d) Against own commission on birth control
  - e) already back to top-down authority
3. Encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* (1968)
  - a) Prohibition of artificial forms of birth control
  - b) Unifying couples and procreation
  - c) Frustrating God’s designs
  - d) Avoid pregnancy during fertile time “natural” “calendar” cath
  - e) Sterilization—vasectomies, tubal ligation
  - f) In vitro fertilization
  - g) but not grievous sin
4. Openly defied
  - a) Protests in Washington DC by priests
5. General ignoring—less than 4% of Catholics practice “natural birth control”

II. Decline in vocations

A. Decline begins after WWII

1. increase in number but also rise in number of Catholics
  - a) 1965 peak year for women in convents
  - b) large number of schools and students increase
  - c) 1955 peak mass attendance with slow decline to 70% in 1965 down to 30% weekly communion (?) now—decline in number of Catholics needed ministry
2. Decreases in number of US men
  - a) In 1975, there were 36,005 diocesan priests in the United States. In 1995 -- 32,300; 2005 -- 28,700. The most recent count, from 2007 -- 27,971. (the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University)
  - b. There were 16,300 seminarians in 1930 and 49,000 in 1965. By 2002 the number had plunged to 4,700:
  - b) 1,575 ordinations to the priesthood in 1965, in 2002 there were 450, a decrease of 350 percent.

- (1) Those ordained older, average age 36 (2002)
- (2) Conservative diocese slightly more but not much and certainly not as much to turn tide
- (3) More over 90 than under 30--greying
- c) 27% of parishes do not have a resident priest (2000USCB study)
  - (1) Catholic parishes (3000 av. 7000) tend to be much larger than Protestant parishes
- 3. From 1966 to 2005—Boston decline 57%; Los Angeles 13%; Chicago 51%; Des Moines 44%; Orlando—gain 25% St. Petersburg gain 84%
  - a) Burn-out as men drive thousands of miles trying to manage three parishes
- 4. Decrease of women going into religious life
  - a) 138,000 sisters in 1945; their numbers swelled to 180,000 by 1965. In 2002, there were 75,000 sisters, with an average age of 68. By 2020, the number of sisters will drop to 40,000--and of these, only 21,000 will be age 70 or under
  - b) Catholic women have alternatives in community and church
  - c) Women religious not wanted to be unpaid labor for the Catholic middle class
    - (1) Moving into social work and parish work
    - (2) More religious religious
  - d) Decline means less apt to be controlled by local bishop

#### B. Reasons

- 1. Liberals: conservatives, celibacy, overwork, authoritarian bishops, male hierarchy—God is punishing
- 2. Conservatives: liberals, small families (birth control) who wants to “give up” one son to God?, homosexual orientations in seminaries, psychological tests that throw out those who believe in pre Vat style as too rigid and divisive, laity with too much power so his presence is optional, feminized church so men don’t want to join—God is punishing

#### C. Reconfiguring Parishes

- 1. circuit riding priests with several parishes
- 2. 14,106 permanent deacons in US (Rev. Paul Sullins, a sociologist at Catholic University in Washington)
  - a) 20% pastoral administrators
  - b) No lay ministers, no parishes
- 3. foreign priests and nuns
  - a) long history of immigrant religious tending to “their own”
  - b) LA and Africa much higher ratio—sometimes as high as six times as few—but now they are missionaries to US
- 4. professional women
  - a) pastoral administrators—33% nuns
  - b) paid staff—women trained in universities and seminaries
- 5. sacramental importance
  - a) V2 heightens importance of Eucharist what happens when no priests? Sacraments as key difference with Protestantism

#### D. What to do?

1. 2005 Gallup Poll 63 percent of American Catholics support allowing priests to be married; 55 percent said women should be allowed to become priests.
2. drop more often go to church: Among weekly Catholic churchgoers, only 48 percent said that priests should be allowed to marry, and only 44 percent want women to become priests.
3. conservatives: distinct, special, privileged – harder on the “moral” codes that ignore birth control issue

### III. Re-assertion of conservative Catholicism

#### A. Pope John Paul II (1978-2005)

1. Polish, traditional, charismatic, active
  - a) Turn to the conservative in America in general
  - b) Approving of devotional life, especially to Mary
  - c) 1983 Canon law priests cannot hold public office
  - d) appointment of most of cardinals who elect pope
  - e) telling sisters to wear habits

#### B. Women's ordination

1. 1994 apostolic letter “On Reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone.”
  - a) We're not talking about this any more
2. ordaining married ex-Episcopalians w/wives in 1980
  - a) 80 in US 800 in UK
  - b) used to put them in administration but with shortage more with families are running parishes
  - c) Eastern rite always with married

#### C. Joseph Ratzinger (2005) Pope Benedict XVI

1. Continues conservative trends
2. Control over theology, re-assertion of views on women and reproduction, contra “cafeteria approach”

#### D. World Catholicism, soon majority of Catholics living south of equator

1. 29% American Catholics are Hispanic (Pew 2008)
2. theologically more conservative but less apt to become “professionals”
3. more ritual oriented, devotion to Mary and the saints
4. women carry on religious traditions

### IV. Sex Abuse Scandals

#### A. Clerical sins

1. throughout long history: concubinage, simony, alcoholism, illegitimate children
2. Ireland too
  - a) Pattern: busy family with lots children, father working two jobs; boys working as altar boys or in teen groups; taking on outings to friend's summer cabins; becoming “favorites”; Teenage boys 10-18 (not strictly pedophilia, child abuse); everything from fondling to rape; scared and embarrassed; sense of betrayal that lonely boy

was favorite and then hurt; confusion—how could someone you like do that? Maybe it was ok. Sometimes willing but initially coerced. Changes in attitude and school grade but silence. Troubles. Counseling. Parents overwhelmed and because they are marginal few believe them.

- b) Boys could initiate but legally they are children
- c) Silence of boys taken as consent

### 3. Boston

- a) Cardinal Bernard Law coverup uncovered in 2002 through reporting by Boston Globe, Courts demanding secret files opened
  - (1) Father John Geoghan
  - (2) Sending to therapy
  - (3) Assuming can change, mercy – understanding
  - (4) Declining number of priests
  - (5) Protecting one's own
  - (6) Very delayed or not turning over to police
  - (7) Moving from parish to parish
  - (8) Eventually not supporting as becomes public
- b) under pressure from own priests eventually moved out of Boston to Vatican
- c) closing parishes and schools, selling property
- d) insurance not covering all

### 4. few priests but costly suits

- a) Orange county 87 victims \$100 m
- b) LA 500 cases \$600 m \$20 m insurance
- c) Hard to get clear picture
- d) Media exploitation

### 5. corporation—bishops turning to lawyers for advice, not victims

### 6. Why?

- a) arrested psychosocial development
  - (1) minor seminaries after 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- b) celibacy? Not obvious as most sexual abuse in families
- c) few priests meaning isolation and freedom to act
- d) fear of women

## B. Results

### 1. bankruptcy and Chapter 11 diocese

- a) postponing legal problems
- b) Portland, 2004 ( \$53 m) Spokane (\$48 m), Tucson (\$11 m), Davenport Iowa, San Diego
- c) Continuing as new people add on, how to find out if they all are true?

### 2. not looking to bishops or guidance on sexuality

### 3. decline in diocesan giving, not to parishes

### 4. fear of priests to be warm or friendly with anyone

## Conclusion

- 1) Church confronting serious issues

- 2) More lay involvement less clerical
- 3) Consolidation of parishes
- 4) Possible ordination of married men, not women