

# Why it went so Wrong?

Reflecting on the  
Victims of abuse



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After obtaining in 2003 a PHD on child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, Demasure worked as a doctoral assistant and assistant professor at the **University of Leuven**. From 2007 till 2011 she was a researcher for the Interdiocesan Services for Pastoral Care for Families (Belgium) and for the **Chaplaincy in the Dutch Military** (The Netherlands). From 2008 to 2014 she held the Chair Sisters of Our Lady of the Cross in Christian Family Studies as an Associate Professor at **Saint Paul University Ottawa (Canada)**. From 2010 to 2014 she was the dean of the faculties of Human Sciences and Philosophy. From 2012 to 2014 Demasure was the president of the Société Internationale de Théologie Pratique.

Since 2014 she is the Executive Director of the Centre for Child Protection of the Gregorian University. This centre elaborates e-learning programs in preventing abuse of children and vulnerable persons. In 2016 the CCP started with a diploma course in safeguarding of minors.



# Some General Reflections

- **KARLIJN DEMASURE (1955):**

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- Homosexuality or pedophilia, by itself, do not explain the scandals of sexual abuse, she points rather to clericalism and the deficit of affective-sexual formation in seminaries.



# World Health Organization (WHO)

- One in five women has been sexually abused or assaulted, compared to one in 13 men.
- The proportion is reversed in the Catholic Church, where two thirds of the victims are boys, mostly teenagers.
- What does not change is the gender of the aggressor, 90% male.
- There are also predators among women , but their violence tends to be more psychological and less sexual in nature.

# KARLIJN DEMASURE (1955)

- She prevents us from jumping into premature conclusions, such as

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- **To identify the aggressor priest with a pedophile.**
- According to the investigations in Ireland, USA or Germany, "we know that about 7% of priests have been abusers, but of them only 1% or maybe a little more were [clinically] pedophiles."
- If we add to these "true pedophiles" the ephhebophiles (those who feel attracted by adolescent boys), Demasure calculates that "the total percentage can be around 15% or 20%".
- How to explain then the remaining 85% of abuse?

# KARLIJN DEMASURE (1955)

- Some immediately respond: it's because they're homosexual.
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- But the investigations do not prove this.
  - Homosexuals do not abuse more than heterosexuals.
  - Aggressors turn to the vulnerable people they have at their disposal, and the conditions have been more favorable in environments such as boys' schools.
  - In the same way, remember, until a few decades ago, there were no girls altar servers.

# KARLIJN DEMASURE (1955)

- Another false myth is that which associates the crisis of sexual abuse with "the infiltration of the culture of 68 within the Church."
- According to statistics she has studied of tried cases: "The abuses begun on average - she argues - ten years after ordination, except in the case of true pedophiles, who act immediately."
- Since the greatest number of cases occurred in the 60s and 70s, this means that the problem is earlier than to the 68 movement.
- What did happen was that victims began to speak more openly about the abuses suffered, and that allowed more cases to come to light.

# KARLIJN DEMASURE (1955)

- The causes of the abuses are complex and diverse.
- Some have "mistakenly" pointed to compulsory celibacy.
- She, however, puts the focus on psychological immaturity. "These are mainly priests who went to the minor seminary when they were 12 years old, and since then they lived surrounded only by men, without dealing with women (not even with their moms and sisters), in a very closed environment and without responsibilities: food was cooked for them, as was laundry and they did not have to confront daily problems like taking care of a sick brother or sister -things people have to do at home and make them mature -... ».
- All this together with what the Pope Francis has called a "clericalist culture", which places the priest in a kind of superior caste.

# KARLIJN DEMASURE (1955)

- **From Sin to Crime**

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- She notes an important evolution in the perception of sexual abuse in the Church.
- “Up to the 1980s, as is still the case today in many dioceses and countries, sexual abuse was thought as a moral sin, which can therefore be forgiven, just like adultery.
- That is why it was common to transfer the aggressor from parish to a parish or even to another diocese. ”

# KARLIJN DEMASURE (1955)

- This was a very common mistake in the part of bishops who tried to solve the problem by talking to the aggressors, who "can be very convincing" and disguise a repentance that is not real.
- In the face of recidivism, aggression came to be understood as a pathology, mistakenly equating it with pedophilia.
- In order to defend the good name of the Church, it was decided as a general rule to hide the problem, by sending the offenders to rehab centers, which later generated a greater indignation among the people.
- From **Benedict XVI**, it is understood that it is a crime that, therefore, "must be communicated to the civil authorities."

# The 13 Reasons

1. The continued influence of the idea of an angry God
2. The immaturity that arises from passive obedience in adults
3. The doctrine of the Church on sexual morality
4. The role that celibacy plays in abuses, especially obligatory celibacy



Kati Ford:

**“Christianity has given us a God who caused the death of his son, the damnation of disbelievers, the subordination of women, the bloody massacre of the Crusades, the terror of judgment, the wrath toward homosexuals and the justification of slavery. The Father God embodied in the creeds is a deity who chooses some of the world’s children while rejecting others. He is the father of wrath, the father of male ordination and female submission, the father of literal and spiritual slavery.”**

# The 13 Reasons

5. The lack of a strong female influence in every aspect of the Church
6. The idea that by ordination the priest is above others (clericalism)
7. Lack of professionalism in the lives of priests and religious
8. Unhealthy situations in which many priests and religious are obliged to live



# The 13 Reasons

9. The constant collation of correct beliefs before correct acts

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10. The passion for obscurantism and the concealment of failures in the Church, especially in the Vatican
11. The ways in which the protection of papal authority has been preceded by the eradication of sexual abuse
12. The lack of structures to realize the 'sense of faith' (sensus fidei) of all Catholics
13. The lack of authority of each Episcopal Conference to compel individual bishops to follow common decisions in this matter

## JOHN 6

<sup>60</sup> Many of Jesus' disciples heard him and said, "This is too hard for anyone to understand." <sup>61</sup> Jesus knew that his disciples were grumbling. So he asked, "Does this bother you? <sup>62</sup> What if you should see the Son of Man go up to heaven where he came from? <sup>63</sup> The Spirit is the one who gives life! Human strength can do nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are from that life-giving Spirit. <sup>64</sup> But some of you refuse to have faith in me." Jesus said this, because from the beginning he knew who would have faith in him. He also knew which one would betray him. <sup>65</sup> Then Jesus said, "You cannot come to me, unless the Father makes you want to come. That is why I have told these things to all of you." <sup>66</sup> Because of what Jesus said, many of his disciples turned their backs on him and stopped following him. <sup>67</sup> Jesus then asked his twelve disciples if they were going to leave him. <sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered, "Lord, there is no one else that we can go to! Your words give eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We have faith in you, and we are sure that you are God's Holy One."

