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### The Church Is Torn between Desire and Duty

By Steve Duin  
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<http://www.oregonlive.com/special/priest/index.ssf?/special/oregonian/priest/020317.html>

Last month, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland was duly applauded for distributing its new policy about pedophile priests and child abuse.

Those new rules and safeguards were part of the church's settlement with 23 victims of Maurice Grammond, who molested kids in Oregon for more than 20 years.

"The painful experience of dealing with allegations of abuse by priests of the archdiocese of Portland," Archbishop John Vlazny wrote, ". . . has strengthened my determination to take every necessary step to protect the children in my care."

Yet even as that brochure was circulating, lawyers for the archdiocese were in court, defending a priest named William McLeod against charges that on more than 50 occasions in the 1940s he French kissed and molested "D.A.," then an altar boy.

As part of that defense, the church's legal team insisted McLeod's alleged conduct does not qualify as child abuse under Oregon law. Although a priest with a heavy beard was jamming his tongue into the boy's mouth, the lawyers argued the facts "cannot support a finding that McLeod knew or should have known that his actions violated plaintiff's sense of intimacy."

That argument falls somewhere between un-Christian and unbelievable. "It smacks of the worst kind of evasion and institutional denial," said Kelly Clark, the attorney for the 74-year-old who filed the suit.

And it makes me wonder when good Catholics will finally stand up to their pope, their bishop and their church, and say, "Enough's enough."

Enough allegations? Thanks in large part to the church's "old" hush-hush policy of moving the molesting priest to a different parish, there's no stemming that tide. Witness a dozen pedophiles forced from the pulpit in Los Angeles . . . 165 abuse cases in Santa Fe, N.M., . . . as much as \$45 million to settle with the victims of a single priest in Boston.

Nor does there seem to be a cap on the financial toll for the church, which may have already paid \$1 billion to victims. Increasingly, those settlements aren't covered by insurance.

Good Catholics should be appalled that offerings designated for missions and charity must now be diverted to pay for the sins of priests. But that's not what requires the voice of the caring people who are the best part of the church.

They should be standing to say, "Enough secrecy. Enough stonewalling. Enough callousness."

"It's taken far too long for the church hierarchy to act on its rhetoric that victims come first," said Clark, who has six ongoing cases against the Portland archdiocese involving five priests. "I don't think anyone inside the Catholic Church is asking the great question, 'How do we represent the values of the church if the shots are being called by insurance adjustors?'"

David Slader, who represented many Grammond victims, argued it's folly to assume the church, its lawyers and its insurers aren't on the same page.

"It's a deeply ingrained instinct to cover up anything that sullies the church's power," Slader said. "This is the way the church has done business for hundreds of years."



"The conduct of the church has been evil and sinful. They have put their desire to protect their image against their duty to protect their children. There is no moral justification for that."

Karen O'Kasey, a lawyer for the church, pointed out that the legal argument in the McLeod case was designed to ensure that these 60-year-old incidents merit an exemption from the statute of limitations. She also noted that the church can't fulfill its true mission when it's mired in court.

Clark agrees the Catholic Church has learned enough from its mistakes that it no longer seeks quick, confidential settlements so it can recycle an abusive priest into a new, unsuspecting parish.

But the church is still under the impression, after 15 years of accusations and millions in hush money, that it's the victim here. It won't get over that until enough of the faithful rise and say . . .

"Enough."

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