

Transparency within the Hierarchy of the Catholic Church in the Treatment of Clergy Sexual Abuse Cases

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Abstract : The central argument of this paper proposes that while democracy cannot guarantee transparency, authentic transparency within the hierarchy of the Church can be pursued as a means of dealing with cases of clergy sexual abuse. Amid the recent global scandal of clergy sexual abuse cases, a previous study has argued that a democratic rule should be applied to the administration of the Church so that, while a democratic Church could be compelled to exercise greater transparency when handling such cases, the Church might thereby regain credibility. Using the methodology of literature analysis, this paper explores the necessity for hierarchy and finds that democracy cannot be a guarantee for transparency. Further, through a dialogue between the theological insights of Benedict XVI and Edward Schillebeeckx, this paper argues that transparency practices are possible within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in dealing with clergy sexual abuse cases. Finally, three implications of transparency in dealing with clergy sexual abuse cases are proposed, viz.: (a) that the harm which is ultimately done to the sacred faith of believers and to the sacred origin of the hierarchy through clergy sexual abuse cases should be given greater emphasis, (b) that the removal of unnecessary layers within the Church hierarchy or replacement with layers empowered with the authority to effect change might help implement accountability and transparency practices, and (c) that any changes made to enhance transparency should be made in terms of 'adaptability'.

Keywords : Benedict XVI, clergy sexual abuses, democracy, Edward Schillebeeckx, hierarchy, transparency

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