



## From the Deacon's Desk

Bishop Robert Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, is releasing a new book titled "Letter to a Suffering Church". In it, he addresses some Frequently Asked Questions.

### **1. Is the sexual abuse crisis still a massive problem today?**

Generally, no. While even a single case of abuse is one too many, by and large, the rate of clerical sexual abuse has dwindled to a trickle since the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops established the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (e.g., the "Dallas Charter") in 2002.

"Numerous careful studies have revealed that instances of clergy sex abuse peaked in the 1960s and 1970s, declining steadily thereafter, and precipitously after 2002, so that now the reporting of new cases is down to a trickle. I wouldn't dream of denying or underplaying the horrors reported in the Pennsylvania Attorney General report already cited, but I would say that it is regrettable in the extreme that even churchgoing Catholics tended to believe that the terrible instances mentioned in that study were recent cases. In point of fact, of the four hundred or so crimes reported, precisely two occurred after 2002."

### **2. If the Church let priests marry, would this have happened?**

Marriage is not a solution to the problem of sexual abuse. Countless children have been sexually abused by family members, married and unmarried. According to a 2010 Newsweek article, the rates of sexual abuse among Catholic clergy were similar to those of the male population as a whole. This confirms that celibacy does not markedly increase the incidence of abuse.

### **3. If the church ordained women to the priesthood, would that solve the problem?**

Unfortunately, sexual abuse occurs not only among men but also among female religious orders, as well as within public schools, where female teachers are increasingly being arrested and charged with the crime of sexual exploitation of students or others. The disordered desire to control or wield power over others is not exclusive to males; it is a disorder of the human mind, heart, and soul, rooted in more than biological sex.

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