Landas 18:2 (2004) 193-210

CRISIS IN THE CHURCH
Causes and Response of Formation

Luis Antonio G. Tagle, D.D.

The word crisis in the title of this article points to the allegations of sexual misconduct on the part of the clergy. While this is happening in different parts of the world, this article will focus on specific cases and situations here in the Philippines. But we have to alert you to the fact that the allegations and actual cases of sexual misconduct of the clergy here in the Philippines have also opened other areas of crisis. For instance, people are now looking into finances (the way money and property of the churches are being handled), the exercise of authority in the workplace, etc. We cannot, therefore, isolate the crisis of sexual misconduct from the other crises related to the clergy. Our topic focuses on something quite specific—the context of formation.

The word "crisis" comes from the Greek verb *creno*, which means to make distinctions, to exercise judgment upon a particular case, or even to be brought to trial. Crisis, therefore, means distinctions, discriminations, judgments, decisions. When we hear the word crisis,

---

*Lecture delivered during Theological Hour at Loyola School of Theology, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, on August 27, 2003.

we normally think of it as a problem. Actually, it is more than just that; it also demands a decision, a judgment, a discriminating look or view. It calls for finer distinctions leading to a judgment and a decision; and that is more difficult. So when we say that the sexual misconduct of the clergy has generated a crisis, it means that it has generated a lot of urgency regarding some decisions that the Church has made. (Some of them are painful decisions.) Let us bear this in mind as we think about the crisis. Meanwhile, let me share with you some pastoral guidelines that the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has disseminated in addressing this issue. (I am not a member of the Commission of the Clergy, but I was invited to be part of the drafting committee to help in the writing.) This article will have three main parts. The first part will focus on understanding the six aspects of the crisis; the second part, responses to the six aspects of the crisis; and the third part, formation amid the sexual misconduct crisis.

I. Understanding the Crisis

The first part: We should admit that there is a crisis. If we all admit that there is a crisis, we will go a very long way in forming ourselves and the Church in facing the crisis. I say this because there are still many people in the Philippines who are too shocked and are going through a stage of denial. In fact, during one of the first sessions in preparation for the guidelines, some bishops came to me and said, "We do not need to address the issue because that is a Western issue. That is not an issue here in the Philippines. Our Catholics are very subservient and respectful to the Church. They will not raise any issue."

But such is not true. We only have to open our eyes and admit that something problematic is going on. The recognition that there is a real crisis is formative. Such recognition should be integrated into the personal and communal approach to formation. In our formation houses, we cannot just pretend that no such crisis exists. We cannot just continue with our regular formation programs (which were for-

mulated five years ago and evaluated last year) and ignore the presence of the crisis. Those of you who are in charge of formation, please review your formation programs and see if you have already integrated the presence of the crisis in the Church now.

In speaking about the causes of the crisis, I will be modest. I am not an expert in identifying the causes of the crisis. I think what I can offer you are some helps in understanding the crisis. Let us try to understand the crisis in its complexity. Let us avoid at the outset simplistic approaches because, in reality, the crisis is complex.

Two years ago, I was invited to preach at the annual retreat of the clergy of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in California. When I got there, the crisis had erupted to unimaginable proportions. The retreat schedule was arranged in such a way that priests, according to their felt need, could attend workshops facilitated by lawyers, social workers, psychiatrists, and youth ministers. For example, if one feared indictment, he could go to the workshop conducted by the lawyers. If one felt that the youth in his parish were causing problems, he could go to the youth minister. It felt weird and strange to be in that setting. It was a graphic manifestation of the complexity of the matter.

When we talk of sexual misconduct, we just cannot lump together all actions that are related to genitality and sexuality. Sexual misconduct comes in different shapes and forms. (I think that this is one major problem with our media people here in the Philippines; they do not make the necessary distinctions.) Pedophilia, the abuse of a child, is quite different from fathering a child, or having a 25-year-old partner. Statutory rape is quite different from indecent touching. A homosexual encounter between a parish priest and an 18--year-old altar boy is quite different from sexual encounters among priests. Sexual misconduct is an umbrella concept and there is a rich variety under that umbrella. This makes it difficult for us to make generalizations. In the end, we just have to deal with concrete cases and persons. What I will give in terms of understanding the crisis will be rather general, but as a word of caution, let us give room for individual cases because each one of them is unique. I have here six aspects of the sexual misconduct crisis.

1. Personal-Relational Aspect

If the crisis is about sexual misconduct, sexuality is at the heart of the crisis. But sexuality is not synonymous with genitality. Broadly, it is about personal identity and relationships; genitality is just one part of sexuality. So when we talk about sexuality, we talk about the person's identity and the quality of his/her relationships with other people based on that identity. It is not just about sexual behavior.

Now, this whole crisis has generated a lot of discussion on the fundamental question of what it means to be human and how the human being expresses his/her being human in relationships. Once, I was in the library browsing through the periodicals, and I saw an article written by Gerard Sloyan in *Theology Today* entitled, "Pedophilia among the Catholic Clergy: Some Questions and Answers." One of the questions in the article was, "What do Catholic priests do when they fall in love?" This is one aspect of human reality—a loving relationship. Married people or those open to marriage definitely know what they will do; priests, however, do not have the same freedom and certainty. So when we are brought into the heart of this sexual misconduct crisis, we should be prepared to enter into deeper questions such as the mystery of the human being and of human relationships, for the mysterious realm called relationship is at the heart of our being persons

Sometimes, however, human beings who have entered into enriching relationships wake up and realize that they are no longer in such relationships. They realize that they are in an abusive situation, a situation of disrespect, a situation of manipulation and victimization. Part of the journal of a priest who was in jail for child abuse said, "It does not start with sex. There are days when I just want to have a friend. There are days when I just want to have someone to talk to... [S]ex is farthest from my mind." Then he goes on to say, "I see this familiar face, a young boy who serves at my mass, who wants to join me for pizza... I find joy in talking with him and it looks like he's enjoying the interaction. There seems to be a relationship.... [T]he next thing I know, I have just molested a boy."

The crisis on sexual misconduct has also spawned a lot of questions about sexual orientation and sexual behavior. Different theories are being offered to us. Some offer the theory that sexual orientation leads to a particular action or sexual behavior, and they hold that since sexual orientation is an essential part of personhood, one cannot but act it out. I was in one seminar where the facilitator said, "Come on. No amount of formation can change a seminarian who just wants to have sex with a woman. No amount of formation can change that." We asked him, "What do we do with formation." He answered, "No more." But what do we do now with the ethical-/moral principle that sexual action, not the sexual orientation, is sinful? This is also the question in some circles.

2. Cultural Aspect

In every culture, there are accepted behaviors. In fact, cultures determine, to a wide extent, what behaviors are acceptable or not. Sexual behaviors are culturally conditioned. Hence, if there is a crisis in the area of sexuality, we have look at the culture. The culture must also be put to the test in many ways. The culture is being asked to explain why its members, the people who have been nurtured by the culture, end up as abusers or engage in sexual misconduct.

For example, in the Philippines, some sexual behaviors are acceptable. In the barrios, we see parents fondle the genitals of their sons to check their masculinity. They even do this in front of a priest and as a sign of affection for the child. This is culturally accepted if the child is three or four years old; but it becomes otherwise when it is done to a 15-year-old child, whether by a parent or by a friend. But we ask, why are some aspects of affection acceptable and some others not?

A study on the sexual behavior of males in the Philippines conducted by the University of the Philippines Psychology Department reveals that sexual intimacy is regarded in a sexist way by wives. One response consistently given by wives—who described sexual intimacy or intercourse as an act of being used—was: *ginamit ako* (I was used); or an obligation: *nagpagamit ako* (I allowed myself to be used).

After being asked, "*Kung ayaw mo, bakit ka nagpagamit?*" (Why did you allow yourself to be used, even if you didn't want to do it?), their common reply would be, "*Kasi hindi ako kakausapin kinabukasan; mainit ang ulo*" (Because he will not talk to me the next day; he will be moody). Seemingly, the culturally-accepted perception that the woman can be used is not an expression of union and love. The bishops have been reflecting on this, and we ask the question, "What elements of the Philippine culture open up to possible sexually-abusive behaviors or sexual misconduct?"

Some experts indicate that we are a hugging culture. Seminarians put their arms on another's shoulder when they go home to San Jose Seminary, a gesture seldom found in other cultures. *Mahilig tayo sa kalabit, pasundot* (It is normal for us to poke gently). Even the word *kalabit* does not exist in other languages because only Filpinos do this. But when a three-year-old child is hugged, s/he is not yet capable of distinguishing signals coming from the touch. A certain sophistication or maturity is needed to be able to distinguish whether this is a friendly touch, a caring touch, or the beginning of an abusive or seductive touch. However, the child will get mixed signals especially if the one touching him/her is someone called "Father." This is another element of Philippine culture; priests are considered part of families. When you say that you are a priest, people open their doors, their inner sanctum, and they even entrust their children to you, and say, "*Father, bahala ka na sa aking anak*"(Father, please take care of my child). That is why sexual abuse by clerics is much more painful.

In addition, males are vested with so much authority in our culture. One study reveals that the most powerful people in the Philippines are priests because they are males whose source of authority comes from a culture that enthrones religion. Hence, we are the potential abusers of that power.

When we were seminarians, we were advised, in our pastoral counseling training, to maintain a table between the counselee and ourselves, regardless of gender. However, in some current modules, some supervisors teach our seminarians that a normal human being

needs forty hugs a day. Now, assuming this is true, I will remove the table if I have a client who is in distress and needs forty hugs. The module has shifted and one asks: in a shifting mode, when do we cross the boundaries of culturally-accepted behavior?

I have been told by an auxiliary bishop of New York that many mothers in the United States have forbidden their husbands from changing the diapers of their infant daughters. It is not culturally accepted for fathers to touch their infant daughters. Such has become a sexualized behavior. As a response, bishops have proposed that in the ministerial/pastoral relationship, sexualized behavior should be avoided. Because of the crisis, new cultural modes are being born. Cultural expressions of affection that were formerly acceptable are now being questioned.

I was once asked to facilitate a recollection—for former seminarians, priests and their wives—where one woman complained in front of the assembly that her husband was very cold, distant, and aloof. "He does not praise me, he does not affirm me, he does not show signs of affection." The husband admitted this and explained that this was due to their training in the 1950s when touching and signs of intimacy were prohibited and custody of the eyes was practiced. Formation really worked with this person, even unto marriage. Another fiancée of a younger former seminarian said that her partner hugs every woman, which is an effect of the present formation.

3. Ecclesiastical Aspect

When the case of a bishop was reported by the media, a psychology professor asked me on the phone, "What's the problem? He's an adult and the woman is also an adult. What's the big problem?" For this psychologist, the personal-relational-cultural aspect is not a problem, and there shouldn't be a fuss about these two adults who happened to fall in love. While I appreciate the concern of this professor, I must say that he was oblivious to the ecclesiastical aspect of the case. The person involved is a cleric who is bound to his vow of celibacy, even if the behavior can be excused in the cultural and personalistic view. When we move to the ecclesiastical level, there

are added considerations involved: the ecclesiastical discipline among members of the religious community and the religious vow. The question now is, "Have we ordained people who were not ready to embrace a lifestyle that is in harmony with the vows of chastity and celibacy?"

This question is being posed to dioceses and religious orders with regard to the ongoing formation of their members. Some have questioned whether celibacy as a call is humanly possible, or whether celibacy is part of the problem. I think you are familiar with the arguments for and against. I arrived in the United States last week and visited the pastors of four parishes who said that they were in favor of removing the vow of celibacy. I was told that in two parishes a random survey was done and the results indicated that an overwhelming number of Catholics prefer to remove the vow of celibacy. But that is in the United States. Here in the Philippines, the picture might be quite different. Even here in this school of theology, we just cannot discuss sexual misconduct without having a solid theological response to the issue being raised against celibacy. After all, in the tradition and experience of the Church, the practice of celibacy has been a source of great blessing.

Many people would like to approach it logically. They say, "Great, if it is not part of the essence of the priesthood, would it not be more timely to review the discipline, especially now that we are facing the scandal?" Some are eager to learn from the Christian communities that do not practice celibacy like the Eastern Orthodox Churches. Although they recognize the Eucharist, some of their priests are married, some are not. (And I think that all of the bishops are celibate; at least that is what we know.) But we should not rush into following their formation. I was once at an inter-faith dialogue where one Lutheran Pastor said, "You Catholics should not rush into removing the discipline of celibacy. In our Church, the pastors can get married, but they also have a lot of problems in the sexual area. There is [for example] the problem of adultery."

Studies conducted in the United States show that the majority of child abusers are married men. It is, therefore, a mistake to think that sexual misconduct disappears just because these men are in a legal and, in some cases, sacramental union (and, therefore, can enjoy intimacy). Marriage is not a guarantee that sexual misbehaviors will be prevented. I will not be in full harmony with some changes being made in some circles. When I reflect on the capacity of a seminarian for ordination/ordained life, I always look for two charisms: one is the charism for pastoral leadership, and the other is the charism for celibacy. These must be present in anyone we recommend for ordination. Sad to say, we find some people who have the potential to be leaders but do not have the gift of celibacy; so I just have to tell them, "*Baka hindi*" (Maybe not). But there are some people who have the gift of celibacy but do not have leadership potential. I talked with one priest who was ready to leave the priesthood. He said, "I would like to be dispensed from the obligations of the clerical state but I would remain celibate." He was called to celibacy, but he was not called to priestly ministry.

4. Legal Aspect

There is a legal definition of rape. A sexual act may be considered rape even without penetration. There are laws regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, i.e., relationships with secretaries, cooks, or sisters working in your parish. Because of this crisis, I was called to hear some of the cases. The scope covered by the law is amazing. Clerics, because they are citizens of the land, are definitely not exempted from the law. There are some areas on which the courts are clear, such as the exclusive domain of the diocese, religious order, or the Church; but when criminal acts are involved, a religious will definitely be judged as a citizen.

The jurisprudence in the Philippines is not well developed, but we have been warned that some high-ranking people in the government and Philippine society have sent some Filipino lawyers to the United States. The latter have been tasked to study the jurisprudence of the United States and to pin down offenders. There is a Filipino

priest, imprisoned in the United States, whose mother diocese here in the Philippines was contacted and asked to shoulder the legal fees amounting to $150,000.00 as first installment. The legal aspect is financially enormous, but there is a concern beyond finances—the anguish of the victims.

I hope that part of our formation, even among superiors who are here, would be an awareness of the legal aspects of sexual misconduct here in the Philippines. In the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, applicants to the seminary are fingerprinted. They are not accepted unless they submit an FBI clearance. One bishop advised me to require a waiver from a candidate for ordination stating that the bishop and the seminary will not be liable in case of future sexual misconduct.

5. Media Aspect

The media are a part of life. John Paul II regards them as the means of social communication, the new "aerophagus" for the evangelization of the world. But I guess that when it comes to crises related to sexual misconduct by the clergy, our instinct is to be repulsed by the media. They become a hostile presence. I think we should calm down a bit for the simple reason that they are a fact of life. We appreciate the media for exposing corruption in the government and other sectors, and I think that we cannot be selective in our demand for fair and balanced reporting, especially when the object of reports are Church-related scandals. "*Kapag iniri-report ay pari o obispo dapat* fair and charitable. *Pero kapag* government official, *puwedeng babuyin 'yan"* (If media reports are about priest scandals, we demand fairness and charity; but we condemn government officials when they become targets of controversy). Some people do not like that; they will all the more accuse us of suppressing truth and say, "What can we expect from you? You are defending your own kind." Now we should clamor for fair and fruitful reporting and look at the common good. The media are there to tell the truth, not to destroy.

6. Pastoral-Spiritual Aspect

And finally, there is the pastoral-spiritual aspect: a personal integrity before God and the Church. One bishop asked me during a CBCP meeting, "After long years of formation in the seminary and in spite of the ongoing formation programs available, why do some priests and bishops still engage in sexual misconduct? What has happened?" There are many aspects to this question, but there are three things we should consider: 1) the call to personal integrity; 2) a deep communion with the Lord; and 3) a deep commitment to the Church.

The bishops distinguish between three fora in handling sexual misconduct cases: 1) legal, 2) canonical (ecclesial laws), and 3) internal (forum of the person's conscience). When one is cleared in the legal forum and the canonical forum, that person can be cleared right away. I was told of a case of one priest who was relieved to have lost his child, whom he considered a mere obligation. I hope that our ecclesiastical discipline will do something about this.

II. Responses to Cases or Allegations

1. Caring for Victims

Many cases in the United States and Europe were blown out of proportion because many of the victims felt that they were not cared for, attended or listened to. We have to be sensitive to these: compassion, protection, justice, and restitution for the victims and their families. I think that our tendency to protect the Church and our fellow priests could be a problem. In integrating the discussion about and evaluation of sexual abuse cases into seminary and religious formation, we must endeavor to put ourselves in the victim's shoes. This must be a conscious effort and, therefore, done deliberately. If you have not had such experience, I encourage you to talk to a victim and, assuredly, your perception will change. When you ask, for instance, a poor and abused nine-year-old altar boy, "Why didn't you run away?" you will be rendered speechless by his answer, "Father,

kapag tinutukan na kayo ng baril sa ulo n'yo habang hinahalay kayo, hindi kayo makakatakbo" (Father, if a gun were pointed at your head while you were being abused, you cannot run away). You cannot but feel compassion for the woman who has fallen victim to a priest who promises to leave priesthood to raise a family with her, but leaves her after a miscarriage and says, "Huh, so I have no obligation, I really love my priesthood." And the girl weeps before you saying, "He has a life that he can return to. But what about me? What about my life?" Listening to these stories should be part of formation. If we are changed by the stories of the victims, we can hope that their experiences serve as a deterrent for further victimization. I hope that the study of the dynamics of victimization and the lack of accountability can be included in seminaries and schools of theology.

Hopefully, we could also study what victims go through, how their worlds are shattered. It really angers me every time I see some priests and bishops who deal with this reality as though no life has been shattered. I tell you, when the world of a victim is shattered, the lives of the victim's family members, friends, etc., are also shattered. Sometimes the victims that we have to care for may potentially become offenders. Many offenders were victims at some point in their lives. Once, when I was a seminarian, the priest in our apostolate area took a fellow seminarian and me to his room saying, "Please do not go" (as it was time for us to go back to the seminary after talking with the lay people). We asked, "Why?" He said, "See some of the people outside, especially that woman? They are out to get me. Her friends have been doing their very best to put us in a compromising situation." This also happens. We have a culture of victimization and, in many cases, mutual victimization. This aggression, this anger, this domination—we hope that we become sensitive to them in formation.

2. Caring for a Community

The crisis has created wounds not only among the victims but also among parishes, apostolate areas, and schools. Last week, in the United States, one of the auxiliary bishops of Los Angeles arranged

for me to stay in a parish where he had stayed for a few months. I did not know that the place was getting over a sexual misconduct crisis. I felt it; the gloom, the hurt, the pain was thick in the air. Someone told me that one Sunday the commentator greeted everyone in the usual manner, "Good morning, everyone. Let us greet one another. Let us welcome those who are not part of our parish. Will our visitors please stand? Our presider for this liturgy is Father So-and-so. By the way, I have been sleeping with Father. I am his mistress. I have discovered that he sleeps with two other women." This was before the mass. The priest was already there with all the ministers and the choir. What did the priest do? He just stopped there, he could not continue anymore. Trust had been violated. The whole community, the whole diocese, was hurting.

Even when a new bishop replaces a bishop accused of sexual misconduct, the wounds are still there; I get a lot of phone calls from the people of the diocese. But what do we do? We keep quiet. I am not sure if such response will continue to work. The people are hurting. Some priests call me and they just cry. They understand the administrative approach: the bishop has been replaced. But theirs is a lost community who could not believe that their pastor—someone ordained to care for the community—abused them. Their response should bring the right signals in the community.

One bishop asked me, "How do we discern this? How do we interpret the behavior of many parishes in the Philippines?" Many parishioners know that their pastor has a mistress and children, but they tolerate it. In trying to protect everyone, some bear the shock and pain. Some prefer having an erring priest to not having regular celebrations of the Eucharist. What does this mean to our people? Is it an act of forgiveness on our part? Are we a forgiving people? Or is it a sign that we are ready for a married clergy? Or that our morals are becoming loose?

Clearly, handling wounded communities should also be part of our sensitivity in formation.

3. Caring for the Offender

Care for the priest-offender is also needed. No accused offender I know enjoys the situation. They are lost, confused, and ashamed; they feel that they have betrayed God and the community; they feel they have no more reason to exist. As we defend victims and work for justice, we cannot abandon the accused and the offenders. They need a lot of human support, the assurance that they can be restored after they face their dark inner selves. This does not mean, however, that we are tolerating what they have done; rather, we are assuring them that there is hope for them, that the journey back to facing themselves is worth taking, and that we are willing to accompany them through the painful process of assessment, counseling, and sometimes, dismissal from the clerical state. Let us give extensive guidance to the accused or the offenders; let us help them start a new life and recover.

4. Caring for the Offender's Family

In our culture, families of the accused also suffer the most. The priest may be sent by the diocese or congregation somewhere else abroad (United States, Rome, India, etc.), but the family remains here. *"Totoo ba 'to? Ito ba ang ginagawa ng anak mo?"* (Is this true? Did your son really do that?) We cannot underestimate the impact of the scandal on the families. I know of parents of accused priests who fathered children; some of them have stopped going to church, not because they do not believe in the Eucharist or in the community, but because of shame. They feel betrayed by their priest-sons. We need to reach out to them. In the diocese of Imus, I reach out to parents and families of ex-priests in order to assure them that they are still loved and that they can re-integrate themselves into the community. In school and seminary formation, programs such as Care for the Families and Victims and the Offenders can be included in Family Ministry. They have their pastoral needs and dynamics. To seminarians and priests, before you engage in a sexual misconduct, just think of your families. Our study says that many of the offenders are "me-first" persons with no regard for other people. How would other

people and your fathers and mothers feel? If caring for families of the offenders becomes part of our consciousness, it will hopefully help us understand what our own parents and families go through when we will fall.

5. Caring for the Non-offender

This is an aspect that is often forgotten: how to take care of priests who have been doing their best, but have to bear the weight of the scandals committed by their fellow priests. The offense of one priest becomes the shame of all. It has brought a lot of fear to priests, fear for their own past. "What will my former girlfriend in high school say? What if a playmate shows up and talks about it? What if people just come up?" In the middle of the retreat with the clergy of Los Angeles, a cardinal was accused of molesting a girl who was a student at the Catholic High school where he, while a priest, was the director. He didn't know what to do.

Last month, I had the chance to talk to one of the professors in a Catholic university. He said, "You know I am 66 years old. I've been a priest for more than 30 years. Since my ordination, I have never imagined that some people would spit on me just because they see me wearing the clerical collar." How do we care for the majority of these people who have not done scandalous misdeeds but are ashamed, afraid, and unsure of what to say to people who demand an answer?

Last week, after celebrating mass in our parish, one of the parents of the altar servers (boys and girls) asked me to join a photo session with the children. All of a sudden, I had to be very careful with my hands; I just did not know how to behave. I felt a strong mutual suspicion. In the retreat for the clergy of Los Angeles, I discovered that they who lived in the same rectory admitted having suspicion toward their fellows' possible involvement in secret sexual misbehavior. Pastors think this way toward their parochial vicars and I cannot blame them. I know a case of a young, newly-ordained priest who related how one morning he came down to the kitchen to make

some coffee and found a note on the table. The note came from a fellow pastor who had written that he was arrested the previous night for molesting a child. We looked at each other and he asked, "Will I be the next?"

In the same retreat for the clergy of Los Angeles, the former rector of the seminary ended a wonderful homily by saying: "Please pray for me. I am thinking of leaving the priesthood. I'm confused right now. I don't think I want to be associated with priests." At the time, our seminarian, who was preparing himself for ordination to the diaconate, was also confused. He came to my room and said, "When I finished my theological studies, my mother was so afraid that I still had to undergo a year of parish work prior to ordination. She said that she would talk to the bishop to exempt me from the required year because it was dangerous. *'Baka maligaw ka pa'* (You might be waylaid). The sooner the better." He went through the year of parish work, yet his mother kept on calling him, expressing her anxiety over priests being ridiculed. This is a sad example of families retreating; not taking pride in having sons who will become priests. How do we care for them? I hope that part of formation is to intensify mutual support, brotherhood among priests, fraternal correction, assurance of a companion, common prayer, and support of lay people. Many of our priests are hurting not because they have done something wrong, but simply because they are priests.

6. Caring for Your Superiors and Bishops

We are torn. We help and defend our priests. On the one hand, we are like fathers to them, but on the other hand, we are also defenders and helpers of all the victims and people of God. A point comes when we have to be judges also. *Krisis talaga.* (It's really a crisis.) I know that, at times, the best way to help an erring cleric is to help him face his mistakes, and we lose many friends when we do that. Some priests and lay friends say that I am very harsh, but I also do not want to give signals that abuse and misconduct are all right. Many bishops are hurting; many superiors are confused. It is not easy. We are losing sleep.

Archbishop Rosales is the head of the Commission on the Clergy that prepared the guidelines on how to deal with sexual misconduct. He told me, "This is one of the most difficult papers I have ever helped write. I catch myself spending 15 minutes to write one sentence on the computer. It's not easy, especially if I start thinking of concrete cases and people I know. These are applied to them."

Learn how to support the local superiors, too. It is not easy to be in their position.

III. Formation in Accountability

Formation is a continuum. It does not only take place inside the seminary but also outside of it, even after ordination. We cannot put all the burden on the seminary. One question is, "Is the seminary to be blamed for all the sexual misconduct?" (Perhaps not only because seminarians are not screened well, but also because the very structure and atmosphere of seminaries create potential abusers and offenders? Is it a healthy atmosphere?) I am appealing to the bishops to look at formation as a continuum where we can integrate family life, formation in the parish, among the youth, and those who wish to enter the seminary and religious life. What kind of formation, whether in the seminary or religious order, can be given to them during and after the seminary years, amid the sexual misconduct crisis?

1. Human maturity, especially when it comes to responsible relationships.
2. Ministerial and pastoral accountability, which comes with clarity of purpose and identity. "What is a priest?" When I am clear with my identity as a priest, hopefully my relationships and my way of handling communities will follow.
3. Motivational purification—from a view of myself with the grandeur and sense of authority that comes with the position of the priesthood. Maybe it is time to check that. After all, the scandal has already proven that we are not grand. It is time for us to accept with humility our own humanity and

start to be the seeds of the Church with the human face—humble and focused on service. These motivations should be tested among seminarians and constantly checked in our priestly life.

4. And, of course, our spirituality—a spirituality that will enable us to discern God's calling every moment of life, in everything and in everyone whom we encounter. A calling to serve God and not to manipulate, abuse, and offend. A spirituality of total dependence on God rather than on "my authority," "my grandeur" and "my grand position."

Finally, let me close by emphasizing the fact that the priest is the *Cura Párroco*, the caretaker of the parish. He is also the *Cura Animarum*, the caretaker of souls. Paradoxically, however, I read a book that lampooned priests as "Slayer of the Soul," and another book entitled *The Story of the Soul of a Church: Healing Congregations Wounded by Clergy Sexual Misconduct.* Sadly, we have to acknowledge that from being one who cares for the soul, the priest has become a slayer of the soul; and through sexual misconduct, the Church is losing its soul. It is a painful reality: the slayers of souls are the very ones who ought to care for souls. We are in a crisis. We have to make a decision: Will we be slayers of souls or *Cura Animarum*, caretakers of souls?