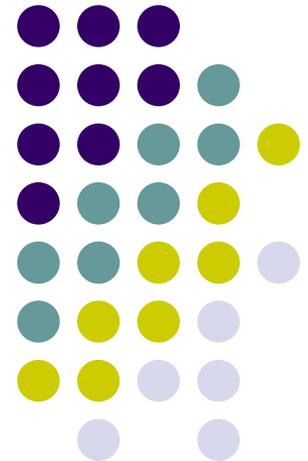


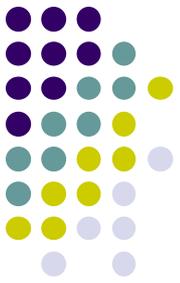
# Professionalism in the Priesthood: A Response to the Clergy Sexual Abuse Crisis

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Fr Kevin McGovern,  
Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics:  
Conference of Directors of Clergy Life and Ministry,  
1 July 2015

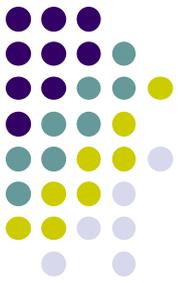


# Overview



1. The clergy sexual abuse crisis
2. The professions
3. Clericalism
4. Professionalism in the Priesthood
5. Richard Gula's *Just Ministry*
6. Questions for discussion

# Resources



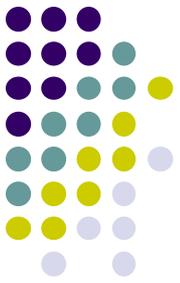
1. *Clericalism: The Death of Priesthood*,  
by George B. Wilson, SJ
2. *Health Care Ethics* (4<sup>th</sup> ed),  
by Benedict M. Ashley and Kevin D. O'Rourke
3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,  
#1536-1600 (on the priesthood)
4. *Just Ministry: Professional Ethics for Pastoral Ministers*,  
by Richard M. Gula, SS



# 1. The clergy sexual abuse crisis

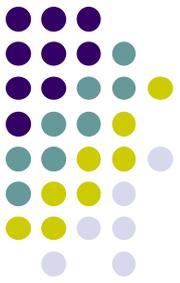
- Sexual misconduct by some priests
- Great harm to victims
- Cover-ups by some bishops
- Victims organise:
  - support groups, spokespersons, victims' advocates
- Lawyers and legal proceedings
- The press and exposés
- National responses: *Melbourne Response, Towards Healing, Integrity in Ministry, Integrity in the Service of the Church*
- An international response, e.g. CDF's *Circular Letter* (3 May 2011)
- 2013 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
- 2014 Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors

## 2. The professions



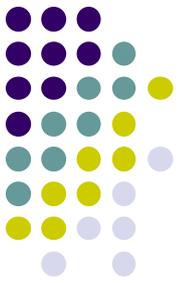
- Health care (doctors, nurses, allied health)
- Education
- The law
- Priests
- The police and the military
- The press
- Politicians
- Business consultants and technology experts
- Sports coaches and personal trainers
- Parents

## 2. The professions (cont'd)



- 1) The primary good which the professions produce is not material.
- 2) The professions essentially produce changes 'inside' people or 'inside' society.
- 3) These changes are vitally important. They are about the fullness of life, or even about life and death.
- 4) The professional draws upon professional knowledge to identify what must be done to bring about these changes.
- 5) The client does not simply receive passively. Instead, the client must 'appropriate' what is offered.

## 2. The professions (cont'd)



### Ethical Responsibilities of Professionals:

- 1) Developing and maintaining professional skills
- 2) 'Getting inside' one's clients
- 3) Confidentiality
  - though obligation to reveal in some circumstances (e.g. serious and imminent threat to client or another person, legal obligations of disclosure)
- 4) Detachment from other rewards
- 5) Limited obligation to charity
- 6) Commitment to one's fellow professionals and to one's profession
  - this includes fraternal correction

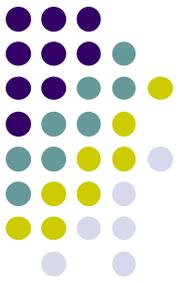
## 2. The professions (cont'd)



What good do we priests facilitate?

- salvation
- meaning in life
- a way of life
- a way of life in community
- the Kingdom of God
- holiness

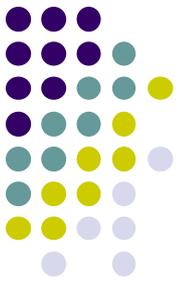
## 2. The professions (cont'd)



Why does someone join one of the professions?

- usually, they fall in love with what the profession does
- this is often brought about by contact with professionals from this profession

# 3. Clericalism



Clericalism develops:

- when professionals lose sight of the good that we serve
- and instead focus on ourselves, our privileges and our rewards



### 3. Clericalism (cont'd)

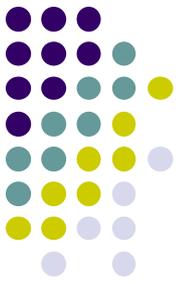
- “The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful... differ essentially.” (CCC, #1547)
- The ministerial and the common priesthood “differ essentially and not only in degree.” (*Lumen Gentium*, #10)
- “The ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians.” (CCC, #1547)

# 4. Professionalism in the Priesthood



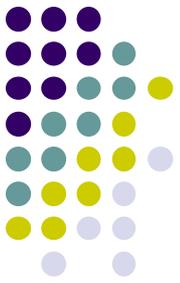
- When we compare priesthood to the other professions, what are “noticeably absent are the standard structures of accountability, namely, a code of ethics and the structures and processes of review and discipline.” (Gula, p. 38) →
  - some enthusiasm and
  - some resistance

# 4. Professionalism in the Priesthood (cont'd)



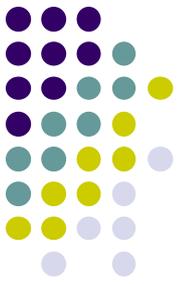
- One form of resistance: Because we are called to a vocation, some say that what we do is too spiritual, too transcendent and too holy to be regulated.
- In Chapters 1 & 2 of his book, Gula considers pastoral ministry both as a vocation and as a profession. If we truly believe that we are called by God to ministry, surely we should welcome professional standards, not reject them.
- **In what other ways might resistance to professional standards manifest itself?**

# 4. Professionalism in the Priesthood (cont'd)



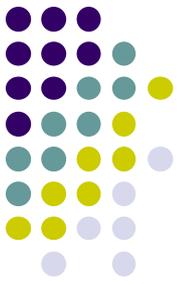
- Standards are not just imposed from on high!
- In his book, Gula offers two examples of a personal Statement of Ministerial Commitment:
  - Responsibilities to Those to Whom I Minister
  - Responsibilities to Colleagues
  - Responsibilities to the Diocesan and Universal Church
  - Responsibilities to the Wider Community
  - Responsibilities to Self
- Even if we might not write a complete statement, perhaps we could at least set minimal standards for ourselves in those areas where we know we are weak.

# 4. Professionalism in the Priesthood (cont'd)



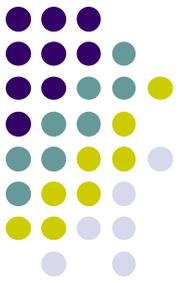
- I believe that we would benefit greatly if every level of our church gave more attention to articulating acceptable standards and to establishing processes to ensure that these standards are met:
  - married couples
  - families
  - parishes and other ministries
  - priest support groups (formal and informal)
  - religious orders
  - dioceses
  - bishops' conferences
  - and beyond!
- **What do you think? How might we set up standards and processes of accountability at every level of the church?**

# 4. Professionalism in the Priesthood (cont'd)



- **Gula's vision: "Codes of ethics properly developed, personally appropriated, structurally supported, responsibly implemented, and justly enforced" might indeed "contribute... to restoring trust in the church." (p. 39)**
- **"Throughout this book... my aim has been to stimulate a new attitude among pastoral ministers to view themselves as professionals and to take seriously the responsibilities that come with this identity." (p. 238)**

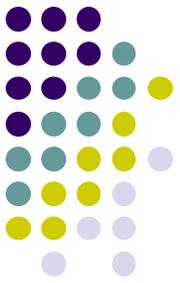
# 5. Richard Gula's *Just Ministry*



## Chapters 3 & 4: Character and Virtue

- Perhaps the deepest challenge in following Christ is striving to become more and more like him:
  - We must “grow in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.” (Eph 4:15)
  - “Let the same mind be in you that was in Jesus Christ.” (Phil 2:5)
  - We are to be “mirrors of Christ” or indeed “letters of Christ written on the tablets of human hearts.” (II Cor 3:3,18)
  - Quite simply, we must “put on Jesus Christ.” (Rom 13:14)
- Given that priests act *in personal Christi Capitis*, this challenge applies particularly to us! (CCC, #1548)

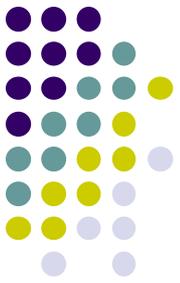
# 5. *Just Ministry* (cont'd)



## Chapters 3 & 4: Character and Virtue

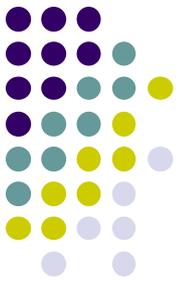
- refining our life's purpose, forming our emotions, shaping our imagination, and developing various virtues or good habits
- through empathy, spiritual practices, friendships, mentors and role models, and the culture of the Catholic, Christian community
- These two chapters are useful for spiritual reading, perhaps when we are on retreat
- William F. May: "One test of character and virtue is what a person does when no one is watching." (p. 66)

## 5. *Just Ministry* (cont'd)



- Note that Gula offers two approaches:
  - virtue ethics to motivate our faith and our idealism so we truly do strive to become like the Good Shepherd, and
  - codes of ethics to try to ensure that we are at least minimally decent shepherds
- I suspect that at times and particularly in some areas of our lives we need both approaches!

# 5. *Just Ministry* (cont'd)



## Chapter 5: Power

- As priests, we still have considerable power.
- “Many of us do not like to be told that we are powerful.” (p. 123)
- However, “professionals are most at risk of unethical behaviour when they minimise or ignore their power.” (p. 133)
- Don’t forget too that power “can also be liberating or enabling.” It is “a capacity to influence. It is what enable us to make things happen or not.” (p. 123)

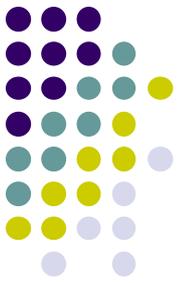
# 5. *Just Ministry* (cont'd)



## Chapter 5: Power

- Try to maintain clear boundaries: “boundaries are the way we set limits to create a comfortable space where others can come in and feel safe.” (p. 129)
- There are boundaries of time, space and person.
- “Be cautious about dual relationships.” (p. 142)
- “Those dual relationships that we cannot avoid need to be carefully monitored... often with the help of a friend, a spiritual director, or a therapist...” (p. 141)

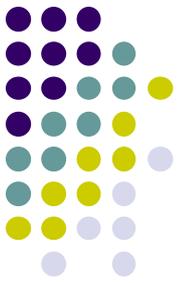
# 5. *Just Ministry* (cont'd)



## Chapter 6: Sexuality

- sexual abuse and sexual exploitation
- sexual harassment
- sexual fantasy: “The moral issue is not in having a fantasy but in using the fantasy to shape our behaviour.” (p. 167)
- cybersex and internet porn
- good touch/confusing touch/bad touch

# 5. *Just Ministry* (cont'd)

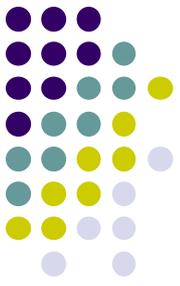


## Chapter 6: Sexuality

### Strategies for Prevention

- 1) Recognise our risk factors.
- 2) Know our warning signs.
- 3) Understand the dynamics of transference and counter-transference.
- 4) Avoid dual relationships as much as possible.
- 5) Maintain appropriate self-care. (pp. 182-188)

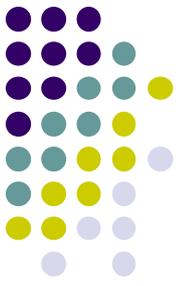
# 5. *Just Ministry* (cont'd)



## Chapter 7: Confidentiality

- “We probably abuse confidentiality more than we abuse sexual boundaries... not because we are ill-willed, but because we are careless.” (p. 191)
- Gula invites us to reflect on the rights and wrongs of revealing information about people in conversations, as illustrations in preaching, in gossip, and in parish newsletters and Prayers of the Faithful.
- More often than not, we should seek permission before revealing perhaps sensitive information.
- If we are not sure and we have not asked permission, “we ought to resolve the doubt in favour of silence.” (p. 216)

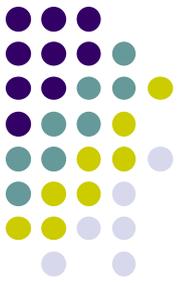
# 5. *Just Ministry* (cont'd)



## Chapter 7: Pastoral Care

- Preaching
  - The Second Vatican Council recognised that preaching is the primary duty of the parish priest.
  - Preaching “requires learning in scripture and theology, spiritual maturity, a discipline of prayer, a breadth of personal experience, familiarity with the local community, communication skills, imagination, and time to prepare.” (p. 219)
  - “One of the most common complaints people in the pews make about presiders is the poor quality of homilies.” (Wilson, p. 118)
  - Pope Francis’s *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 135–159.
  - Congregation for Divine Worship’s *Homiletic Directory*.

# 5. *Just Ministry* (cont'd)



## Chapter 7: Pastoral Care

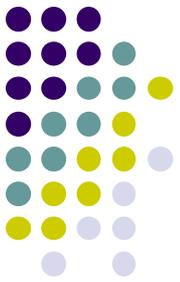
- Managing Finances
  - “Transparency, clarity and honesty in accounting... can go a long way to restoring trust in the church... The parish should know where the money comes from and where it goes. The people should be assured that their money is being spent of the purposes for which it was raised.” (p. 231)
- Pastoral Moral Guidance
  - Let there be understanding!
  - Let there be encouragement!
  - Let there be challenge! (pp. 235-238)

# 6. Questions for discussion



- What do I have to say about the clergy sexual abuse crisis?
- How was I called to be a priest? Did I fall in love with the ministries that priests do? Was there a significant priest or priests in this process?
- Was there anything about the discussion of the professions which rang bells for me? Or that I disagreed with?
- How do I react to the proposal that we respond to the clergy sexual abuse crisis with a renewed focus on professionalism and accountability in the priesthood?
- How could I do this in my ministries? How could we do this in this diocese?
- From all that I have heard, are there any new standards that I would like to set for myself today?

# Presenter



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