

# Theology in a Post-Traumatic Church

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# Introduction

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In October 2021, Pope Francis called the church into a synodal process that will continue through 2024. For Christians, to be synodal means to walk a path together, to journey together, as a community collectively shaped and animated by experiences of dialogue and reciprocity in which the Holy Spirit is discerned to be present, calling all in the church to a deeper conversion to the mission of the church. It enjoins participative and inclusive ecclesial processes so that everyone—especially those on the margins or peripheries—can speak, be heard, and contribute to the body of the church. Synodality recognizes and promotes the irreducible human diversity of God-given gifts and charisms bestowed upon humanity for the benefit of all, and it seeks to render these more audible, visible, and participatory. Importantly, as the Preparatory Document describes:

Synodality represents the main road for the Church, called to renew herself under the action of the Spirit and by listening to the Word. The ability to imagine a different future for the Church and her institutions, in keeping with the mission she has received, depends largely on the decision to initiate processes of listening, dialogue, and community discernment, in which each and every person can participate and contribute. (no. 9)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Preparatory Document for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission” (July 9, 2021). Official church documents referenced herein are available on the Vatican website.

This book began as a collaborative project in 2019, motivated by a desire among us as theologians to offer constructive theological engagements with the Catholic Church's self-inflicted abuse crisis in the wake of the Theodore McCarrick situation and the Pennsylvania grand jury report, both of which rocked the US Catholic Church in the summer of 2018 and revealed more dimensions to the ongoing story of abuse and cover-up. For us as authors, constructive theological engagement with the dynamics of abuse and traumatic wounding has not been a dispassionate academic study. As theologians and other professionals, we have endeavored to draw close to the wounds of victims, to their experiences of vulnerability, manipulation, abuse, and cover-up, as a mode of being church together and, from that context, to offer theological expression to the phenomena of abuse and healing. We have endeavored to contribute to a theology that is "victim-centric." We have endeavored to listen carefully, to feel deeply, and to bring to bear upon these crimes and sins a wide range of biblical, theological, ecclesiological, liturgical, ethnographic, and psychological resources. Just as the church becomes incoherent if its people do not journey together, we feel that a theological program unaffiliated with, unallied with, or indifferent to the crimes and sins of abuse inflicted upon other members of the body of Christ is a theology in crisis, a theology that offers no functional meaning for the church of which it is a part.

The Preparatory Document connects the synodal process to victim-survivors of abuse while drawing heavily upon Pope Francis's August 2018 "Letter to the People of God." The Preparatory Document states:

In particular, we cannot forget the suffering experienced by minors and vulnerable people "due to sexual abuse, the abuse of power and the abuse of conscience perpetrated by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons." We are continually challenged "as the People of God to take on the pain of our brothers and sisters wounded in their flesh

and in their spirit.” For too long the cry of the victims has been a cry that the Church has not been able to hear sufficiently. These are deep wounds that are difficult to heal, for which forgiveness can never be asked for enough and which constitute obstacles, sometimes imposing ones, to advancing in the direction of “journeying together.” The whole Church is called to deal with the weight of a culture imbued with clericalism that she inherits from her history, and with those forms of exercising authority on which the different types of abuse (power, economic, conscience, sexual) are grafted. It is impossible to think of “a conversion of our activity as a Church that does not include the active participation of all the members of God’s People:” together let us ask the Lord for “the grace of conversion and the interior anointing needed to express before these crimes of abuse our compunction and our resolve courageously to combat them.” (no. 6)

Here the Preparatory Document conjoins the opportunity for synodal renewal of the church with the stark and overwhelming challenge of listening carefully to the pained voices of survivors, to accompany them, to deconstruct the culture of clericalism onto which different types of abuse are grafted, to tell the truth about the ecclesial conditions that gave rise to abuse, and to recognize our shared need for the “grace of conversion” and “interior anointing” to meet these challenges as a community.

The authors of this volume are aware that much has been researched and written analyzing the causes and conditions of abuse, of clericalism, and of the pathological narcissism associated with abuse. Significantly less constructive theological work interfacing with victim experience has been undertaken by theologians. Hans Zollner, SJ, director of the IADC Safeguarding Institute at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, was correct in 2017 when he wrote that theologians have not quite shown up with their skillset to contribute to the church’s reform of the causes and conditions of abuse:

During the last two years, at international colloquia, we were able to see that on the issue of sexual abuse one could find many publications in the fields of spiritual, psychological and pastoral studies, but that, up to now, almost nothing has been written in the field of systematic theology. Bishops usually delegate the problem to psychologists and Canon lawyers.<sup>2</sup>

That judgment has remained largely accurate even as, since 2018, theologians have begun to show up and offer explicitly theological engagement with the issue, both in our principal academic university contexts and in service on local diocesan review boards and on the USCCB National Review Board, both boards being mandated by the 2002 “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” (The Dallas Charter).<sup>3</sup> The authors of this volume intend to do so in a victim-centric modality. That is, when we listen to victim-survivors of abuse, what do we hear? What are the theological implications of their witness, and will their witness be recognized as making a claim or even a demand upon our attention so as to be viewed as authoritative? How do we retain our victim-centric orientation in an ecclesial environment that, to date, has struggled to do so? So too, what do the church and theologians learn when they approach matters of abuse not simply with a view to how to help survivors or others affected by the abuse of loved ones, but with a view to what survivors can teach us about trauma, whether and how to come back from betrayal, the conditions for the possibility of healing, and the effective ministry that can facilitate it? Synodality primes the church not merely to be present and to accompany, important as these are, but, through accompaniment, synodality

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<sup>2</sup> Hans Zollner, SJ, “Sexual Abuse in the Church: A Call to Change Our Way of Seeing Things,” *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 81 (2017): 255.

<sup>3</sup> See United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” (2002; rev. June 2018) articles 2, 10.

also readies the church to ask—and to learn—what survivors of abuse can teach about how God actively relates to brokenness, what theological insights emerge from survivors' lived experience and the processing of wounds and healing, and what is revealed as lost to persons and to the church when these wounds remain unprocessed, unhealed, over a lifespan.

The synodal process requires significant patience on the part of the church as a listening body. Because all are invited to speak out with courage, including specifically the marginalized and excluded who have been subjected to prejudice or stereotyping, the community of the church is tasked with making space for authentic, transparent forms of communication that identify, interrogate, and interrupt those same prejudices and stereotypes. The spirit of freedom and courage to speak forthrightly finds its corollary in a humbled, listening church made ready by the Spirit to receive what is new, authentic, and corrective from among us. This suggests that the church's ongoing work of processing its wounds of abuse will find opportune chances for doing so in local environments where there is serious commitment to and conversion toward the synodal process.<sup>4</sup> Where a lack of conversion to the synodal process is evident, or where the results of the synodal process are neglected or not taken seriously by leadership or laity, we are less likely to find an environment conducive to survivors, to their witness, and to the shared responsibility to accompany them on the journey of healing, which is the church's own journey.

It is nearly impossible to take a static picture of the church's response to the crisis. Any such picture would fail to capture what in reality is a continually evolving dynamic environment. One sees variation at the local level of dioceses, parishes, and schools where people live out their faith lives and encounter the structural realities of the institutional church and personnel responsible for safe environment and protection. At the institutional levels of the USCCB and the Holy See, one observes ongoing evolution in policies and procedures that have been designed, implemented, and revised since 2002 to protect the

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<sup>4</sup> Preparatory Document, nos. 30.II, 30.III.

vulnerable from abuse, to be accountable to the church's own codes of conduct, and to heal the very real and deep wounds of both primary and secondary victims of abuse. The environment of the Catholic Church is in constant flux for these reasons. The reality of the church is in fact pluriform, because the conditions of the church pertaining not only to matters of abuse and healing but to all matters are distinct from diocese to diocese under the impact of different leaders and local cultural dynamics. The abuse crisis brings into sharp focus the hierarchical governance of the church with regard to the dynamics of power, but equally the decentralization of the church with regard to local experiences of life-affecting inconsistencies across dioceses, parishes, schools, and other institutions. Indeed, in the judgment of Karen Terry, the principal investigator of the John Jay College's "Causes and Context Study,"<sup>5</sup> the Catholic Church's decentralized organizational structure functions as a risk factor for abuse. It is not enough to rest content with the USCCB's "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," or upon the latest revision of the same, or the latest *Motu Proprio* issued by a pope. All such achievements, important as they are, must be implemented in numerous local dioceses, parishes, and schools to be effective. Where there is indifference or only a minimalist response—checking boxes—among local actors responsible for implementing safe-environment standards, vulnerability persists. As important as mandatory policies and procedures are, focus must fall upon the culture of the church itself, on whether the church in its manifold local iterations has embraced an ethos of protection and healing, or, in the words of the former chair of the USCCB National Review Board, Francesco Cesareo, in many of the last USCCB *Annual Reports: Findings and*

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<sup>5</sup> Karen J. Terry, "The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950–2010" (Washington, DC: USCCB Communications, 2011). Frequently referred to as the "Causes and Context Study."

*Recommendations*, there are “signs of complacency” and “a lack of diligence” on the part of some dioceses.<sup>6</sup>

The annual reports provide a yearly assessment of whether and how dioceses have been in compliance with the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.” The USCCB commissions Stonebridge Business Partners to conduct onsite audits of diocesan compliance with the charter, and the results provide the USCCB and the National Review Board with data on both successful implementation of the charter and the specific reasons some dioceses may fall out of compliance with it. This data provides a somewhat useful window through which to observe the culture of the church around matters of safe environment as it plays out in varied ways in local stakeholders and contexts.

The *2018 Annual Report* is of particular interest. Francesco Cesareo begins his comments in that report by noting the depth of frustration and disappointment among many in the church stemming from the situation with (former Archbishop) Theodore McCarrick and the Pennsylvania grand jury report. Many wondered, Cesareo writes, whether the implementation of the charter “has been more concerned with ‘checking-off the box’ as opposed to creating a culture of safety within dioceses.” Not merely an abstract speculation, this sentiment was supported, Cesareo indicated, in the results of the 2018 audit, which reinforced the findings of audits in years past. They would also be shown to be consistent with audits in the years to come (2019–21).<sup>7</sup> He goes on to explain in greater detail:

During the last several years the Annual Report has pointed out recurring concerns that speak to the issue of complacency. This year is no exception. We continue to see failure

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<sup>6</sup> USCCB, *2017 Annual Report: Findings and Recommendations*, vii; *2018 Annual Report: Findings and Recommendations*, vi–vii; *2019 Annual Report: Findings and Recommendations*, viii; *2021 Annual Report: Findings and Recommendations*, vi.

<sup>7</sup> Cesareo, *2018 Annual Report*, vi.



to publish reporting procedures in the various languages in which the liturgy is celebrated; poor record keeping of background checks; failure to train children not trained, especially in religious education programs; lack of cooperation by parishes and implementation of safe environment requirements or responding to requests from safe environment personnel; lack of a formal monitoring plan for priests who have been removed from ministry; failure to update policies and procedures in light of the 2011 *Charter* revisions. These are just some of the concerns highlighted in this year's Annual Report that need attention. While not widespread, the fact that in some dioceses these recurring problems are still evident points to lack of diligence that puts children's safety at risk.

In the contexts of a society and of youth-serving organizations in which child vulnerability is ubiquitous, the fact that Cesareo notes these problems are not widespread is an indication of just how successful the implementation of safe environment has been in Catholic dioceses. Always balanced in his assessment of the data, Cesareo confirmed in the same Annual Report that the majority of current bishops have seriously confronted clerical sexual abuse. The unevenness, the variability in buy-in among local stakeholders, nonetheless, remains a concern. Each year, despite stakeholders knowing that a diocesan review board that fails to meet at least once during that year causes the entire diocese to fall out of compliance with the charter, a number of diocesan review boards continue to be inactive or dysfunctional; this fact is an example of this concerning variability.<sup>8</sup> It reflects upon the quality of the culture around protection of vulnerable children and persons in that diocese. Dioceses in which parishes

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<sup>8</sup> According to the *2021 Annual Report: Findings and Recommendations*, three dioceses and one eparchy were non-compliant with Article 2 of the charter, which requires diocesan review boards to meet during the audit period. Each year, a small number of dioceses and eparchies have been non-compliant with the charter for this reason.

resist training children in the safe environment practices in which they are entitled—and required—to be trained, also reflect on the quality of that particular diocese’s commitment and vigilance for protection of vulnerable children and persons.

Into this ground-level assessment of problems and concerns that continue to occur in an environment that is generally compliant with the charter, one may ask what difference theology can make to the culture of a church. Are the efforts of theologians to build up constructive theological responses to abuse and ecclesial conditions that make abuse more likely able to offer any meaningful contribution to people harmed directly and indirectly by abuse? With an eye fixed upon the horizon of an unfolding future, can theology make a difference to people who may be, or someday may become, vulnerable to abuse? We think so.

Constructive theological and ethical engagements with clergy-perpetrated abuse tend to come in articles of chapter length. Few current volume-length treatments focus upon theological engagement with victim-survivors of abuse. By collecting a variety of authors and theological sub-disciplines into one volume, we intend not to say the best or final word on the subjects addressed, but rather to demonstrate first that a wide range of theological sub-disciplines do have much to offer a victim-centric ecclesial culture and, second, that the gifts and efforts of other theologians from these and additional theological sub-disciplines stand to make important contributions going forward. Such focus upon a victim-centric orientation combined with a breadth of theological perspectives—systematic theology, ethics, ecclesiology, biblical studies, liturgical studies—along with clinical psychological expertise has not yet occurred within one volume.

Chapter 1, “Resiliency, Hope, Healing: Victims Assistance Ministry in a Trauma-Sensitive Theological Context,” is written by Heather T. Banis, PhD, a clinical psychologist with theological training who specializes in trauma-informed counseling. Banis has served on the faculty at Occidental College and is currently the Victims Assistance Coordinator for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. She serves also as a consultant to the USCCB Committee

for the Protection of Children and Young People. This chapter situates the church's victim assistance ministry in terms of an ongoing relationship of learning from those harmed how best to respond to victim-survivors of abuse in order to nurture authentic healing. With his permission, she describes the call "Joe" placed to her office as the beginning of a long relationship that was therapeutic for him but also instructive to her in terms of how to develop attunement to survivors. This chapter combines research on trauma and theology with victim assistance ministry experienced in real time and with real people. It develops a variety of best principles to govern such ministry, including how to be victim-centric, how to honor the sacred story of survivors, and how to understand clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse as a betrayal trauma. Her work with Joe provides some suggestive possibilities of the difference victim assistance ministry can make in the cultivation of resilience and renewal.

Chapter 2, "Critical Reflections on the Discourse of a Traumatized Church," written by Jennifer E. Beste, the Koch Chair of Catholic Thought and Culture at the College of Saint Benedict and a leading researcher in this field in the United States, provides a helpful corrective to a misunderstanding of the meaning of the title of this book. Is the church traumatized? Is it the case that people of God are traumatized by the phenomenon of clergy sexual abuse and its cover-up? Emphatically, this is not the case. This chapter embodies a victim-centric perspective in its clarification, based on Beste's three decades of research on trauma, that trauma and post-traumatic stress are clinical terms that do not apply to the entire church as synonyms for people's grief, anxiety, disorientation, and even crises of faith that can attend confrontation with abuse and cover-up. Such responses are distinct from trauma, and to conflate the two harms our capacity to accompany victim-survivors of abuse and to redress the causes and conditions that led to it. The title of this book, *Theology in a Post-Traumatic Church*, does not mean to convert the clinical application of trauma into a synonym for all who have come to grief over the phenomenon of abuse in their church, whether

laity, priests, or bishops. Rather, it underscores the responsibility of theologians to do theology from the perspective of abuse and healing (that is, redemption), to draw constructively upon the resources of the Christian tradition for the entire people of God, which in this focus includes victim-survivors and others harmed indirectly by abuse. Beste enjoins the reader to retain focus upon victims and their children, on the one hand, while calling upon Catholics to accept for themselves the onus for resolving the crisis as collaborators who are co-responsible for the church.

Chapter 3, “What Is Redemption?” by John N. Sheveland, a theologian at Gonzaga University who serves on the Spokane Diocesan Review Board and National Review Board, turns to survivors themselves to learn theologically about what survivors undergo and why when they experience their wounds to be encountered by a God who heals and redeems them over a long developmental process throughout their lifespan. The chapter acknowledges that policies surrounding prevention, while necessary, are not enough, and that one part of the needed change in the culture of the church will include the community’s capacity to accompany survivors of any form of abuse. This move beyond a narrow focus on prevention policies implemented by only a few toward a more earnest culture of attunement to global and ecclesial child vulnerability and the flourishing of survivors as a commitment made by many will require sober redress of patterns of clericalism and narcissism among clergy and laity alike. This chapter expands on the compelling ethnographic research of Susan Shooter, proposes an alignment between the principles of high reliability organizations and some features of Catholic ecclesiology, and probes the power of communal liturgical prayer to effect change in the culture of the church.

Chapter 4, “What Can Make the Churches Unsafe: The Catholic Church as Total Institution,” by Cristina Lledo-Gomez, an ecclesialogist and research fellow at Charles Sturt University and lecturer at BBI—The Australian Institute of Theological Education, explores the organizational structures of churches that enhance conditions for the abuse of power. Such abuse of power

can persist even in ecclesial environments that have committed to zero tolerance for abuse. In this chapter Lledo-Gomez draws upon her concrete experience and roles in position of service to her local church—ranging from youth minister, reader, senior server, and extraordinary minister of holy communion to chair of the Australian Catholic Bishops Commission for Social Justice, pastoral associate for staff, and theology lecturer at a Catholic university, to wife of a permanent deacon—to arrive at the finding that the same churches that support people can also use and abuse them, not only sexually but spiritually. She argues that the safeguarding of children must be widened toward people’s generalized vulnerability to the abuse of power, toward specific ways a religious institution can be set up and maintained that cater to spiritual abuse such as manipulation, coercion, and controlling behavior, censorship, isolation as punishment, and compelled obedience to an abuser. These are risk factors for clergy-perpetrated abuse, and they remain risk factors for other kinds of abuse even when clergy-perpetrated abuse is absent. The chapter employs the powerful framework of a “total institution” and investigates whether and how some of its features apply to Catholic experience. Total institutions constitute alternative moral universes, embrace assumptions about human nature, extinguish members’ previous identities, promote secrecy, and exhibit unique power structures and unique informal group dynamics. A trauma-informed approach to these risk factors will prioritize safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment, these being protective factors associated with synodality and a means to measure the integrity of those claiming commitment to safeguarding in the church.

Chapter 5, “Visions of Survivor Healing and Empowerment in Response to Trauma,” by Scott R. A. Starbuck, a biblical theologian at Gonzaga University and senior pastor at Manito Presbyterian Church, is the first of two chapters that contemplate the prophetic power of the Hebrew Bible to empower survivors’ processing and recovering from traumatic wounding. It is a powerful witness to the ways in which the biblical text itself, in this case the Book of Isaiah, offers anticlerical opportunities for the empowerment of the laity, those wounded by trauma in particular.

Starbuck provides a trauma-informed theological exegesis of Isaiah 55:1–13 and 61:1–11 precisely for those in pastoral contexts who have been failed by the religious institution and who are in need of an anchor in the biblical text itself, which discloses a God who is theologically available to the violated in an unmediated manner. Exegesis of these verses provides a biblical opportunity to foster in victim-survivors a sense of healing and the empowerment of their own personal agency without dependence upon clerical mediation.

Chapter 6 also probes the Hebrew Bible's capacity for victim-centric resources for healing and finds the psalms to have already become a crucial aid in the processing of grief among many survivors. Linda Schearing, professor emerita of Hebrew Bible at Gonzaga University, notes that an analogy can be drawn between the theological and ecclesial tendency to neutralize the themes of anger and lament—despite their ubiquity in the Psalter—and the experiences of many survivors of sexual abuse when their voices are silenced or viewed as unsettling to others. The chapter studies the meaningfulness of the genre of lament for trauma recovery, gives voice to a number of survivors who have written of the importance of Psalm 55 and Psalm 88. It provides a biblical justification for the pastoral reality that survivors need and are entitled to lament, with its depth of feeling, bold truthfulness, inherent messiness, vivid and desperate intonation of divine absence in the midst of interpersonal betrayal, yet with a sense that healing may be possible even if distant and remote. This chapter has significant implications for a community's capacity to accompany and hold space in the midst of survivor witness or testimony, and it challenges the contemporary moment of synodality in the church with another way to appreciate how hard the church must work to incorporate the voices and contributions of all, even and especially those who call out with disruptive testimony from the "pit" (Ps 88:4, 6) in which they have found themselves. It provides a biblical key as well for the trauma-informed pastoral practice of listening in ways that necessarily elongate the processing of trauma, permitting gradual testimony in a space of receptivity without rushing to provide well-intended words of consolation.

Such words are not always to be found in the psalms, and this tells us something vital.

Chapter 7, “Malignant Narcissism and Clericalism: Psychological Perspectives on a Culture of Abuse,” is the first of three chapters that conduct “deep dives” into clericalism. It is written by Fernando A. Ortiz, PhD, a clinical psychologist at Gonzaga University and former member of the USCCB National Review Board; he also regularly psychologically evaluates candidates to various US seminaries. This chapter explores clericalism as a danger to the church and gives particular psychological attention to narcissistic personality traits that frequently combine with the culture of clericalism. This chapter is a “must read” for any stakeholders involved in seminary and religious formation desiring the ability to predict risk factors that predispose candidates to an abusive clerical culture. Ortiz stresses the importance of a comprehensive human formation program for priests and seminarians to reduce risk factors and promote resilience, emotional intelligence, problem-solving skills, and healthy support systems.

The author of Chapter 8, “Understanding and Resisting Clericalism and Social Sin,” is B. Kevin Brown, a theologian at Gonzaga University and a principal investigator in Fordham University’s initiative *Taking Responsibility: Jesuit Educational Institutions Confront the Causes and Legacy of Clergy Sexual Abuse*. This chapter joins another recent study on clericalism by Julie Hanlon Rubio and Paul J. Schutz to provide sophisticated and complementary analyses of various patterns of clericalism as a bias.<sup>9</sup> For Brown, clericalism is a structure of domination rooted in bias that affects and distorts all relationships in the church. It conditions the community’s set of meanings and values in ways that enable the dominant group to maintain power and privilege at the expense of others. It appeared repeatedly in four historical patterns of abuse and cover-up: (1) with few exceptions, bishops and priests did not report offending priests to law enforcement; (2) bishops

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<sup>9</sup> Julie Hanlon Rubio and Paul J. Schutz, “Beyond ‘Bad Apples’: Understanding Clergy Perpetrated Sexual Abuse as a Structural Problem and Cultivating Strategies for Change” (New York: Fordham University, August 2022).

frequently allowed perpetrators to continue serving in positions of ministry with children; (3) bishops did not inform parishioners that a priest assigned to their community had been accused previously or that children might be in danger as a result; and (4) there was a lack of collaboration between ordained and non-ordained in responding to cases of abuse. Brown proposes creative ways in which clericalism can be resisted for the well-being of all and gestures toward a renewed theology of ministry predicated upon the Spirit's invitation to participate in non-dominating love.

Chapter 9, "Worship among the Ruins: Foundations for a Theology of Liturgy and Sacraments 'after Abuse,'" by Joseph C. Mudd, a theologian and director of Catholic Studies at Gonzaga University, explores the psychic structure of clericalism with the help of the works of Canadian Jesuit theologian Bernard Lonergan. Clericalism is a human phenomenon observable across cultures that locates authority in office, not with authenticity. Authenticity legitimizes authority, whereas unauthenticity destroys it. Mudd explores Lonergan's analysis of dramatic bias and the repressive function of the psyche and applies them to the clericalism in our setting, expressing itself as dishonesty with reality and the choice not to attend to the testimony of victim-survivors due to the attending dread, horror, revulsion, and distaste for abuse and its conditions. For all, psychic conversion is needed to transform the repressive role of the psyche to a constructive one. One liturgical task is to become clear on the role of sacrifice in the liturgy 'after' clergy sexual abuse. Mudd then moves to consider how the sacramental economy of the church presents the opportunity to participate in what Lonergan referred to as the "law of the cross," namely, the experience of evil turned into good by the power of God in Jesus Christ. This can feature clergy and laity working together from their indelible baptismal priesthood to undo patterns of coercion and abuse lodged deeply and unconsciously in a community's way of proceeding and replace them with the sacrificial attitude of Christ, a mutual divine-human interpersonal situation of mutual self-offering in solidarity with victims of abuse. For this reason Mudd suggests every mass should remember victims of clergy-perpetrated abuse, and he speculates that the failure to do



so may undermine the meaning of the liturgy. Mudd concludes by reimagining how the sacraments of reconciliation and anointing of the sick might be reimagined for a community ‘after’ abuse as a way for the community to process what has happened through public penance and collective absolution through, for example, liturgies of lament and masses offered for reconciliation. These may become one way for individuals and communities to reconfigure how authority is expressed in the church, and in so doing, recover authenticity.

This book is indebted to a number of people, and it is a privilege to acknowledge them here. Each author took this task to heart in the midst of difficult pandemic living conditions. I am grateful for their willingness to take on the project and for their resilience in the midst of it. Thomas Hermans-Webster, acquisitions editor for Orbis Books, and before him, Jill O’Brien, offered tremendous insight and energy toward this project at every turn, for which we as authors are deeply grateful. Maria Angelini, managing editor at Orbis, contributed a sharp eye for detail and enhanced the manuscript throughout. I am grateful to members of the Secretariat for Child and Youth Protection at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, its director Deacon Bernie Nojadera, Molly Fara, Laura Garner, and former members Lauren Sarmir and Melanie Takinen. These professionals have tirelessly performed the church’s front-line work of making the promise to protect and the pledge to heal, and they are true subject-matter experts. I am grateful to past and present members of the National Review Board from whom I have learned deeply, especially Francesco Cesareo and Suzanne Healy, and to members of the Spokane Diocese Review Board. All of us as authors are indebted to our spouses and families who have graciously tolerated our distraction during long and irregular work hours. We dedicate this volume to our children—to all children—and especially to the people of Saint Michael, Alaska—past, present, and future. May we learn from our past and together create a future in which the landscape of child vulnerability and flourishing exceeds even what hope empowers us to imagine.