

# Child sexual abuse by the Catholic Church in Spain

Noemí Pereda, PhD  
Research Group on Child and Adolescent Victimization (GReVIA)  
University of Barcelona  
[www.ub.edu/grevia](http://www.ub.edu/grevia)



# Catholic Church in Spain





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# Introduction



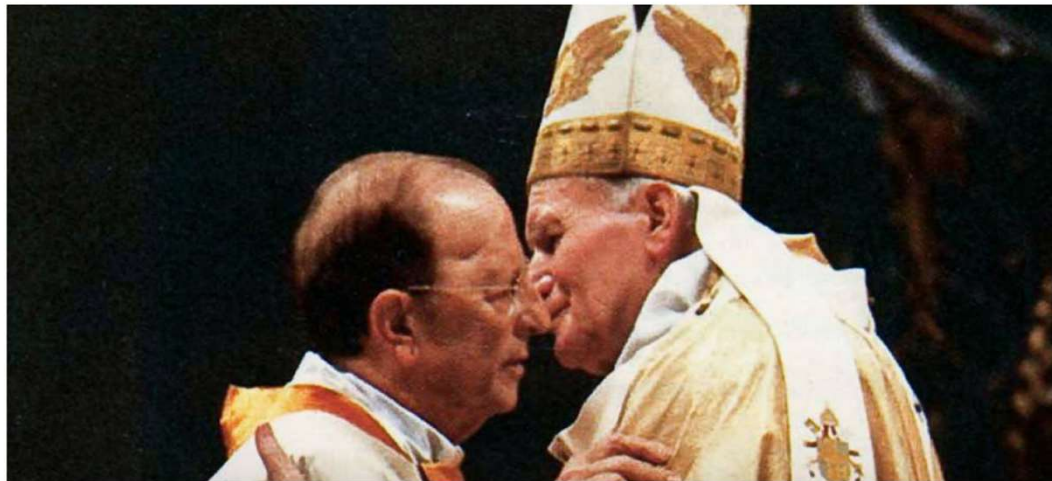


# introduction

## keeping the silence

### **El Vaticano ocultó durante 63 años los abusos del fundador de los Legionarios de Cristo**

Por primera vez el Vaticano reconoce que sabía los abusos cometidos por Marcial Maciel pero no hizo nada





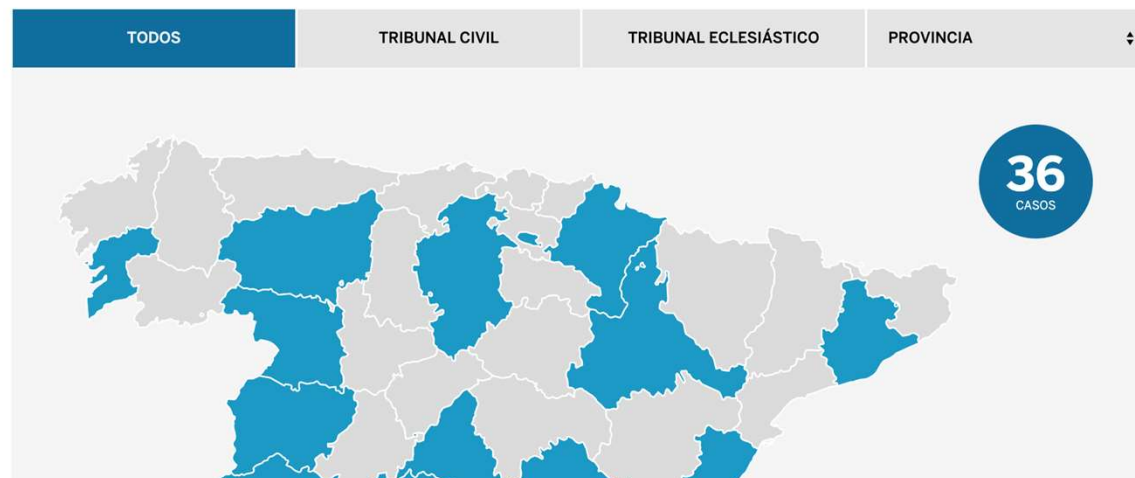
# introduction

## keeping the silence

ABUSOS A MENORES >

### La Iglesia española silencia desde hace décadas los casos de pederastia

La cúpula eclesiástica se niega a facilitar datos de los procesos que ha conocido o instruido. Solo tres de las 70 diócesis consultadas obligan al obispo en sus protocolos a informar a Fiscalía





# introduction

relationship  
with the  
Church

silence  
strategy

male  
victims

incredulity

chronic  
abuses

secrete until  
adulthood

serious  
consequences

Doyle, T.P. (2003). Roman catholic clericalism, religious duress and clergy sexual abuse. *Pastoral Psychology*, 51(3), 189-231.



# introduction

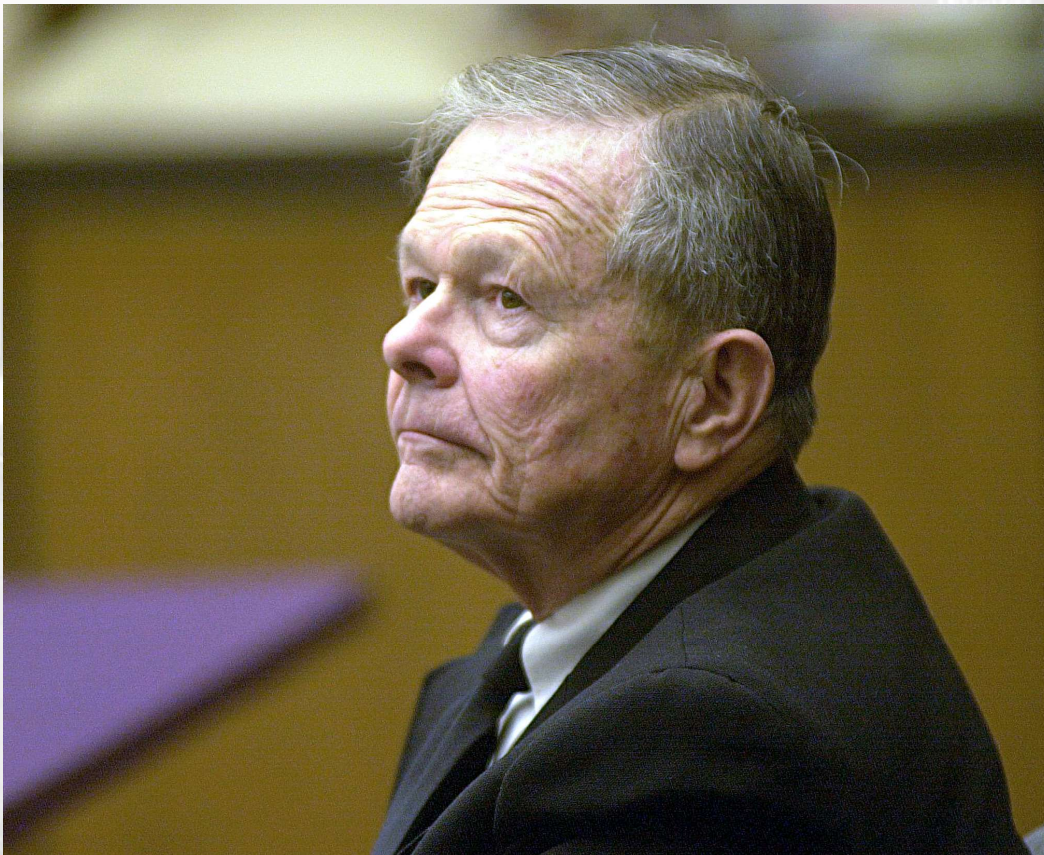


Gilbert Gauthé (1945)





# introduction



John Geoghan (1935-2003)

VOLUME 261  
NUMBER 24  
50 cents

# The Boston Globe

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2002

IN COLD MUD  
Today: Rain with fog, high in the mid 40s  
Tomorrow: Mostly sunny, high in the upper 50s  
High tide: 6:56 a.m., 7:34 p.m.  
Full report: Page B15

## Documents show church long supported Geoghan

Officials gave comfort despite abuse charges

**Spotlight**

This article was prepared by the Globe Spotlight Team: Editor V. Robinson, senior assistant metropolitan editor Stephen Kurkjian, and reporters Matt Carroll, Sasha Pfeiffer, and Michael Barmes. It was written by Robinson and Carroll.

Even as two successive cardinals and dozens of church officials heard of growing evidence that the Rev. John J. Geoghan could not control his compulsion to molest children, Geoghan found extraordinary comfort in his church. In succession, Cardinals Humberto S. Medeiros and Bernard F. Law offered him their prayers, but never condemnation. Even as prosecutors closed in, Law wrote Geoghan in 1996: "There has been an effective life of ministry, sadly impaired by illness... God bless you, Jack."

Bishop Thomas V. Dally, once the top deputy to both cardinals, likened Geoghan to a lost sheep. In dozens of internal communications, Geoghan's superiors and his doctors regularly alluded to his pedophilia euphemistically. After Geoghan was removed from a Dorchester parish in 1984 for abusing children, Dr. Robert W.

memo from the desk of  
Bishop Banks  
4/27/89

Dr. Brennan

- only problem I have about was 10 years ago  
- I advised him not to work with kids in his parish work  
- I knew of no recurrence  
- You better clip his wings before there is an explosion.  
- You can't afford to have him in a parish  
- since 84 my contacts have been avoided  
- back. I thought everything was under control

Acting Governor Jane Swift detailing her budget proposal.

### Swift proposes a \$23.5b budget, calls the cuts vital

By Rick Klein  
12.06.01 1:07

Acting Governor Jane Swift said yesterday she has come up with a "realistic and responsible" approach to the state's fiscal problems that makes necessary cuts, keeps intact services for the neediest, and avoids "sticking it to the taxpayers."

"The choices that we made were certainly tough, but they've been made," Swift said. "None of them are easy, many of them are unpopular, but they are necessary."

Swift's \$23.5 billion plan would

**School funding**  
The acting governor says her proposal upholds the state's end of the bargain struck at the outset of education reform in 1993.

**Criticism on health**  
Advocates complain that cuts in disease prevention programs can backfire on the taxpayers.

**MWRA money at issue**  
Homeowners in Greater Boston could see large increases in their water and sewer bills next year under the Swift plan.

Storlies, 85.

Medical records contrast on risk

priest and top officials in the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, including Cardinal Bernard F.

Previously secret correspondence over three decades between

"You better clip his wings before there is an explosion." Bishop Robert J. Banks wrote in this memo to himself, referring to the Rev. John J. Geoghan. The heading "Dr. Brennan" apparently refers to the psychiatrist who had long treated Geoghan.

### Memos offer split view of priest





# introduction

## prevalence

**JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE**  
**The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors**  
**by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United**  
**States, 1950-2002 (2004)**

10,667 victims of child sexual abuse  
by 4,392 priests and deacons



more than 4% of active religious

only officialy reported cases



# introduction

## prevalence

### META-ANALYSES

Pereda, N., Guilera, G., Forns, M., Gómez-Benito, L. (2009). The prevalence of child sexual abuse in community samples: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23(2), 102-111.

Stoltenborgh, M., van IJzendoorn, D. H., van der Valk, I., & Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J. (2011). The prevalence of child sexual abuse: A meta-analysis of prevalence studies. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 16(2), 79-101.

Barth, J., Bermetz, L., Heim, J., Trela, S., & Tonia, P. (2014). The current prevalence of child sexual abuse worldwide: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Public Health*, 58(3), 469-483.



# introduction

## prevalence

### US and CANADA

Rossetti, S. J. (1995). The impact of child sexual abuse on attitudes toward God and the Catholic Church. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 19(12), 1469-1481.

$n=575$  male and 1,234 female adults practising Catholics

3.3% of men and 1.7% of women  
victims of child sexual abuse by a priest





# introduction

## prevalence

### IRELAND

Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (2009)  
Ryan Report

between 6% and 9% of Catholic priests  
had committed sexual abuse against minors





# introduction

## prevalence

### NETHERLANDS

Langeland, W., Hoogendoorn, A. W., Mager, D., Smit, J. H., & Draijer, N. (2015).

Childhood sexual abuse by representatives of the Roman Catholic Church: a prevalence estimate among the Dutch population. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 46, 67-77.

$n = 34,267$  subjects

representative of the Dutch population

aged 40 and above

2.7% of men and 0.7% of women

victims of contact sexual abuse before age 18  
by an employee member of the Catholic Church





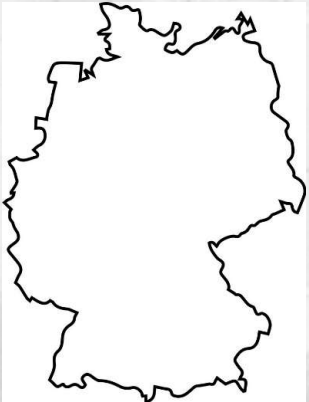
# introduction

## prevalence

### GERMANY

**Sexueller Missbrauch an Minderjährigen durch katolischer Priester, Diakone und männliche Ordensangehörige im Bereich der Deutschen Bishopskonferenz (2018)**

**Heidelberg University, Giessen University, University of Mannheim**



**complaints against 1,670 clergy,  
or a 4.4% of the total**



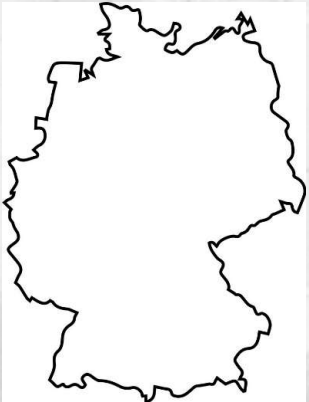
# introduction

## prevalence

### GERMANY

Witt, A., Brähler, E., Plener, P. L., & Fegert, J. M. (2019). Different contexts of sexual abuse with a special focus on the context of Christian institutions: Results from the general population in Germany. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.

$n = 2,510$  adults (54.3% females,  $M = 48$  years)



0.16% of participants reported  
contact sexual abuse before age 18  
in institutions of the Catholic Church

around 200,000 victims



# introduction

## prevalence

AUSTRALIA  
Betrayal of Trust (2013)

7% of Catholic clergy  
faced credible allegations of child sexual abuse





# introduction

## prevalence

23,000 parishes  
18,000 priests

less than 0.2% convictions



## **España, un desierto estadístico sobre la pederastia en la Iglesia**





# introduction

## keeping the silence

Child sexual victimization



6th commandment

“Thou shalt not commit impure acts”

Co

(1983)

canon nº 1395 § 2 “A  
sixth commandment of the  
or by threats, or in public  
to be punished with just pen

SIN, MORAL  
FAILURE

in other ways against the  
crime was committed by force,  
under the age of sixteen years, is  
including dismissal from the clerical  
state if the case so warrants”



# introduction

## keeping the silence

Legionaries of Christ  
(Berry & Renner, 2004)

MEXICO



FSM. Karadima's Group  
(Monkeberg, 2010)

CHILE



Sodalicio (Sodalitium  
Christianae Vitae)  
(Salinas, 2015)

PERU





# introduction

## keeping the silence

Joaquín Benítez Case - Maristas Brothers of the Schools  
(2016)

SPAIN





# introduction

## keeping the silence

el Periódico EDICIÓ CATALUNYA EDICIÓ GLOBAL INICIAR SESIÓN

SOCIEDAD CASTELLERS CIENCIA EDUCACIÓN MEDIO AMBIENTE TIEMPO SANIDAD SORTEOS SUCESOS PRIMERA PLAN@ +PERSONAS

## Una víctima revela la ocultación de abusos sexuales en Montserrat

La abadía pagó 7.200 euros en efectivo a Miguel Hurtado en el 2003 para tratar sus secuelas psicológicas

El monasterio informó al Vaticano en el 2016, que con afectación

el Periódico EDICIÓ CATALUNYA EDICIÓ GLOBAL INICIAR SESIÓN

SOCIEDAD CASTELLERS CIENCIA EDUCACIÓN MEDIO AMBIENTE TIEMPO SANIDAD SORTEOS SUCESOS PRIMERA PLAN@ +PERSONAS

## Dos hermanos denuncian abusos en los Jesuitas de Barcelona: "Destrozaron a toda la familia"

Las víctimas aseguran que los Jesuitas recibieron en el pasado quejas de ambos profesores pero la congregación lo niega

Guillem Sánchez  
Barcelona - Sábado, 19/01/2019 | Actualizado el 01/02/2019 a las 00:45 CET



el Periódico EDICIÓ CATALUNYA EDICIÓ GLOBAL INICIAR SESIÓN



SOCIEDAD CASTELLERS CIENCIA EDUCACIÓN MEDIO AMBIENTE TIEMPO SANIDAD SORTEOS SUCESOS PRIMERA PLAN@ +PERSONAS

## Fin del silencio en Constantí: mosén Pere Llagostera abusó de niños durante décadas

Joan Maria Ramon, víctima del sacerdote de la localidad, explica los ataques sexuales que sufrieron los monaguillos en excursiones al Pirineo

Joan Reig, de Els Pets, revela que la canción 'Corvus' es autobiográfica y habla del abuso que también él sufrió por parte del mismo párroco

Guillem Sánchez  
Constantí - Domingo, 03/02/2019 | Actualizado el 04/02/2019 a las 18:30 CET



3:22 CET



TRANSFORMA TU NEGOCIO SIN MIEDO, CON LAS SOLUCIONES DE SEGURIDAD.



# introduction

## keeping the silence

### El Síndic de Greuges crea una comisión para ayudar a víctimas de abusos en la Iglesia

- El organismo tendrá la función de “escuchar a las víctimas, valorar los casos, examinarlos, evaluar los daños físicos y emocionales y proponer diferentes vías de reacción”







# introduction

## keeping the silence

“I want them to investigate whether there have been more cases and that Brother S.V. do not continue to appear as a person valued by the school”

"My only interest is to let them know what this person did to us”

“To let them know what my classmates and I suffered”

“I want them to recognize the abuse and I want to help others who were also victims with my testimony”

“Having an interview with Father S. and asking him why he did it and how many more children he had abused. Then I want him to apologize to the victims ”

“I want to sit down and talk with those responsible for the abuse”





# introduction

## keeping the silence

Orth, U. (2004). Does perpetrator punishment satisfy victims' feelings of revenge?. *Aggressive Behavior*, 30(1), 62-70.

$n = 31$  victims of interpersonal violence

the punishment that the perpetrator receives only partially, and often transiently, satisfies the desire for revenge that the victim may have

the desires and fantasies of revenge tend to be linked more to the development of mental disorders than to an adaptive process of overcoming victimization



The background of the slide is a faded, grayscale image of a cathedral dome, likely the Sagrada Família in Barcelona, viewed from a street level. The dome is centered in the upper half of the image, with its spire reaching towards the top. The surrounding architecture of the street is visible on both sides, with streetlights and building facades. The overall tone is somber and historical.

# introduction

## keeping the silence

- a) full disclosure and recognition of what happened
- b) recognition of the damage caused by the Church (and the abuser)
- c) the responsibility of the facts by the Church
- d) the prevention of future abuses to other possible victims
- e) an adequate response to the perpetrators
- f) compensation, either financial or not
- g) efforts to help the victim restore their faith in God and in the Church.

Commission on Child Sexual Abuse in Ecclesiastical Contexts (2020). *Report on child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in Catalonia*. Barcelona: Catalan Ombudsman.



# introduction

## keeping the silence

- a) Fear of confronting the problem or institutional reprisals.
- b) Lack of empathy for the victims.
- c) Fanaticism.
- d) Complicity in previous actions.
- e) Professional and institutional loyalty.

System justification  
theory  
(Jost et al., 2004)

Jost, J. T., Banaji, M. R., & Nosek, B. A. (2004). A decade of system justification theory: Accumulated evidence of conscious and unconscious bolstering of the status quo. *Political Psychology*, 25, 881-919.



# introduction

## keeping the silence

rotten apples theory

sexual abuse is the result of individual persons without  
knowledge of institution

but it is responsibility, bishops of institution  
'Passing the trash' (Wurtele, 2012)  
in the US many  
complaints of they had received  
parish to parish

White, M. D., & Terry, K. J. (2008). Child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church: Revisiting the rotten apples explanation. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 35(5), 658-678.





# introduction

## keeping the silence

### Opportunity structure

- Great authority, which is reflected in their power to forgive our sins.
- Socially viewed as virtuous, trustworthy, community leaders.
- Isolated, without friends, partner, family.
- Discretion and lack of formal supervision in activities carried out with children.

### Structure of the organization

- Little professional mobility and few possibilities for promotion.
- Subculture of secrets, sins, celibacy.
- Male status quo, very conservative values.

Death, J. (2013) *"They did not believe me": Adult survivors' perspectives of child sexual abuse by personnel in Christian Institutions*. Australia: Crime Justice and Research Centre.



# introduction

## keeping the silence

coping mechanism allowing individuals to forget  
or separate from their conscious thinking those experiences  
that are too painful to cope with at that moment

Spiegel, D., et al. (2011). Dissociative disorders in DSM-5. *Depression and Anxiety*, 28(9), 824-852.

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**childhood**  
dissociation

**adolescence**  
grieving process

personal maturation and reflection

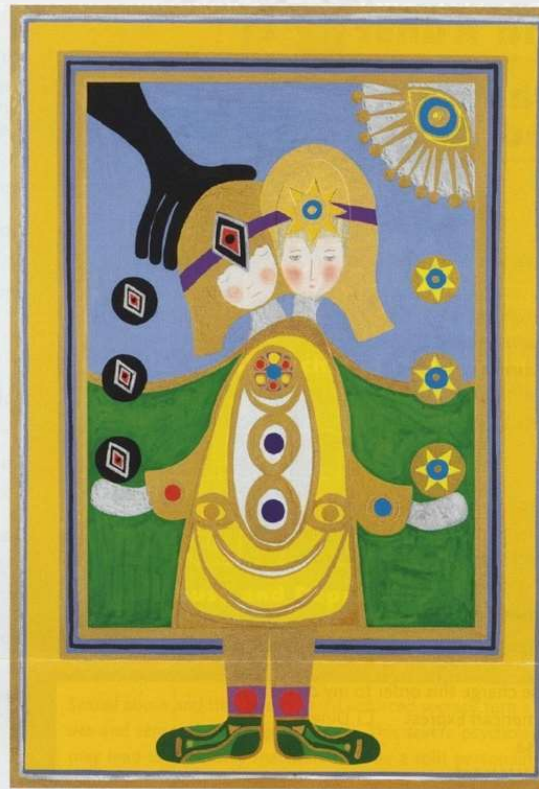


**unprosecutable**



# introduction

## keeping the silence



(Rut, Benedetti, & Waser, 2004)





# introduction

## keeping the silence

Felstiner, W. L., Abel, R. L., & Sarat, A. (1980). The emergence and transformation of disputes: Naming, blaming, claiming... *Law & Society Review*, 15, 631.

«naming, blaming, claiming» effect

hard to put a name to what happened to them (*naming*), to blame the victimizer rather than themselves (*blaming*), and to reveal their victimization and testify in court, explaining their experience in detail (*claiming*)



# Consequences





# consequences

## children and adolescents

### Confidence in oneself

low self-esteem  
negative self-concept  
perception of low value  
undeserving love  
anxiety  
depression

### Confidence in others

distrust  
interpersonal problems  
low empathy  
perpetration of violence  
isolation  
antisocial behaviour

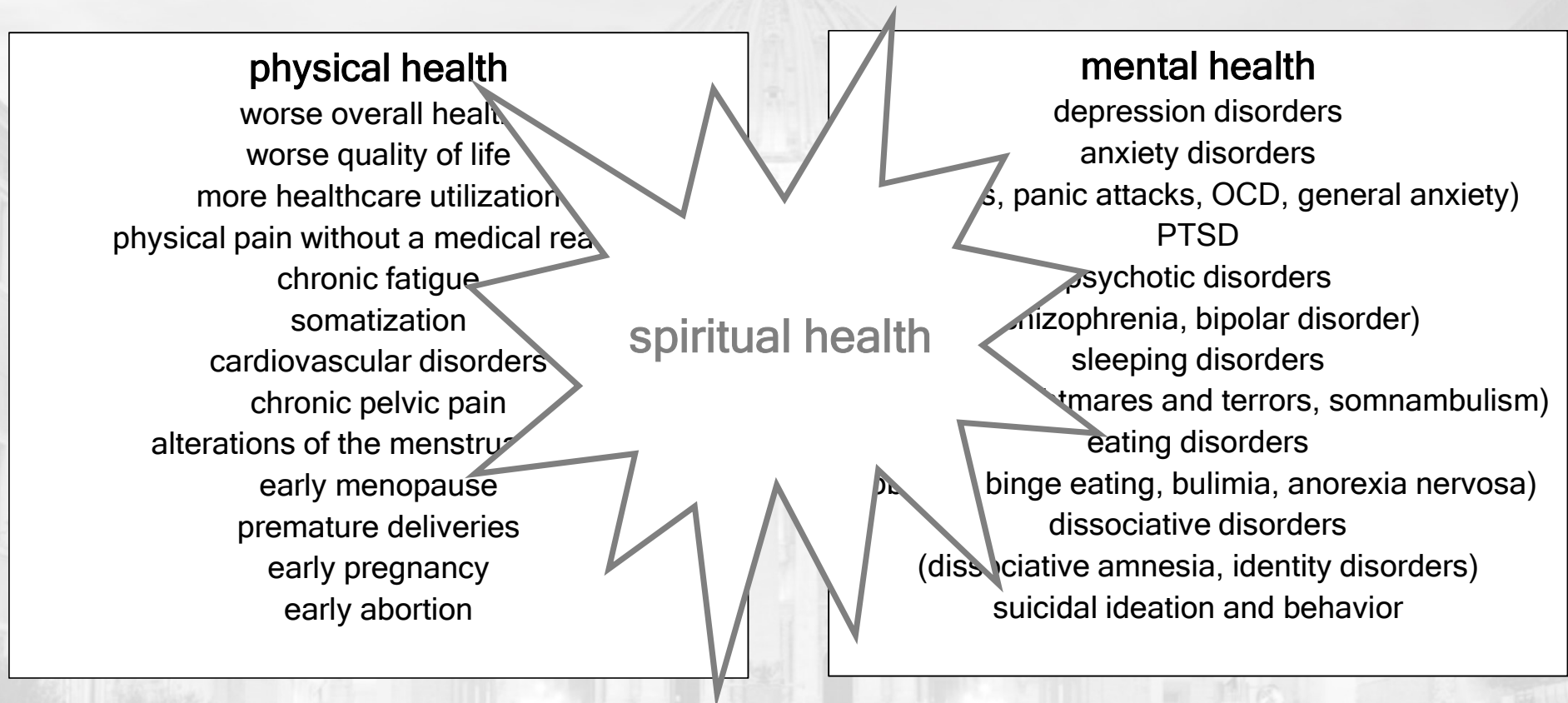
### Confidence in the future

lack of hope  
lack of faith in the  
future  
despair  
helplessness



# consequences

## adults

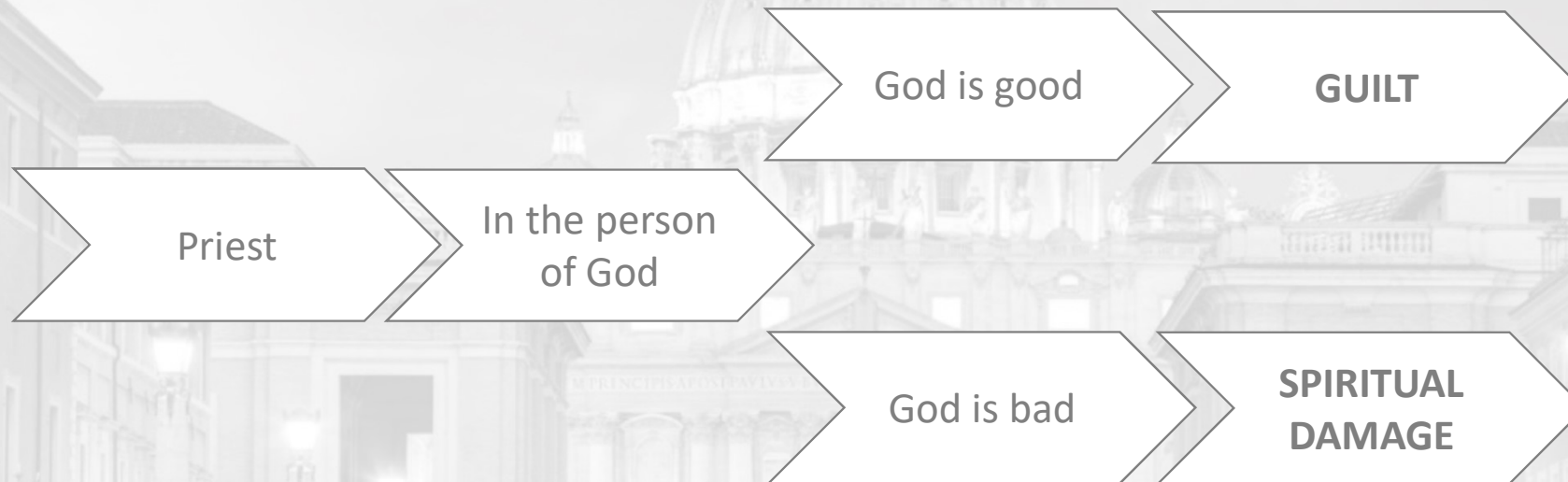


(Maniglio, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013)



# consequences

## spiritual damage







# consequences

## spiritual damage

“Because clergy represent God, Christ, and the Church,  
to be violated by a member of the cloth is to feel violated by  
God, Christ, and the Church”

Lebacqz, K., & Barton, R. G. (1991). *Sex in the Parish* (p. 105). Louisville:  
Westminster John Knox Press.





# consequences

## spiritual damage

“I no longer know who God is, or who he supports or represents”

“All I know is that I no longer believe in what I believed and that affects me a lot”

“Is he really a forgiving God? If so, will I find my abuser in heaven if he repents? ”

“If God is supposed to be so good, why didn't he intervene and stop what was happening?  
Why didn't he help me or protect me? ”

"They taught me that the hands of a Catholic priest were sacred, but those same hands abused me. How do you make sense of this?"



# consequences

## spiritual damage

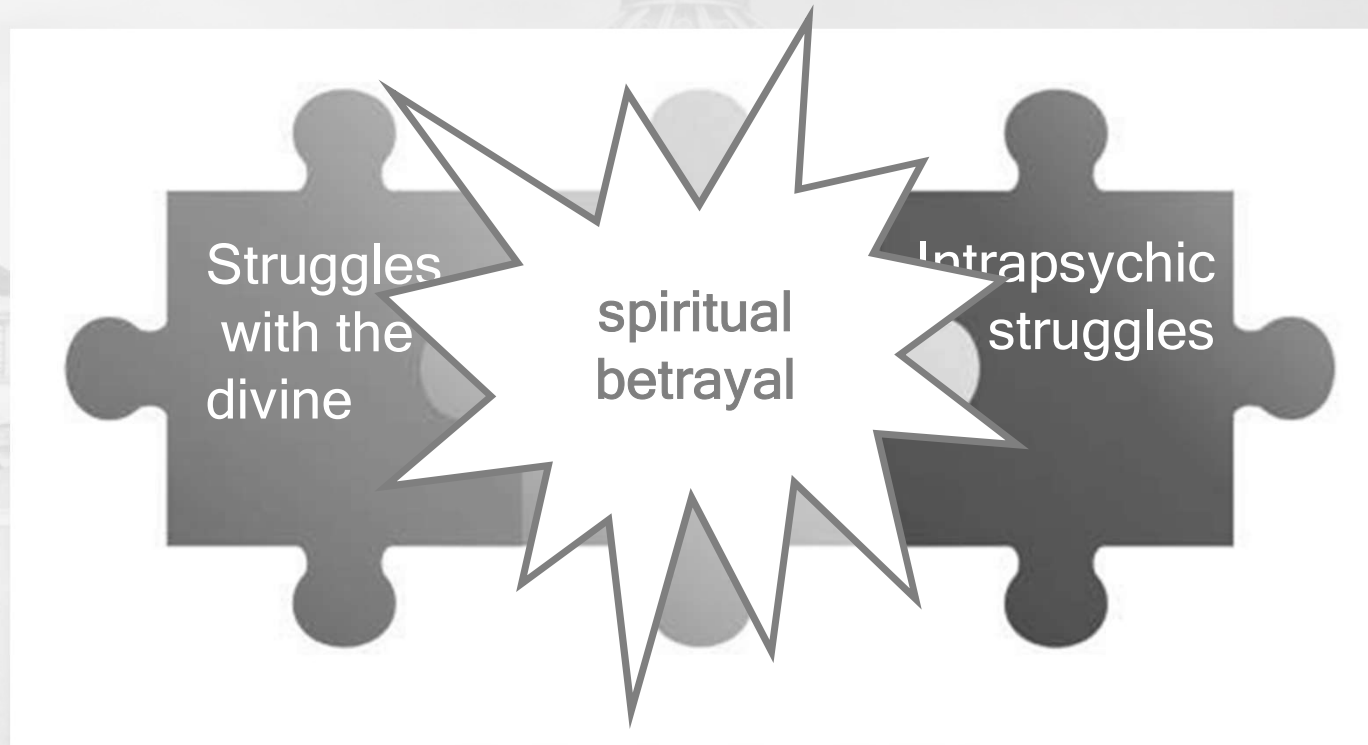
a negative image of God  
cruel, non-protective and punishing, distant and bad  
they feel neither loved nor cared for by God, distrust, anger  
(Hall, 1995; Imbens & Jonker, 1998; Greer, 1993; Pritt, 1998)

guilt, shame,  
feeling of  
betrayal and  
abandonment  
lower levels of spiritual well-being  
relationship with the experience of God  
religious practices, church activities  
(Ben-Ezra et al., 2010; Hall, 1995; Hall, 2008; Rossetti, 1995; Russell, 1986)



## consequences

spiritual damage

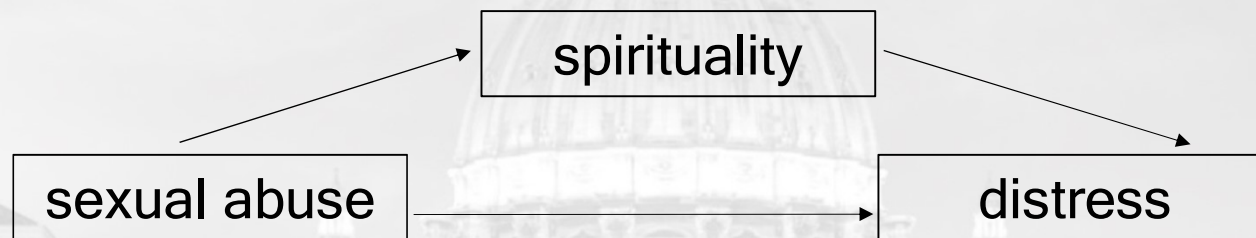


Pargament, K. I., Murray-Swank, N. A., & Mahoney, A. (2008). Problem and solution: The spiritual dimension of clergy sexual abuse and its impact on survivors. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 17(3-4), 397-420.



# consequences

## spiritual damage



Gall, T. L., Basque, V., Damasceno-Scott, M., & Vardy, G. (2007). Spirituality and the current adjustment of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 46(1), 101-117.

$n = 101$  males and females  
between 19 and 66 years

a greater spirituality, defined as belief and faith in God or in a higher power, less depression and greater posttraumatic growth after abuse



# Justice



UNIVERSITAT DE  
BARCELONA





# justice

## institutional abuse

institutional abuse occurs when adults who work for an institution that involves children abuse those who are in their care and who they should watch over and protect

Smith, C. P., & Freyd, J. J. (2014). Institutional betrayal. *American Psychologist*, 69(6), 575-587.

possibility of applying  
restorative transitional justice





# justice

## transitional justice

- a) A legacy of abuse that mostly corresponds to the past.
- b) The existence of mass victimization, sufficient to reveal patterns of abuse and systematic practices.
- c) The linking of abuses to an institution that has occupied a position of spiritual power with influence in a broad sector of society.
- d) The existence of largely unsatisfied demands for justice because of conditions defining a status quo that imposed insurmountable barriers on the victims and on those seeking a response from the justice system.



# justice

## transitional justice

- e) The inability of the criminal justice system to deal with current demands for justice, due to the time lapses since the occurrence of the events or the fact that perpetrators are no longer in condition to stand trial.
- f) A social context, in which a new one favourable to the transition from an old order to a new one is being established.
- g) The need to adopt measures of transitional reform and the guarantee of non-repetition.

Tamarit, J.M. (2018). Abusos sexuales en la Iglesia Católica: ¿cómo responder a las demandas de justicia? *Nuevo Foro Penal*, 14(91), 11-42.



# Our study





# methods

## sample

Pereda, N., Segura, A., & Sicilia, L. (2020). Características del abuso sexual infantil por representantes de la Iglesia Católica en España. *Revista de Psicopatología y Salud Mental del Niño y el Adolescente*.

victims still  
feel the power  
of the Church  
and are afraid  
to talk

adults (25 male and  
and 67 years old ( $M = 51$ ,  
experience and snow ball

victims have  
received hush  
money from  
the Church



# methods

sample

battery of questions  
7 sections

General personal information

Sexual victimization by the  
Catholic Church

Sexual victimization by others

Other childhood victimization  
experiences

Psychological consequences

Spirituality

Posttraumatic Growth Inventory  
(Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996)



# Some results







# results

## sexual victimization by the Church

age when the abuse begun and ended

sexual victimization begun at a mean age of 11.8 years old  
( $SD = 3.2$ ; minimum= 5; maximum= 17)

sexual victimization ended at a mean age of 14.3 years old  
( $SD = 4.6$ ; minimum= 7; maximum= 31)





# results

sexual victimization by the  
Church

chronicity

34.2% one-time episode

for the rest victimization lasted on average 3.8 years  
( $SD = 3.9$ ; minimum = 1; maximum = 16)





# results

## sexual victimization by the Church

### severity

78.9% touching and masturbation

42.1% introduction of objects or a part of the body of the abuser  
into the vagina, anus or mouth of the victim

10.5% introduction of a part of the body of the victim  
into the vagina, anus or mouth of the abuser

15.8% sexual victimization without physical contact  
(sexual propositions, exhibitionism, pornography exposure,  
sexual behaviours in front of the victim)





# results

sexual victimization by the  
Church

sex of the offender

100% male

7.9% female





# results

## sexual victimization by the Church

### role of the perpetrator in the Catholic Church

65.8% parish priests

28.9% consecrated (monk, abbot, friar, brother), 7.9% seculars  
(catechism, religion teacher, social solidarity), 2.6% deacon,  
cardinal, prefect



# results

## sexual victimization by the Church

### Catholic symbols and faith

5.3% the offender used some symbol, object or religious image  
-wear soutane, carry a crucifix, hold a religious icon, light a  
candle-

34.2% the offender used the catholic faith of the victim

“God is love and this is good”

“The holy Spirit flows through me”

“God will kill your father if you talk, if you don’t obey me”

“This is what God wants for you”



The background of the slide is a faded, grayscale photograph of a city street. In the center, a large, ornate church with a prominent dome and a cross on top is visible. The street is lined with multi-story buildings, and there are streetlights and some greenery in the foreground.

## results

### sexual victimization by the Church

#### disclosure

86.8% disclose the abuse at a mean age of 24.1 years old  
( $SD = 11.8$ ; minimum = 10; maximum = 55)

to their mother (36.4%;  $n = 12$ ), to a friend (36.4%;  $n = 12$ ), to another family member (24.2%;  $n = 8$ ), to their partner (24.2%;  $n = 8$ ), to their father (18.0%;  $n = 6$ ), but also to a member of the Church (18.0%;  $n = 6$ ) or to a professional (15.2%;  $n = 5$ )





# results

## sexual victimization by the Church

report to the authorities

44.7% reported the abuse

94.1% ( $n = 16$ ) reported to a member of the Catholic church,  
23.5% ( $n = 4$ ) to a member of the security forces and 11.8% ( $n = 2$ ) to the justice department

52.9% affirm that reporting  
had a negative effect on their wellbeing





# results

sexual victimization by the  
Church

other victimization experiences

71.4% previous sexual abuse

53.8% previous physical abuse

50.0% previous emotional abuse

77.7% previous neglect

poly-victims probably chosen specifically



# Conclusions







# conclusions

what the church must do?

- 1- **Recognize and accept what has happened.**  
Sexual abuse against minors is a frequent reality, also in the Catholic Church.
- 2- **Offer treatment to abusers.**  
They should be treated with evidence-based intervention programs that are used for other abusers and have proven their effectiveness.
- 3- **Offer treatment to victims.**  
Victims and their families must receive psychological treatment and be respected and understood by the Church.



The background of the slide is a faded, grayscale image of a church with a large dome, likely St. Peter's Basilica, and a street scene with buildings and streetlights.

## conclusions

what the church must do?

**4- Share information.**

The Church should facilitate studies and research on this subject, by making all relevant information available.

**5- Develop protocols for prevention and intervention.**

How to avoid new abuses, and what to do when a case is discovered, must be regulated and formalized in specific protocols.

**6- Train and support priests and other members of the Church.**

Regarding the limits that must be maintained with people in their charge or with whom they come into contact, doubts related to sexuality and celibacy, etc.



# conclusions

what the church must do?





**conclusions**  
what the church must do?





# THANK YOU

Noemí Pereda, PhD  
Research Group on Child and Adolescent Victimization (GReVIA)  
Universitat de Barcelona  
[www.ub.edu/grevia](http://www.ub.edu/grevia)