

Child insecurity: A case for Roman Catholic parenting Lessons.

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Abstract

Given the clergy children sex abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic Church, its justice and peace policy focuses on victim-child and offender-adult prosecution system and not a children's wellbeing and development—parenting system. The latter being fundamental to children—Catholic justice and peace tradition for the worldwide Church. Using an analytical research approach, this article finds that worldwide, over 120 million girls are sexually abused; 90% by family members, boyfriends/husbands, or known persons. In fact, child neglect and violence drive children into crimes such that between 2005 and 2020 over 93,000 children were recruited into armed conflict. Hence, I propose a policy for enhancing children's security, wellbeing and development that minimises child abuse and neglect in the Church: A Behavioural Parent Training Lessons (BPTLs). A policy that transforms parenting from a private and informal activity into a semi-public and semi-professional one. This change will ensure that there are less children as foot-soldiers for crimes in the world.

Keywords: Catholic, Children, Insecurity, Parenting-lessons

Background

Conceptualisation of Terms

Children Sex Abuse. This occurs when an adult uses a child for his/her sexual gratification or arousal or for that of others. It includes accessing, acquiring, possessing and distributing pornographic/indecent images of children by any means or medium.

Children Physical Abuse. This is any physical injury inflicted on a child by beating, kicking, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting with a hand, stick, strap, or other object. The intention of the parent/adult whether to punish or to educate the child does not matter as any injury imposed on a child that is not accidental constitutes child physical abuse.

Children Neglect. The failure of parents/adults to provide for children's basic physical, medical, educational, and emotional needs: not providing proper nutrition, adequate clothing, and proper sleeping place; not protecting children from harm; and not providing educational services.

Justice. The care and assistance that is due to children so that they can grow as individuals who are prepared to live freely with dignity and tolerance granting equity to others in society.



Peace. What is due to children so that they grow up with a harmonious personality such that they can live in equality and solidarity with others.

Children's Status in the Catholic Church

Children. These are members of the Catholic church by Baptism and not by birth. They have certain rights and obligations by virtue of membership, "in so far as they are in ecclesiastical communion."¹ Children's membership depends on the consent of parents,² but they remain individuals with distinct rights. Children's attachment to parents is in their best interest—they need a caring adult for their well-being and development.

Children and Parents. John Paul II teaches that, "in giving origin to a new life, parents recognize that the child, as the fruit of their mutual gift of love, is, in turn, a gift for both of them, a gift which flows from them."³ Given this gift of love, children, the Catholic Church enforces and defends parental interest. The presumption is that parents are capable of looking after their well-being and that of their children.

Children and Rights. "Parents have the most serious obligation and the primary right to do all in their power to ensure their children's physical, social, cultural, moral and religious upbringing."⁴ In addition, this Church accepts the 1989 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child which states in its preamble that children are entitled to care for full and harmonious development in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. The Catholic Church signed and ratified this Convention on the 20th of April 1990. It was the fourth State party to do so. Moreover, John Paul II⁵ reaffirms the value of human life and its inviolability to be respected, protected, loved and that this is a sure way to find justice, development, true freedom, peace and happiness in the world. Therefore, children have rights and parents are obliged to protect children's rights.

Children and Parental Obligations. Firstly, children have a right to belong to this Church. Hence, parents are obliged to baptize them within the first few weeks of birth and in danger of death that a child be baptized immediately.⁶ Secondly, a god-parent—a good Christian is assigned to the child so as to help parents to bring up the child to live a Christian life.⁷ Thirdly, parents have the most serious primary obligation to ensure children's Christian education.⁸ These obligations are God's given to parents as John Paul II⁹ argues if it is true that human life is in the hands of God, it is no less true that these are loving hands,

¹ Catholic Church, "Code of Canon Law 96, in *The Code of Canon Law: New Revised English Translation*, Nigeria: St Paul Publications, 1997, 18.

² Canon Law 868, 1; 111, 1

³ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, Encyclical Letter on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life, 92, accessed March 25, 2019, http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0141/_INDEX.HTM.

⁴ Canon Law 1136.

⁵ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 5.

⁶ Canon Law 867-868.

⁷ Canon Law 872.

⁸ Canon Law 226 § 2.

⁹ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 39.

like those of a mother who accepts, nurtures and takes care of her child. Hence, an obligation that parents respect and protect children's right to life.

Children/parents and the Catholic Church's Obligations. This Church has three principal obligations towards children and parents. Firstly, the parish priest or others duly prepare, instruct parents on the meaning of baptism by means of pastoral advice and communal prayer.¹⁰ Secondly, this Church acts to protect children in cases of abuse and neglect. As John Paul II¹¹ argues, children's life comes from God; it is his gift, his image and imprint, a sharing in his breath of life. Therefore, God is the sole Lord of this life: no one can do with it as s/he wills. God makes this clear to Noah after the Flood: "For your own lifeblood, too, I will demand an accounting ... and from man in regard to his fellow man I will demand an accounting for human life" (Genesis 9:5). Hence, (a) the baptism of a child may be deferred if there is no realistic hope, in the interest, of the child to be brought up in the Catholic religion; (b) an infant of Catholic parents, indeed even of non-Catholic parents, is lawfully baptized in danger of death, even if the parents are opposed to it;¹² and (c) according to canon law 871, "aborted fetuses, if they are alive, are to be baptized, in so far as this is possible". Since the Catholic Church teaches that human life, as a gift of God, is sacred and inviolable. Thirdly, parents who hand over their children to be baptized or educated in non-Catholic religion are punished with a censure or other just penalty.¹³ However, this Church proscribes little about how to protect children's rights in cases of physical, social, and cultural abuses and neglect.

Analysis of Children's Status in the Catholic Church

Given children's status in the Catholic Church: those who have rights to physical, social, cultural, moral and religious upbringing.¹⁴ As Pope Francis¹⁵ emphasizes that every human life is unique and constitutes an inestimable value that must be respected. Indeed, John Paul II¹⁶ insists that this is the only way, we need, to defend and love this life such that we can realise justice, peace and happiness for children. Hence, in its works of evangelization, this Church directs its vast human power and resources to enable families, parents, to fulfil their responsibilities of satisfying children's rights. In Africa alone, it has over 74,000 religious sisters and over 46,000 priests operating 7,274 hospitals and clinics, and it is educating over 19 million children in 45,088 primary schools.¹⁷

¹⁰ Canon Law 852 § 2.

¹¹ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 39.

¹² Canon Law 868.

¹³ Canon Law 1366.

¹⁴ Canon Law 1136.

¹⁵ Pope Francis, General Audience Address, Meditation on the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, March 25, accessed March 25, 2020, Rome: Vatican City, <https://zenit.org/articles/for-nothing-will-be-impossible-for-god-pope-francis-reminds-on-feast-of-annunciation-full-text-of-morning-homily>.

¹⁶ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 5.

¹⁷ Cardinal Tagle, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, in responding to Pope Francis established emergency fund for COVID-19 victims at the Pontifical Mission Societies, gave this statistics, accessed April 8, 20, <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-creates-emergency-fund-to-aid-coronavirus-victims/>.

These are places where children should feel secure and safe, but UNICEF¹⁸ reports that in these places and children's homes, children go through violence. In fact, what derives this violence is social norms, including the use of violent discipline, violence against women and community beliefs about witchcraft.¹⁹ However, the status of the Catholic Church says little about enforcing physical, social, and cultural aspects of children's rights in cases of child violence, abuse and neglect. The presumption is that parents have the capacity of looking after their wellbeing and that of their children. This presumption ignores the fact that parenting is not an attribute that adults automatically possess, but skills that parents come to possess as a result of a process of education and socialization. Hence, the status of the Catholic Church on children should spell out the processes by which these rights will be achieved and protected. If children are not raised in such a way that they develop skills to be effective individual persons, then the most basic premise of this Church that children are individuals and distinguished beings will be undermined. The issue of children's security and rights needs to be looked at, all the time, in a holistic way. Otherwise, this Church will be protecting a limited number of children, falling short of justice and peace for children as I argue below based on the Church's response to clerical sex abuse of children.

Children and Clergy Sex Abuse: Children's Security

In the advent of clergy sex abuse of children, the Catholic Church's responses to securing children seems to be focused on a paradigm of victim and offender: The Catholic Church prescribes its justice system to deal with sexual abuse in new canon laws²⁰ under the heading "Offenses Against Human Life, Dignity, and Liberty." Canon law 1398, 1 state that a cleric is punished with deprivation of office and other just penalties, and if necessary, dismissed from the clerical state, if he has sex, grooms or induces a minor and or immorally acquires, retains, exhibits or distributes pornographic images of minors.

This Church gives copious instructions to local churches and religious superiors on how to find cleric guilt in Canon 1502 and 1504. So local churches or religious step it down in details on what to do. For example, the 2016 policy for Safeguarding of Minors of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (CSSp); a congregation that is 350 years in the Catholic Church and has about 3000 members working in about 60 countries of the five continents focuses on responding to allegations of sexual abuse that are found credible.²¹ Superiors must report at once any credible case to statutory civil authorities and the Catholic Church authorities.²² It is also mandatory that every clergy or ordinary

¹⁸ UNICEF, "Child Protection," UNICEF for Every Child 75, Nigeria, accessed October 7, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/child-protection>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Pope Francis, Apostolic Constitution, "Pacite gregem Dei", Reforming Book VI of the Code of Canon Law, accessed 24/09/2021, <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2021/06/01/210601b.html>, 01/06/2021, this modification enters into force on 8 December 2021.

²¹ Congregation of the Holy Spirit (CSSp), *Safeguarding of Minors, Guidelines*, Roma: Casa Generaliza, 2016, 1.0 and 2.2.

²² CSSp., *Safeguarding of Minors*, 1.0 and 2.3.

members of the congregation who know or suspect inappropriate behaviour on the part of another member in his relationship with minors to report without delay to the major superior or their delegate for this purpose.²³

Analysis of Clergy Sex Abuse

From justice and peace, the realization of children's security and rights, there are two principal shortcomings with an approach that is based on reporting child predators in this Church. Given that sexual abuse of children is not just a phenomenon amongst the clergy, but abusers are often family members or relations, family friends or neighbours, and other professionals, of men and women.²⁴ Indeed, at least 120 million girls worldwide are forced into sexual activities, although the actual figure may be higher.²⁵ Therefore, the first principal shortcoming of the response policy can be made in four arguments. One, a children's security policy based on responding to allegations of sexual abuse and determining its credibility is likely to have limited impact in preventing sexual abuse of children. As UNICEF²⁶ reports 90 per cent of girls worldwide who report forced sex show that perpetrators are someone they know, usually a boyfriend or a husband, but many of this sexual violence, including millions of boys tell anyone. Additionally, researchers²⁷ show that sexual offenders often target children with particular characteristics: children suffering from some physical or emotional neglect. Indeed, sexual predators look for children who are emotionally immature, have learning difficulties and problems, have experienced prior maltreatment, have problems with peer friendships, have strong respect for adult status, have low self-esteem and children who are deprived of love or attention and who will co-operate for a desired reward such as money and material gifts. Can children with these characteristics come forward and report sex offenders and substantiate that their reports with credibility? I believe this system places too much responsibility on children in a process that seeks to protect them.

Two, sex offenders play it safe, they groom children: exploit children's interests and become helpful to them so as to gain their trust and confidence; befriend children by given them money, sweets; take children out for walk an activity that allows them time alone with children; once away they try to establish control over children by giving and withholding rewards; introduce intimate physical contact in a playful way, tickling or wrestling and hugging children; test the resistance or willingness of children and desensitize them; and finally entice and acquiesce children to engage in sexual activities.²⁸ Is placing reporting on such children a responsible expectation? I suggest that, at best,

²³ CSSp., *Safeguarding of Minors*, 4.1.

²⁴ Anne-Marie McAlinden, "Setting 'Em up: Personal, Familial and Institutional Grooming in Sexual Abuse of Children," *Social and Legal Studies* 15 (2006): 339-362.

²⁵ UNICEF, "Sexual Violence Against Children," UNICEF for Every Child 75, accessed 07/10/2021, <https://www.unicef.org/protection/sexual-violence-against-children>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ McAlinden, "setting Em Up; Kimberly J. Mitchell, Davide Finkelhor and Janis Wolak, "Risk factors for and impact of online sexual solicitation of youth," *JAMA*, Vol.285 23 (2001): 3011-14; and Vikki Petraitis and Chris O'Connor, *Rockspider: The Danger of Paedophiles – Untold Stories* (Melbourne: Hybrid Publishers, 1999).

²⁸ McAlinden, "Setting 'Em up."

these children need education to withstand these manipulations before they can report.

Three, sex offenders groom children's families too. Anna Salter's²⁹ work shows that sex offenders befriend families to secure trust and confidence and so gain easy access to children. In fact, they target single-parent families who are economically disadvantaged or emotionally disturbed and or where the woman is looking for a "father figure" for her children. These manipulative activities reduce the possibility of quick discovery or disclosure by family members and subsequently reporting sexual abuse. I suggest again that, at best, these families need education to withstand this manipulation and report sexual offenders. Four, sex offenders also groom the larger society to carry out their abuse of children. Again, Salter's studies³⁰ show that sex offenders are socially responsible; they behave in a caring manner in the public; and they build a good reputation and are socially outstanding members of a family, the local church or community, and a nice person who is always kind to children. Given these facts, it is not easy for a society to recognize and report sexual abuse of children without a public education on this matter. Hence, it appears the present children's security policy at its best seeks to secure strong children survivors of sexual abuse rather than children's security.

The second principal shortcoming of this policy is that it neglects physical abuse and neglect. As such, it does not meet the requirement of this Church's children physical, social, cultural, moral and religious rights.³¹ Indeed, physical abuse and neglect are as damaging to children's wellbeing and development as sexual abuse in many ways. Firstly, physical abuse and neglect cause more than immediate pain and suffering to children. As Neurobiology Danya Glaser³² finds that physically abused and neglected children may show some emotional and behavioural difficulties and educational underachievement. Other studies also show physical abuse linked to affective deregulation e.g., depression,³³ and cognitive impairment e.g., language-delays.³⁴ Additionally, physically abused children exhibit hyperactivity, negativistic outlooks, and lower self-esteem.³⁵ These insecurities, vulnerability, drives children into crimes such that between 2005 and 2020 over 93,000 children are verified recruits of parties to conflict worldwide.³⁶

²⁹ Anna Salter, *Predators, Paedophiles, Rapists, and Other Sex Offenders: Who they are, how they Operate, and how we can Protect Ourselves and our Children* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).

³⁰Salter, *Predators*.

³¹ Canon Law 1136.

³² Dany Glaser, *THE LINK: The Official Newsletter of the International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect*. ISPCAN 10 (2001).

³³ Renee Johnson, Jonathan B. Kotch, Diane J. Catellier, Jane R. Winsor, Vincen Dufort and Wanda Hunter, "Adverse Behavioural and Emotional Outcomes from Child Abuse and Witnessed Violence," *Child Maltreatment* 7 (2002): 179-186.

³⁴ Inge-Marie E Eigsti and Dante Cicchetti, "The Impact of Child Maltreatment on Expressive Syntax at 60 Months," *Developmental Science* 7 (2004): 88-102.

³⁵ Martha F. Erickson and Byron Egeland, Child Neglect, in J. E.B. Myers, L. Berliner, J. Briere, C. T. Hendrix, C. Jenny, and T. A. Reid eds., *The APSAC Handbook on Child Maltreatment*, 2nd ed., 3-20 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

³⁶ UNICEF, "Child Protection, Children Recruited by Armed Forces," accessed 14/10/2021, <https://www.unicef.org/protection/children-recruited-by-armed-forces>.

Secondly, children's neglect can impair school performance. As some scholars DiLillo et al.³⁷ argue, neglectful households may lack various activities that promote cognitive development, including deficits in parent-child verbal interaction, less reading to children, and overall lower parental involvement in children's academic pursuits e.g., help with homework. Thirdly, the Catholic Church teaches according John Paull II³⁸ that these harms, physical abuse and neglect, if ignored will be a deliberate decision to deprive children of life which is always morally evil and contradicts the fundamental virtues of justice and charity. Take for example, in Nigeria, 1 out of 4 girls, and 10% of boys are victims of sexual violence yet of children who report, 5 out of 100 receive support.³⁹ Therefore, this policy seems reactive and at its best ill-equipped to attend to children's security, sexual and physical abuse, and neglect. We need proactive justice policies against abuses to make children secure—live in peace in homes, families, schools, communities and churches. In the words of John Paul II,⁴⁰ this is a formation of conscience, a work of education, which will help children to be ever more human, lead them more fully to the truth, instil in them growing respect for life, and train them in right interpersonal relationships. Such a program I discuss next.

Behaviour Parent Training Lessons (BPTLs)

For children to be abused, there must be predators who have the capacity and craving, and opportunity to abuse children. Capacity and craving may be out of our control, but we can proactively control and minimise opportunities for children to be abused. Thus, behavioural parent training lessons (BPTLs) is a proactive measure developed for ensuring child security and protection from abuse. Again, what derives violence against children in Nigeria, for example, are social norms, use of violent discipline, community beliefs about witchcraft.⁴¹ Hence, BPTLs are rooted in empirical data that enhance children's basic well-being and development. These lessons tend to assume that parents acquire socially parenting norms that can also be modified through training and practice. Thus, parenting educators accept that parenting attributes/skills are learned in childhood and replicated later in life.⁴² BPTLs aim at breaking the cycles of poor parenting cultures across generations, enables parents to become sensitive to poor parenting attitudes and actions, highlights consequences of poor attitudes and actions for children, and presents parents with a better parenting culture. Hence, topics treated at these lessons as summarised by Matthew Sanders:⁴³ Helping parents to overcome abusive social norms, violent discipline, and community beliefs about superstition and witchcraft: it teaches parents how to talk with and not over children, how to help children learn and

³⁷ David K. DiLillo, Adrea R. Perry and Michelle Fortier, "Child Physical Abuse and Neglect," *Faculty Publications, Department of Psychology* 284 (2006).

³⁸ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 57.

³⁹ UNICEF, "Child Protection."

⁴⁰ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 97.

⁴¹ UNICEF, "Child Protection."

⁴² Stephen J. Bavolek, "Research and Validation Report of the Nurturing Parenting Programs," (2005), accessed December 21, 2010,

http://www.nurturingparenting.com/research_validation/a4_main_r&v_article.pdf.

⁴³ Matthew R. Sanders, "Triple p - Positive Parenting Program as a Public Health Approach to Strengthening Parenting," *Journal of Family Psychology* 22 (2008): 506-517.

deal with frustration; set limits on children's behaviour: set house rules and effective commands; and other related topics. BPTLs have received positive evaluations from parents of diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds in the United States: African Americans, Latinos, and Asians American parents, as well as from parents in Japan, China (Hong Kong), Germany, Switzerland, Norway, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.⁴⁴ Hence, the evidence that attitudes and skills learned from these lessons have far-reaching socio-cultural appeal.

Indeed, BPTLs broadly improves parental competency and quality closely associated with children insecurity, abuse and neglect, that impedes children's well-being and development. For example, a meta-analysis of 23 studies⁴⁵ examines the effects of BPTLs on parents' child-rearing skills toward abuse, and actual abuse finds significant gains in change of attitude from parents immediately following this training. The lessons enable parents to develop children's friendly beliefs and attitudes, and an increase in the willingness to understand and accept children's developmental capabilities, emotions and or intentions. In another meta-analysis of 15 studies,⁴⁶ there was a 32 percent reduction in substantiated maltreatment cases among lessoned participants in comparison to the control groups. Several other meta-analyses⁴⁷ and ⁴⁸ have further established the effectiveness of BPTLs in modifying disruptive child behaviours and improving parent behaviours and perceptions of their children. Furthermore, a Positive Parenting Programme (Triple P) by Prinz et. al.⁴⁹ has consistently shown to increase positive parenting practices, to reduce ineffective and coercive discipline, and to produce better mental health and developmental outcomes for children. A Triple P in South Carolina was offered to all families with children under the age of eight years old. It showed a substantial reduction in children maltreatment, children out-of-home placements, and children maltreatment injuries. These authors Prinz et al.⁵⁰ infer from their data that in a community with 100,000 children under 8 years of age, these effects translated into 688 fewer cases of children maltreated, 240 fewer out-of-home placements, and 60 fewer children with injuries who

⁴⁴ Sanders, "Triple P."

⁴⁵ Brad W. Lundahl, Nimer Janelle and Parsons Bruce, "Preventing Child Abuse: A Meta-Analysis of Parent Training Programs," *Research on Social Work Practice*, 16 (2006): 251-262.

⁴⁶ Arthur J. Reynolds, Lindsay C. Mathieson and James T. Topitzes, "Do Early Childhood Interventions Prevent Child Maltreatment?" A Review of Research, *Child Maltreatment* 14 (2009): 182-206.

⁴⁷ Denita R. Maughan, Elizabeth Christiansen, William Jenson, Daniel Olympia, and Elaine Clark, "Behavioural Parent Training as a Treatment for Externalizing Behaviours and Disruptive Behaviour Disorders: A Meta-Analysis," *School Psychology Review* 34 (2019): 267-286, accessed December 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02796015.2005.12086287>.

⁴⁸ Sndra M. Reyno, and Patrick McGrath, "Predictors of Parent Training Efficacy for Child Externalizing Behaviour Problems - A Meta-Analytic Review," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 47 (2006): 99-111, accessed December 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2005.01544.x>.

⁴⁹ Ronald J. Prinz, Matthew R. Sanders, Cheri J. Shapiro, Daniel J. Whitaker, and John R. Lutzker, "Population-Based prevention of child maltreatment: The U.S. triple p system population trial," *Prevention Science* 10 (2009): 1-12, accessed January 2018, doi: 10.1007/s11121-009-0123-3.

⁵⁰ Prinz et al. Population-Based Prevention, 9.

otherwise end up in emergency treatment and or hospitalization. Therefore, there exists a large body of empirical evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of BPTLs in improving parenting knowledge and skills, promoting positive parent behaviours, reducing harmful parenting behaviours, reducing substantiated cases of children abuse and neglect, improving children's developmental outcomes, and ameliorating children conduct problems. I would suggest that if BPTLs were widely implemented in the Catholic Church, there are thus good reasons to believe they would yield significant benefits for a wide spectrum of parents and children. This is what John Paul II⁵¹ teaches that it is above all in raising children that the families fulfil their mission to proclaim the Gospel of life. By word and example, in their daily round of relations and choices, and through concrete actions and signs, parents lead their children to authentic freedom, and they cultivate in them respect for others, a sense of justice, cordial openness, dialogue, generous service, solidarity and all the other values which help people to live life as a gift. I argue that BPTLs is Scriptural as I present next.

A Sacred Scripture's BPTLs

There are many BPTLs on the well-being of Biblical children (Jacob, Gideon, Isaac, Moses, Rachel, Samson, Solomon, Susanna) that I can choose from. However, I focus on the child Jesus for three reasons. First, John Paul II⁵² (cf. John 16:21) teaches that the birth of Jesus at Christmas reveals the full meaning of every human birth, and it is the foundation and fulfilment of joy at every child born into the world. Second, John Paul II⁵³ insists that in contemplating Mary's motherhood, we discover the meaning of our own motherhood and the way in which we are called to express it. Moreover, the Church's experience of this motherhood leads to a most profound understanding of Mary's experience as the incomparable model of how life should be welcomed and cared for in the world. Third, I argue that the family of Joseph, Mary and Jesus fit the profile of families whose children who are targeted for abuses: Joseph is the foster father of Jesus; Mary is a very young girl with little or no material support and therefore may be an easy subject for manipulation and abuse of her child. Nonetheless, Jesus is not abused or neglected, but he is well brought up. Moreover, this Scriptural BPTLs is based on social norms and cultural beliefs that it protects Jesus from home, workplace and community as demonstrated in the following lessons.

Lesson One: Motherhood is a Gift from God

In this lesson first, the Angel Gabriel teaches Mary that motherhood is a blessing from God (Luke 1:28-30).⁵⁴ Second, Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56) proclaims Mary blessed, "you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (v.42). Indeed, Mary receives this lesson by proclaiming the Magnificent that she is the handmaid of the Lord (vv. 46-55).

⁵¹John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 92.

⁵²John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1.

⁵³John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 102.

⁵⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced employ the *New Jerusalem Bible Version* (London: Darton, Longman, Todd, 1985).

Lesson Two: Fatherhood Demands God's Justice

An angel delivers this lesson (Matthew 1:18-25) to Joseph that in order to be a worthy father, one has to be just in the eyes of God. First, Joseph is regarded as a "righteous" or "just," man because he decides to divorce Mary informally (v.19). Indeed, Benedict XVI⁵⁵ suggests that the "just" are those who inwardly live the ordinances of the law aright—those who walk their path in righteousness, according to the revealed will of God. Hence, the angel says to Joseph, "son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (v.20). It implies that children are a gift from God to be looked after by adults, parents, blood related or not.

Lesson Three: Every Child, Belongs to God, has a Vocation

The Angel Gabriel teaches this lesson to Mary (Luke 1:31-38) that Jesus is God's son. So, God decides his vocation, he "will rule over the House of Jacob forever and his reign will have no end" (v. 33). Mary and Joseph receive this lesson and accept to do God's will and help Jesus to live out his vocation.

Lesson Four: Children Must be Protected from Harm (Matthew 2:13-23)

An angel appears to Joseph in a dream and instructs him to take Jesus and his mother to Egypt so as to protect them (vv. 13-14). Benedict XVI⁵⁶ emphasises that Joseph is presented once again as a learning, listening and discerning father, the obedient one observing the Jewish value of thou shall not kill, who is decisive and acts wisely. The same angle instructs Joseph to come back to Israel because it is safe for the child Jesus (Matthew 2:19-21). This is a big lesson that parents must protect their children even if it means relocation. As Benedict Viviano⁵⁷ suggests that perhaps, Joseph being a builder settles in Nazareth because he finds abundant work in the neighbouring Sepphoris, where Herod Antipas rebuilds as his capital city. This was where they could find work so as to look after Jesus.

Lesson Five: Parents Bring-up Children in a Particular Culture (Luke 2:21)

First, Jesus is circumcised like any other Jew as Robert Karris⁵⁸ says, Jesus is circumcised (see Luke 1:59), formally, stamps him as a member of God's chosen people. Second, Jesus is presented in the Temple (Luke 2:22-38) in order to fulfil the Mosaic law. Hence, his parents present the offering of the poor (v. 24) two turtle doves. This law in Leviticus 12:2-8; 12:6, alluded to in Luke 2:22 and

⁵⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: The infancy narratives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012) 19.

⁵⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 114.

⁵⁷ Benedict T. Viviano, "The gospel according to Matthew," in *New Jerome biblical commentary* eds. Raymond. E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland. E. Murph, 630-674 (London: Geoffrey-Chapman, 1996) 42:15.

⁵⁸ Robert J. Karris, "The Gospel According to Luke," in *New Jerome biblical commentary* eds. Raymond. E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland. E. Murph (London: Geoffrey-Chapman, 1996) 43:25

Leviticus 12:8 in Luke 2:24 enables the parent of Jesus to stamp and seal his status as a poor Jew.

Lesson Six: Parents set Limit to Children's Behaviour (Luke 2:41-50)

Attending the feast of Passover, as the parents of Jesus must perform with him to be situated in his culture (see Exodus 23:17; 34:23; Leviticus 23:4-14) as Luke v. 42 insists according to custom. Robert Karris⁵⁹ says, v. 42 stresses Jesus' family devout adherence to the law to demonstrate the environment in which he is brought up. Moreover, Benedict XVI⁶⁰ makes the argument that the fact that Joseph and Mary do not notice the immediate absence of Jesus illustrates very beautifully that in this family, freedom and obedience are combined in a healthy manner. The twelve-year-old has a right to freely spend time with friends and children of his own age, and to remain in their company during the journey. Naturally, his parents expect to see him when evening comes. However, the boy a teen, 12 years, wants to assert himself. He exaggerates his freedom, a typical teen attitude and so, he does not turn up on time, three days passes. When confronted with his teen attitude he resorts that he must be in his Father's house. He practices the value of accepting responsibility. So, it is no longer Gabriel, or Mary, or Zacharia, or angels or Simeon proclaiming who Jesus is, it is Jesus himself. The result is that the boy understands his vocation, but he is not yet matured so the parents do not accept it and he follows them back home (Luke, 2:50).

Lesson Seven: Parents Enable Children to Discover Their Vocation (Luke 2:51-52)

Jesus learns from the episode in the Temple above that he is a teen, he must go back to learn more about his vocation from his parents in Nazareth (v.51). Consequently, Jesus increases in wisdom, in status, and in favour with God and with his people (v.52). Meanwhile, Jesus repeats the visit for the feast of Passover for 30 years before setting out on his ministry. By living 30 years with his parents, Jesus goes through a rigorous socialisation/preparation for his mission and vocation. He learns the skill to persevere, how to handle his losses but also how to move on in life. Therefore, I make a case that the parents of Jesus do what the Catholic Church teaches according to John Paul II⁶¹ that parents, in their role, are co-workers with God who transmits his image to the new creature and so cooperate to enrich their family day by day. Thus, the seven lessons above, demonstrate that the parents of Jesus give us a Biblical BPTLs example. It helps them bring up Jesus who lives a fulfilled life that I discuss next.

Scripture BPTLs and Child Security

I argue in 2.1. discuss that the presumption that parents are capable of looking after their well-being and that of their children may only be fulfilled if children

⁵⁹ Ibid, 43: 36.

⁶⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 112.

⁶¹ John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 43.

are raised in such a way that when they become parents have the necessary skills and capacity to do so. Therefore, if Jesus can demonstrate in his life as someone with a good self-esteem to overcome the type of vulnerability or grooming techniques children predators use then he would have overcome predators as a child. Consequently, the task for this part is to demonstrate how Jesus' self-esteem overcomes insecurity and vulnerabilities in his lifetime.

Mission. Some of the characteristics that children predators look for from children in order to target them is lack of focus and problem-solving abilities. However, Jesus' life indicates that he has a unity of purpose: He describes in clear terms his mission, "the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life for the redemption of many!" (Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). Again, in the Word of God, the Jewish Sacred Scripture, Jesus finds a better way to express his service. He finds in Isaiah 61:1-2 (see also Luke 4:16-19) that "he is to bring the good news to the afflicted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free". Jesus expresses his mission in a problem-solving way; this motivates him to set out for his work. In Luke's gospel, Jesus set out immediately to live out his mission by preaching to people in Capernaum. Here, he cures a man possessed with an unclean spirit (Luke 4:31-37); cures Simon's mother-in-law who is gripped with high fever (Luke 4:38-39). He performs a number of cures on many who are suffering and those who are possessed with unclean spirits (Luke 4:40-41). This little experience of his mission quickly reminds him of the value in teamwork as he learned from his parents (they were helped by Angel Gabriel, Elizabeth, Zechariah, the Shepherds, Simeon, Anna, etc.). Thus, Jesus sets out to solve his problem, looking for a team to help him realise his mission.

Jesus Calls his First Four Disciples (Luke 5:1-11). I want to argue that in trying to solve his teamwork in a problem-solving way, Jesus uses a scientific approach: uses his hypothesis, collects data, tests his data and draws his conclusion. Given Jesus' mission statement as above, his hypothesis is to find people who are critical thinkers and who have integrated a problem-solving approach into their daily life. He sets out to Lake Gennesaret where fishermen, Simon, Andrew, James and John, are out of their boats and are washing their nets. Jesus finds the people (the data), he must test them. Hence, when he finishes teaching, he says to Simon, put out into the deep water and pay out your net for a catch (v. 4). Simon replies that, master, we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets (v. 5). Simon demonstrates that he is a critical thinker, he knows how to articulate his reasons for wanting to do something: what might seem as an unreasonable request might indeed be an opportunity to solve profound problems—not catching fish all night in this case. Hence, Simon and his companion put out their net and catch such a huge number of fish that their nets begin to tear (vv. 6-7). This phenomenon confirms Simon's critical analysis that the one who may have been making an unreasonable request is in fact more knowledgeable than him in solving their core problem—catching fish. Thus, Simon Peter fell at the knees of Jesus saying, leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man. For he and all his companions are completely awestruck at the catch they have made (vv. 8-9).

Jesus on the other hand confirms that these fishermen are a group who know how to think through their problems. So, Jesus draws his conclusion, says to

Simon, do not be afraid; from now on it is people you will catch and they leave everything and follow Jesus (vv. 10-11). The manner in which Jesus describes his mission carries it out and finds a team to help him demonstrates that he is physically and emotionally mature. As further demonstrated in Jesus' personal, family, institutional and societal life next.

Jesus' Personal Life. I have illustrated above how at a personal level, child predators give children food, offer them friendship, and use the technique of withholding rewards as a means of controlling children for their abuse. Hence, Jesus' temptations in the desert offer a test of character. Satan claims to offer Jesus friendship, and he tempts him with bread, prestige, and power (Matthew 4:1-11). Satan uses the Bible to tempt, indoctrinate, and manipulate Jesus. Similarly, Jesus uses the Bible to overcome the temptations, indoctrinations and manipulation. First, the temptation on food, bread: Satan encourages Jesus to be the glorious Messiah, the new Moses, who feed the people in the desert: "command these stones to turn into bread!" However, Jesus answers that human beings live not on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God (v. 4). Second, the temptation on prestige: Satan encourages Jesus to be the messiah who imposes himself on all by means of a spectacular sign in the Temple: "throw yourself from here!" Jesus offers an alternative: do not put the Lord your God to the test (v. 7). Jesus shows that he has a good self-esteem, he does not need to tempt God to prove God cares for him. Third, the temptation on power: Satan encourages Jesus to be the nationalist messiah who dominates the world: "All these things I will give to you!" Jesus offers an alternative: The Lord your God is the one to whom you must do homage, him alone you must serve (v. 10). In the Old Testament these identical temptations in the desert made the people of Israel deviate from God's plan (Deuteronomy 6:3; 6:16; 6:13). History repeats itself again. However, Jesus resists the temptations and prevents them from perverting God's plan in him. Jesus repeats this resistance in his family life too.

Jesus' Family Life. Children predators seek to groom families by befriending family members so that they can have easy access to their children but also, they will be trusted with them. How would Jesus respond in such circumstances? Jesus shows that he does not take the concerns of his blood family at first value. He is brought up to be a critical thinker. Hence, when his relatives, want to take Him home in the Gospel of Mark Chapter 3 because they think he is mad (Mark 3:21): he is told: "your mother and brothers and sisters are outside asking for you" (v. 32), but he replies, "looking at those sitting in a circle round him", here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother (v. 33). Furthermore, when Jesus becomes famous, his brothers say to him, "no one who wants to be publicly known acts in secret" go up to Jerusalem, the capital (John 7:3-4). However, Jesus replies, "go up to the festival yourselves: I am not going to this festival, because for me the time is not ripe yet," he disagrees with their reasoning (John 7:6-7). Jesus, a critical thinker, continues to reject manipulation by those around him, those he called to build his institute.

Jesus' Institutional Life. Within institutions, child predators tend to be socially responsible and act in caring ways in the public so that they can be trusted members of the institutions. Thus, the possibility of quick discovery of their acts

is made more difficult. However, Jesus shows that this is not the case within his institution: when he preaches about suffering, death and the resurrection, Peter, the leader of his disciples rebukes him: "heaven preserve you, Lord, he said, this must not happen to you" (Matthew 16:22). Jesus is quite disappointed with him and says, "get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because you are thinking not as God thinks but as human beings do" (Matthew 16:23). Furthermore, at the most difficult hour for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:53), the temptation to be "the warrior messiah" appears again. When he is arrested, Peter grasps his sword and draws it and cuts off the ear of the high priest's servant, but Jesus says, "put your sword back, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52); rather, "pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Luke 22:40,45). Not even an important personality like John the Baptist would indoctrinate him to abandon his mission that I focus on next.

Jesus' Society Life. Children predators are people of good public reputations: Would such people manipulate Jesus? When John the Baptist, the precursor of Jesus, wants to coerce him into being the strict judge messiah as John teaches, I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who comes after me is more powerful than I ... his winnowing-fan is in his hand; ... but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out" (Luke 3:9; Matthew 3:7-12; 11:3). John becomes disappointed in Jesus' mission because he does not live up to his expectation. So, he sends his disciples to go and ask Jesus who he is; Jesus reminds John of the prophecies and asks him to compare them to facts, "the blind see and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to the poor; and blessed is anyone who does not find me a cause of falling" (Matthew 11:4-6 and Isaiah 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1). Jesus is not manipulated by his precursor who prepared the way for him; Jesus transcends John's indoctrination.

Similarly, the people, when they see the miracle of the multiplication of the bread in the desert, conclude, "this surely is the prophet who is to come on earth!" (John 6:14). They get together to urge Jesus to be "the messiah king" (John 6:15). However, Jesus takes refuge on the mountain to be with his Father in solitude. Therefore, Jesus overcomes all his personal temptations, does not give opportunity to family members to manipulate him, institutional indoctrinations and public pressure; none succeeds in distracting him from His mission although his predators had the capacity and craving to do so. The seven lessons and the life of Jesus strongly suggest that the parents of Jesus helped him to have a good self-esteem and a strong cultural background on which he relies and overcomes abusive social norms and cultural beliefs. It means that if children are brought up properly, there will be less vulnerable children to be abused and less recruited in conflict situations worldwide.

Conclusion

The Catholic Church's justice and peace system supports children's right to life, protection from harm, basic well-being, and the opportunity to develop their basic capabilities to function as autonomous citizens. Nevertheless, the Catholic Church underrates the need for a detail programme to guarantee children's

rights and interest in the family. Therefore, in the wake of clergy children sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church, its justice and peace response, a securing of children's policy, focuses on victim offender reporting and not on children's wellbeing and development. In general, a system of children security based on reporting seems primarily reactive, intervening only after children have suffered sexual abuse. Many sexual abuses still go undetected and physical children abuse and neglect remain largely unnoticed as reported by UNICEF above. This article demonstrates that evidence-based BPTLs and Scriptural BPTLs present a justice and peace system for the Catholic Church, a policy for children's security that addresses drivers of violence against children: social norms, violent children discipline and community superstitious beliefs in witchcraft. Nigeria needs BPTLs to tackle social norms and cultural beliefs that will get back to school the 10.5 million children of 5-14 years out-of-school. Additionally, the application of BPTLs in Catholic Church will transform parenting from a private and informal activity into a semi-public and semi-professional one and parenting will be open for constant evaluation and improvement. BPTLs is a matter of justice—what is due for children to be at peace in society.

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