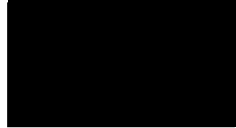


The Family and Community Development Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
East Melbourne
Vic 3002



30 July 2012

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to The Family and Community Development Committee which has been ordered to inquire into, consider and report to Parliament on the processes by which religious and other non-government organisations respond to the criminal abuse of children by persons from within their organisations.

I address the second point of your Terms of Reference- whether there are any systemic practices in such organisations that operate to preclude or discourage the reporting of suspected criminal abuse of children to State authorities.

The Roman Catholic confessional, singled out for exclusion from the reporting rule, is definitely one systemic practice in the Roman Catholic Church that operates to preclude and discourage the reporting of criminal child abuse to State authorities.

The Premier of Victoria says "there is a powerful case to continue preserving the secrecy of the Roman Catholic confessional." (*Keep confessions confidential: Baillieu*, 18 July 2012, AAP)
However, the power of the Roman Catholic Church through this practice is undone when the authority of Scripture and the power of God are applied to it.

Already the January release of the Cummins report has recommended exempting information heard in confession to a priest from the reporting rule and Mr Baillieu has been reported to say that there was "a strong argument for information divulged to priests during confession to remain secret."
(*Keep confessions confidential: Baillieu*, 18 July 2012, AAP)

The prevention of criminal abuse of children is surely the reason for this parliamentary inquiry. It does not surprise however that some would argue that the Roman Catholic confessional be exempted from the reporting rule. As former priest Dr Zacchello states: "Roman Catholic doctrines are not understood by the great majority of the people." (*Secrets of Romanism*, back cover)

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that a priest has power to forgive or retain sins and that a confession must be kept secret, upon pain of excommunication or other punishments.

It is important to know that the Roman Catholic Church does not follow God's way of confession but the way of Papal Rome. The differences are easily discernible. God tells sinners to come directly to Him, to confess sins directly to Him through His Son, Christ Jesus, who is the one and only mediator, a ransom for all people, from all sin, our substitute, offering pardon and peace to all. God is just and righteousness and has once and for all judged sin upon Christ, who was raised up from the dead and is alive now forever, and is the great high priest of the Christian faith.

Whilst the Bible teaches the gospel of Christ and believing in Jesus unto salvation, the Roman Catholic Church teaches its sacraments of grace for sanctification are the tools towards salvation (Catechism of the Catholic Church 1129). Therefore this is a perversion of the gospel of God's grace. The Bible says: but not as the offence, is the free gift, by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, unto justification, and the gift of righteousness unto eternal life. (Holy Bible KJV: Luke 18:13, Romans 3:25-26, Romans Chpt 5; 1 Timothy Chpt 2:5-6, 1 John 1:6-9, Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 9:14)

The Roman Catholic Church seeks to shock-proof its doctrines of sacramental confession, by saying there is a sacramental seal to the confession. The sacramental seal of confession is another layer that Papal Rome has heaped upon the souls of her priests and people to lead them further away from trusting in the living Christ to take away their sins forever. It's another teaching opposed to the mystery of Christ (KJV Ephesians 3:4), which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (KJV Colossians 1:26-27)

Our government must be free from Papal Roman power, their Roman seals, and Roman codes through which Rome directs and controls the consciences of her peoples. This parliamentary inquiry into whether there are systemic practices in religious organisations that operate to preclude or discourage the reporting of suspected criminal abuse of children to State authorities must assist our Government to remain secular and free from religious constraint. Jesus knows what is in man and said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's." (KJV Luke 20:25)

The Roman Catholic code of secrecy will not forever remain secret because "God shall judge the secrets of men *by Jesus Christ according to my gospel*" (emphasis mine) (KJV Romans 2:16).

The seal of confession can have far reaching effects, as described in *Roman Catholicism*, "The Confessional", (1962) by Loraine Boettner:

Under the rules of the Roman Church the priest is forbidden to reveal anything told him in the confessional. This is known as the 'seal of the confessional.'

Otherwise the practice of confession could not be maintained. But under certain circumstances he can pass on information gained: (1) With the consent of the penitent, which for the priest oftentimes is not hard to obtain. (2) Anything revealed apart from the confession itself, that is, in further conversation, can be passed on. (3) Among themselves priests often discuss information gained in the confessional without mentioning names, and so stay within the limits of Canon Law. And (4) if a dispute arises as to whether or not permission was granted, the word of the priest is to be accepted in preference to that of the penitent. And, as the clergy are not permitted to tell what transpires in the confessional, so neither are those who confess permitted to repeat anything, since they too are a part of the church system. This, then, gives the priests an ideal situation for the secret direction of the personal affairs of their parishioners, including their family life, community affairs, voting, or the management of any political machines directed by them or political offices held by them.

The writings and experiences of ex Roman Catholic priests, Dr Zacchello, Charles Chiniquy and Lucien Vinet have been very helpful in providing information about the confessional. Dr Joseph Zacchello's book *Secrets of Romanism*, (1988) "has given us a unique and much needed exposition of the Roman Catholic doctrinal position together with clear and concise refutation of their fallacious claims, using their own Bibles (Douay version and St. Anthony Guild edition) for this purpose." (v)

For example, he writes, "John 20:23 is taught to Roman Catholics as one of the "great Catholic Texts." By it, Roman Catholics attempt to prove the claims of their church to be the only one instituted by Christ and that their priests alone have the power to forgive sins." (101)

Furthermore Dr Zacchello says, "Only the priests of Rome claim the power of remitting sins by a form of absolution in the tribunal of confession. The apostles never practiced this but preached forgiveness of sins and salvation through faith in Christ. 'Believe and be saved' is the motto of the New Testament." (102-03)

Dr Zacchello was greatly convicted by God in the confessional. He realised that he was robbing God of His glory, that people were confessing their sins to him, when it was God's law that they had broken, not his. He knew then: "To God, therefore, they must make confession; and to God alone they must pray for forgiveness. No man can forgive sins, but Jesus can and does forgive sins." (The Confessional, 6-7) He says, "It is utterly false to say that priests of the Roman church can forgive sins." (*Secrets of Romanism*, 102)

Dr Zacchello says, "The aim of the Roman Church in requiring works and the sacraments ministered by the priests to obtain the grace of God is to keep the people subject to the priests and the Pope, in order to retain its power over the nations." (104)

To Roman Catholics the sacramental seal of confession is regarded as sacred and inviolable and penalties apply for any violation, not excluding excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church.

Dr Zacchello explains further, "Even the other texts quoted by Roman Catholics do not prove the dogma of auricular confession and power of priests to forgive sins, but only the mutual or public acknowledgment of sin. The duty of acknowledging or confessing sin, as commanded in Numbers 5:6, 7 is altogether another thing from the Roman private sacramental confession to a priest. Public confession was practised in the early Church, as it is now made in our Protestant churches when converts and members give a testimony of their life, but secret auricular confession was not the rule of the early Church." (104)

It was Pope Innocent III in 1215 who instituted the Roman Catholic practice of auricular confession of sins to a priest instead of to God. Dr Zacchello references the book, *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, to describe how Pope Innocent 111:

increased his power greatly but insidiously by the formal introduction of auricular confession. It was by the fourth Lateran Council that the necessity of auricular confession was first formally established. Its aim was that no heretic should escape, and that the absent priest should be paramount even in the domestic circle. In none but a most degraded and superstitious society can such an infamous institution be tolerated. It invades the sacred privacy of life-makes a man's wife, children, and servants his spies and accusers. When any religious system stands in need of such a social immorality, we may be sure that it is irrecoverably diseased, and hastening to its

end. Auricular confession led to an increasing necessity for casuistry, though that science was not fully developed until the time of the Jesuits, when it gave rise to an extensive literature, with a lax system and a false morality, guiding the penitent rather with a view to his usefulness to the Church than to his own reformation, and not hesitating at singular indecencies in its portion having reference to married life - *History of the Intellectual Development of Europe*, John William Draper, Vol. 11, pp. 65-66." (*Secrets of Romanism*, 104-105)

Consequently the practice of Roman Catholic auricular confession has been opposed by Protestants as Dr Zacchello correctly states, "Because it is a purely Roman invention, is contrary to Scripture teaching, and was never taught or practised by Christ or His apostles."(108)

The issue before this parliamentary committee of whether the reporting rule should be imposed on the confessional is most adequately addressed by Dr Zacchello in these words concerning the Roman Catholic confessional: "Few, if any, have ever brought to light its evil effects in social and moral matters. These evil consequences flow from the fact that Roman Catholics are taught to believe that the priest, a mere man, has the power to absolve them from their sins, on the simple condition that they tell their sins in secrecy to him in the confession-box, and promise to perform a simple 'penance' that he imposes. The following should be noted with regards to the practice of confession:

1. The priest is a real *judge*,
2. He himself can forgive, or withhold forgiveness, of every kind, degree and number of crimes at his own discretion;
3. There are no witnesses;
4. The sinner is his own accuser;
5. No record of the proceedings is kept; a guarantee in fact is given the sinner that absolute secrecy will be observed;
6. No public jail sentence or fine is imposed, only a few minutes of prayer and a verbal promise of reform;
7. By this procedure all effects of the crimes confessed are destroyed and the criminal instantly made 'holy' and a good citizen again.
8. This secret process of forgiveness and hiding of crimes may be accomplished again and again as long as the sinner conforms to the regulations set forth above and as laid down in Catholic Canon Law." (108-09)

The Roman Catholic confessional was operated by former priest Lucien Vinet for years and he relates how far-reaching the effects of the confessional can be in society. In "The Confessional", (1962) by Loraine Boettner, Lucien Vinet says:

We have seen men tremble, women faint and children cry when the time to confess their sins to us had come. A priest cannot hear confessions for many months before he realizes that this ordeal cannot be requested by the kind and merciful Lord. Confession is a usurpation of authority by priests who investigate the minds and souls of human beings. When an organization such as the Roman system can control not only the education, the family and policies of the civil government of its members, but even their very thoughts and desires, we do not wonder that it

can prosper and succeed. Roman Catholics, whether they feel that they ought to admit it or not, are forced into submission to Romanism through the process of torturing auricular confession. (13)

Vinet gives an example of the abuse in the confessional. He contrasts what a Roman Catholic child must do in confession, to "come unto me", showing the simplicity of faith which is in Christ:

Confession of a Child. The child may be only seven years of age. He has been told that he must tell all his sins to the priest. If he does not, he will commit a sacrilege and should he die, he cannot go to heaven. He is naturally very confused as to what really constitutes sin. He is naturally shy and reluctant to tell what he has done or thought. The result is that he omits to declare certain things that are really not sinful but he thinks they are. His conscience will reproach him for having hidden a sin in confession and he cannot make peace with his God. Confession has ruined the soul of many a child. How different is all this from the words of Christ who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me!" (13)

Also the famous priest Charles Chiniquy who left the Roman Catholic Church and the priesthood after spending twenty-five years as a priest in Canada and the United States "expressed his sense of humiliation and shame at having ever engaged in the processes of the confessional". He described in "The Confessional" by Loraine Boettner how the confessional had bound his conscience and contaminated him even to the point of temptation:

With a blush on my face, and regret in my heart, I confess before God and man that I have been, through the confessional, plunged for twenty-five years in that bottomless sea of iniquity, in which the blind priests of Rome have to swim day and night.

Yes, I was bound in conscience, to put into the ears, the mind, the imagination, the memory, the heart and soul of women and girls, questions of such a nature, the direct and immediate tendency of which is to fill the minds and hearts of both priests and penitents with thoughts and temptations of such a degrading nature, that I do not know any words adequate to express them. Pagan antiquity has never seen any institution more polluting than the confessional. I have lived twenty-five years in the atmosphere of the confessional. I was degraded and polluted by the confessional just as all the priests of Rome are. It has required the whole blood of the great Victim, who died on Calvary for sinners, to purify me (The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional, pp. 67, 68). (14)

The processes of the confessional which caused Charles Chiniquy such shame as a priest are also revealed as a process not limited by social accountability.

In *Secrets of Romanism* Dr Joseph Zacchello writes, "To obtain pardon it is not necessary to be sorry for crimes committed because they are offenses against society or God, but it is *sufficient if the criminal is sorry for fear he will go to hell forever if he does not confess them and obtain the forgiveness from a priest in confession.* On this point the Council of Trent (Sess. 14, C.H.) says of the sinner: '*It is sufficient if he is sorry for fear of otherwise burning in hell for all eternity.*'" (109)
See also Trent, Session 14, C.H. IV

This is another example to support the view that the mandatory reporting rule of suspected criminal abuse against children should be imposed upon the confessional.

Certainly, as Dr Zacchello says in *Secrets of Romanism*, "Anyone can understand that this practice of the Catholic confession is no deterrent to crime, and can easily, in fact, be made an excuse for continuing in it. Big-time criminals and racketeers, especially, generally can find ways to circumvent the civil law and its penalties. If they are Roman Catholics and believe in confession, they have assurance of an easy way of also escaping punishment in the next life." (109)

Dr Zacchello gives an example of the futility of the confessional process. He describes the Roman Catholic confession and a soul lost in darkness and sin. God is so far away. He speaks of a criminal, a man who has a great filthy sore of sin but it is never removed or healed through the confessional. Truly this is an unspeakable tragedy, but the man is quite settled and willing to be lead by Rome. Did he ever pick up the Holy Bible of God's Word and read, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life?" (KJV Matthew 7:14)
Did no one care to tell him of Christ, who is the only one qualified by God to be his personal Saviour?

The example that Dr Zacchello gives is this. "A criminal might escape the penalties of the civil law by bribery and corruption. As a Catholic, however, he feared the tortures of hell in the next life. But he was assured by his church's teaching that he could also escape God's punishment as long as he went to confession regularly, told his crimes to the priest and said he was sorry merely *because he was afraid of going to hell.* He was further assured that he could continue his life of crime with impunity as long as he made sure of having a priest absolve him before he died and to say masses afterwards for his soul in purgatory." (110)

The fact that a criminal could think this way about his crimes is a convincing reason to impose the reporting rule upon the confessional.

Consider now what a difference there is between the unscriptural operation of the confessional and believing in Jesus Christ for assurance of salvation. Thankfully Dr Joseph Zacchello enlightens his readers:

We former priests now know what true forgiveness of sins means in Christian teaching: that God alone forgives sins and with forgiveness comes a complete change of life. The Catholic practice of confession is merely a recital to a man of sins committed, with no guarantee of pardon from God, and nothing to prevent the repetition of the same sins over and over again. In true Christian teaching, forgiveness of sins is not just the wiping off of old sins from the soul and then going forth to soil it again with more of the same sins. It means the gift of a whole new soul, the rebirth to a new life for the sinner to whom sin becomes abhorrent and who remains sanctified and a

true child of God thereafter. Then the sinner is really saved. He becomes not only a saint, but also a good citizen. Only this kind of religious teaching is a real deterrent to crime. (110-11)

We must not forget how ex Roman Catholic priest Charles Chiniquy wrote that he was bound in his conscience as a priest in the confessional. It is no wonder that he also wrote of the threat to liberty of conscience that exists through the confessional.

He said, "Have not the popes (e.g. Pope Pius IX in his Syllabus of Errors) publicly and repeatedly anathematized the sacred principle of Liberty of Conscience? But where is the scaffold on which the doomed Liberty must perish? That scaffold is the confessional-box." (*The Priest, The Woman, and The Confessional*, 1887, 85)

Since liberty of conscience is "doomed" in the confessional by the sacramental seal of confession for Roman Catholics, the State must not err in its duty to protect all children from criminal abuse, including Roman Catholic children.

Whereas various reports have suggested keeping confessions confidential, the information that comes to light from former priests, from history and from Roman Catholic Church doctrines, shows that the State must impose mandatory reporting rules on the Roman Catholic confessional because it operates in secrecy.

The Syllabus of Pope Pius IX contains eighty articles of official Roman Catholic Doctrine for Priests and Bishops. Every priest must swear on the Bible to believe and defend it before being ordained. The forty fourth article in the Syllabus states that no civil authority can interfere in moral matters in the Church or in the "regulation of consciences" within the Church. (*Secrets of Romanism*, 188) Everyone should read these eighty articles that the Roman Catholic Church commands its priests to believe and defend.

In conclusion, it is most apparent that the Roman Catholic confessional is a systemic practice which has to, by its own laws, discourage and preclude the reporting of suspected or known criminal abuse of children to anyone, including the Civil State authorities. Thus the State must impose mandatory reporting rules for criminal abuse of children on the confessional for the sake of the children who need defences. Ireland's Justice Minister Alan Shatter is introducing new legislation under the Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Bill. This bill will make it a criminal offence for a priest who learns while hearing a confession about a case or cases of child abuse, from the abuser himself, not to break the seal of the confessional and inform the civil authorities of what he knows. The Irish government says this bill is one element of a "suite of legislation to protect children and vulnerable adults to which the Government is committed". (<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/>)

Yours sincerely,

Alison Ryan

