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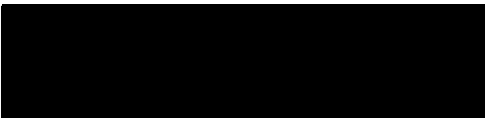
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THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S APPROACH TO RESTORING ITS
IMAGE IN THE FACE OF THE SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

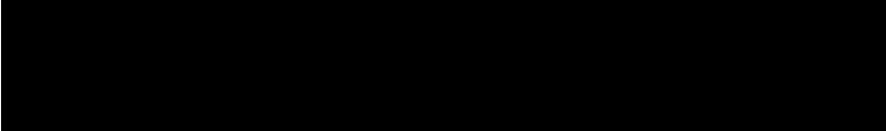
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ABSTRACT

In early January 2002, the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston faced allegations of sexual abuse of minors by a few of its priests. What has followed is a national uproar concerning accused sexual predator priests in the many dioceses across the nation. More alarming, however, to members of the Catholic faith, as well as outsiders, are the responses and actions of the church's bishops and cardinals, and the Vatican, to remedy the scandal. The public relations response of the church to the sexual abuse malady is the focus of this project. The purpose of this project is to evaluate the discourse and actions of the church according to image restoration theory, as categorized by Benoit (1995a, 1995b). The project includes an analysis of the rhetoric of church bishops, cardinals and the Vatican, as these leaders have tried to restore the church's image. The implications of the three tiers of Catholic leadership discourse and actions will be discussed, as well as future possibilities of their actions in a public relations framework.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND

Introduction to the Project

The content of Chapter One presents a comprehensive overview of the project. The context of the problem is discussed, followed by the purpose, scope, and significance of the project. Assumptions made will then be discussed briefly. Finally, a brief organization of the project will be given.

Context of the Problem

Since the resurgence of child abuse charges filed against its priests and other priesthood leaders in early January 2002, there has been extensive and arguably incessant media coverage of the crisis that has struck at the root of the U.S. Church. The doctrines have been questioned and some of the leaders of the church, including bishops, cardinals, and even the pope, have been under the augmented scrutiny of the media eye. It has been suggested that some of the church leaders should resign from their posts, such as Cardinal Bernard Law of the Boston archdiocese and Cardinal Roger Mahony of the Los Angeles archdiocese. The U.S. Catholic Church has faced a

storm of media coverage and has been maligned by publics both within and without its membership.

Purpose of the Project

The project's purpose is to weigh and evaluate the statements made by the three principal leadership tiers of the Catholic Church in response to the accusations of sexual abuse by some members of the church's U.S. clergy. These leaders, first, bishops, secondly cardinals, and finally, the Vatican, have all been blamed to one degree or another regarding the alleged cover-ups that have taken place. The author, who takes great interest in rhetoric and actions of those in religious leadership, believes it pertinent to any institution to make correct and proper choices in order to maintain an acceptable and suitable relationship to those who revere it as a beacon. It is imperative that the leadership of the church restore the church's tarnished image. The significance of image cannot be underestimated, and at critical times such as this for the U.S. Catholic Church, nothing short of image restoration will rescue it in the public relations realm.

Scope of the Project

The scope of the project is three-fold. First, the project will consist of a detailed literature review of

Benoit's theory of image restoration. In order for the U.S. Catholic Church to properly restore its image, recognition of the crisis is mandatory. Image restoration theory is an apt and able theory with many tactics that allow church leaders to weigh their options and take appropriate action.

The research in this project is secondary research. Qualitative research and analysis of the rhetorical statements of the three levels of church leadership, U.S. bishops, U.S. cardinals, and the Vatican over a ten-month period, from January 2002 until October 2002, was conducted for this project. The principal sources of the statements are major U.S. newspapers, but statements are also taken from archdiocese press releases and other official church leadership documents. All these statements will be given as evidence of how the U.S. Catholic Church is responding according to the theory of image restoration.

Finally, in order to provide insight into the thoughts and feelings of an offended public, statements of the public's discourse will be given throughout the qualitative analysis. Various polls are cited that reflect the attitudes of Catholics and non-Catholics alike in the United States. Polls are used to demonstrate whether or

not the discourse and actions of church leadership have been effective.

Significance of the Project

The theory of image restoration has been applied many times to companies such as Tylenol (Benoit & Lindsey, 1987), Exxon (Benoit 1995a), and Texaco (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000), among others. The rhetoric and actions of political figureheads such as President Nixon (Benoit 1995a), President Reagan, and President Clinton have been analyzed according to image restoration. Disasters such as the one in Bhopal, India, and the company responsible for the damage done to the town's inhabitants has been applied to image restoration (Benoit 1995a). This project, however, is of profound importance because it touches on some very intimate and sacred topics. While the other case studies provide insight into companies or politicians, this analysis seeks to delve into a religious sphere, which according to the research done for this project, has not been done before in using image restoration theory. Image restoration is significant for all organizations or entities. The Catholic Church leadership must respond in a timely manner to respond to the damage done by the sexual abuse scandal. These church leaders must also take heed of

their actions as shepherds of the flock, a flock that is offended by the actions or inaction taken by these leaders.

Assumptions

This project makes the following assumptions:

1. U.S. bishops, cardinals, and the Vatican have not taken enough action in restoring the church's image in the U.S.
2. U.S. Catholics and non-Catholics alike are disheartened by the crisis, and the crisis in part will contribute to greater dissonance in the church regarding procedural and doctrinal issues.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they pertain to this project.

Archbishop - "An archbishop, or metropolitan...is a bishop who governs a diocese strictly his own, while he presides at the same time over the bishops of a well-defined district composed of simple dioceses but not of provinces" (Knight, 2002). An archbishop, or the vacancy of an archiepiscopal see, may be filled

by either election, presentation or nomination, or direct papal appointment (Knight, 2002).

Bishop - A priest appointed by the Pope. Of necessity must be at least 30 years old. Kohmescher (1999) says that a bishop is usually a theologian or a canonist. A bishop is a teacher and a lawgiver for his diocese. He guides and administers for the diocese, and confirms and ordains priests (Kohmescher, 1999). A bishop is typically aided by the Senate of priests, diocesan synods, and chancery officials (Kohmescher, 1999).

Cardinal - A bishop or a priest who is appointed by the pope. A cardinal "oversees dioceses and curial offices," and takes part in electing the pope (Kohmescher, 1999, p. 51).

Holy See - "A term derived from the enthronement-ceremony of the bishops of Rome" (Knight, 2002). The Holy See is now the technical term for the pope, as well as the central ecclesiastical government (Knight, 2002).

National Conference of Bishops - The organization of Catholic bishops in the United States. The conference permits bishops to convene regularly with the purpose of sharing their insights and experiences. The NCCB is able to exercise the pastoral office of bishop

through meetings and a variety of committees
(Kohmescher, 1999).

Pastor - Appointed by bishop, aided by a personnel board.

Described as a "Priest with leadership, moral character, [and] administrative talents" (Kohmescher, 1999, p. 51). A pastor has limited jurisdictional power, and is able of administering sacraments. The role of a pastor entails that of a preacher, teacher, and one who promotes good works. Typically, a pastor is aided by other priests, lay ministers, and parishioners (Kohmescher, 1999).

Pope - A title used to recognize the Bishop of Rome. The Pope is the Archbishop of the Roman Province, and has a variety of other titles and appellations pertaining to his office. Aside from his power to appoint bishops and cardinals, the pope is the supreme head and authority concerning the definition of all questions of faith and morals (Knight, 2002).

Prelate - The Catholic Encyclopedia sets forth the following specifications of a prelate:

First, those men who have "quasi-episcopal, independent jurisdiction over a special territory separated from the territory of a diocese."

Second, "those who have offices in the administration of dioceses, and enjoy an independent and proper jurisdiction."

Third, "abbots and provosts of monasteries, even when they administer no territory with episcopal powers."

Fourth, prelates are titular bishops, such as certain officials in Rome, who have been bestowed with supreme ecclesiastical administration but no jurisdiction over a special district.

Fifth, the highest officials of the Roman offices, "who, in addition to the cardinals, have a prominent share in the direction of the Roman Church, and thus have a special relation to the person of the pope."

All prelates are conferred the title of "Monsignore;" higher-ranking prelates are partakers of other special privileges (Knight, 2002).

Vatican - Also referred to as a business center, the Vatican is the residence of the Pope; from it, the entire church is governed (Knight, 2002). From the Vatican, the pope "issues a Decree or Motu Proprio, advises the prefects or managing cardinals, and in all important matters his personal business activity is always clearly indicated" (Knight, 2002).

Organization of the Project

The project is divided into chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction to the problem, discusses the context, purpose, scope, and significance of the project. A definition of terms that will be used in the analysis and results chapter are set forth. Assumptions are also provided in Chapter One. Chapter Two gives a detailed literature review of image restoration theory and its tenets. Chapter Three discusses the methodology concerning the qualitative research done for the project. Chapter Four includes an in-depth analysis of the qualitative research results of statements from church leaders. It also includes statements from the offended public in response to image restoration tactics, including a summary of polls taken by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Chapter Five is a summary and discussion of the theory as applied to the U.S. Catholic Church's current plight. Finally, project references conclude the project.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Image Restoration discourse is a growing theory that employs the use of communication strategies to redress the wrongdoings of a crisis (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). The thesis of image restoration actually has its roots in apologia, which was studied in 1973 and defined by Ware and Linkugel as a manner of speech that entails self-defense; it does not zero in on an individual's policies or ideas. Benoit and his associates (1991) determined that self-defensive discourse is encouraged when "a rhetor perceives that he or she has been the subject of, or is threatened with, an attack on her or his image, reputation, or face" (Benoit, Gullifor, & Panici, 1991, p. 273). Apologia, as explained by Downey, "resembles a catalog of options available to rhetors rather than a unified set of elements which, through their recurrence together, warrant a generic label" (1993, p. 43). Apologia has endured for a few millenia, as Downey outlines the various ages in which the technique has been used and implemented up to now. The apologia theory consists of four factors or rhetorical strategies, which

also show up in the theory of image restoration. This rhetoric of redemption, as Foss (1984) asserts, is not merely discourse alone. Rather, rhetoric that seeks redemption is symbolic of action. Burke (1966) takes this theory of guilt and applies it to individual as a symbol user, whereas it is stipulated by Foss (1984) that human action itself is a form of rhetoric. Whether rhetoric implies action or words alone, it is certain that discourse can be a powerful tool that can be either a sure-fire or a backfire approach to restore image. This is essential, seeing how Benoit (1995a) states that the one particular goal of this method of discourse is to restore or to protect one's reputation.

Of course, as Benoit and his associates (1991) say, referring to Burke, guilt is the reason that image restoration is pertinent in the first place. Guilt is a representation of "an undesirable state of affairs, an unpleasant feeling that occurs when expectations concerning behavior are violated, as they inevitably are" (Benoit, Gullifor, & Panici, 1991, p. 274). To redeem such guilt, (whether the motives are truly driven by genuine guilt or less genuine pretenses) image restoration in its various guises is necessary. Among all of the ways that this discourse can be used, the first is denial, which

"consists of the simple disavowal by the speaker of any participation in, relationship to, or positive sentiment toward whatever it is that repels the audience" (Ware & Linkugel, 1973). Bolstering is the next step. This style of rhetoric is not geared directly at the root of the person's image problems; instead, it seeks to make the accused look good without direct response to the problem that has portrayed it negatively (Benoit, 1995a). The third step is differentiation. Differentiation "takes the threat to the rhetor's image out of a negative context in the hopes that it is that negative context and not the object itself" (Benoit, 1995a, p. 12). The final step is transcendence, which contrastingly places the object into a larger or broader and more favorable context (Benoit, 1995a).

The tenets of apologia have considerable influence and sway on image restoration tactics. William Benoit, the perpetrator of image restoration doctrine, recognizes the influence of apologia in the theory. Further, Thomsen and Rawson (1998) cite both Benoit and Downey, proclaiming that image restoration entails "an apologetic response, a genre of speech that occurs when an organization is forced to reduce guilt for failing to perform up to expected standards or when its very integrity or reputation has

been challenged" (p. 36). Benoit (1995a) recognizes that there are two key assumptions that apply to the theory. First, communication is best conceptualized as a goal-directed activity. Benoit (1995a) contends that people try to achieve the goals that seem most vital, or to fulfill the goals that seem most attainable. Secondly, maintaining a positive reputation is one of the central goals of communication. Benoit (1995a) opines that the literature dealing with communication and interaction assumes that a person's face, image, or reputation, perceived or not, is of the highest rank. Because these two issues consume a large part of image restoration discourse, the need to take action to restore the image of one's reputation, face, or image is imperative (Benoit, 1995a).

In an article dealing with the Tylenol capsule poisonings, Benoit and Lindsay (1987) established three major aspects of image restoration theory. These included (a) denial, (b) bolstering, and (c) differentiation. Later, a study on Ronald Reagan's rhetorical discourse concerning the Iran-Contra Affair, Benoit, Gullifor, and Panici (1991) outlined additional steps of *evasion of responsibility, minimization, reduction of offensiveness, corrective action* and *mortification*, which were added to

the communication strategy. In 1995 Benoit reviewed the image restoration discourse of Sears and its auto service image, where the author gave the following steps: (a) denial; (b) evasion of responsibility; (c) reduction of offensiveness; (d) corrective action, and finally (e) mortification. In the same year, Benoit (1995a) came out with *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: a theory of image restoration discourse*. In this extended treatise, Benoit expounds upon image restoration theory more meticulously. He sets forth the following typology:

- Denial
- Evading Responsibility
- Reducing Offensiveness
- Corrective Action
- Mortification

Benoit (1995a) recognizes that each category is a broad one and that there are sub categories for the initial five steps. He goes on to explain each step in detail.

Denial

Denial in simple terms is to deny the undesirable action (1995a). A negation or denial of a wrongful act,

according to Benoit (1995b) entails three different possible approaches.

Denial of Responsibility

The accused may deny either deny responsibility for the act or deny that the act ever transpired (Benoit, 1995b). In other words, if a young boy is accused of stealing a candy bar by the store manager, his simple reply would be "No I didn't!" Another example of negating that an act ever occurred would be the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal. Clinton, in no uncertain terms emphasized "I did not have sexual relations with that woman." Straight-forward, unequivocal denials are the thrust in this segment.

Denial that the Offensive Act was Harmful

The accused party can also negate that the act was harmful (Benoit, 1995b). The example of a young boy hitting his younger sister and then proclaiming, "Oh, I didn't hit her hard! It didn't hurt her!" is an illustrative point. Also, a robber who steals from a rich man may use this type of approach, arguing that the rich man had money to spare, and that a few thousand dollars out of a million would hardly be missed.

Scapegoating and Victimage

Citing Burke (1970), Benoit (1995a) states that the accused may choose to shift the blame, otherwise known as victimage. He also makes reference to Schonbach (1980) who proclaims that a form of refusal is in fact applying guilt to another person. Benoit et al. (1991) note that the latter may be a variant of denial, since the accused cannot have committed the reprehensible act if someone else actually did it. Benoit, Gullifor, and Panici (1991) state that unless the "Who did it?" interrogation is answered properly, the audience may be equivocal to accept the response. Brummett, picking up on the Burkean theory of scapegoating, professes that "victimage is a poignant resolution to guilt because the goat is punished, not so much for what it has done, but for its ability to represent what the guilty themselves have done" (1981, p. 256). For example, in the case of the Tylenol capsule poisonings, Benoit and Lindsay (1987) state that if a madman poisoned the capsules, Tylenol obviously did not; hence, Tylenol is relieved of the guilt. Another example may be that of an adolescent who gets into trouble associating with the wrong people. This, the youth may argue, is because the parents are constantly critical of his behavior when he is at home (Benoit, Gullifor, &

Panici, 1991). Benoit adds that "any form of denial is capable of absolving the rhetor of culpability" (1995b, p. 90).

Evasion of Responsibility

Evasion of responsibility deals with four specific strategies that the accused can implement to reduce their apparent responsibility (Benoit, 1995b).

Scapegoating

The first step includes the strategy of provocation, which also refers to scapegoating. In the eyes of the accused, the offensive act was no more than a rational reaction to some act of provocation. This approach maintains that the provocateur is therefore responsible for the situation that caused the reaction, and thus the accused's image is restored (Schonbach, 1980; Semin & Manstead, 1983). Benoit (1995a) notes that provocation under evasion of responsibility applications is a synonymous term for scapegoating as previously noted by Scott and Lyman (1968). Benoit et al. (1991) put the concept of scapegoating in both denial and evasion of responsibility tactics since rhetors who are incapable of completely deny performing the act in the first instance may be able to reduce the offensive act's nature. Benoit

compared provocation to scapegoating, explaining that "the actor may claim that the act in question was performed in response to another wrongful act" (1995a, p. 76). Exxon made Joseph Hazelwood the instant scapegoat after the oil tanker Valdez crashed in 1989 by firing him (Benoit, 1995a). In further action taken by Exxon chairman Lawrence Rawl followed with the clean up efforts. Rawl blamed officials and the Coast Guard for not obtaining immediate permission to begin cleaning up the spill (Benoit, 1995a).

Defeasibility

Defeasibility is the second approach mentioned by Benoit (1995a) in evading responsibility. This occurs when the accused of wrongdoing claims to have lacked information about or control over important elements that inspired the initial act (Scott & Lyman, 1968). In short, the action indeed was made, but there is a logical and pardonable reason for it being made, due to circumstances that are beyond the control of the accused. Regardless whether the public accepts a plea of defeasibility as legitimate, it is making excuses for the action, which in some instances could be equivalent to rationalization. This is because *if* the public perchance sees it as an attempt of the accused to bring self-satisfaction for deviant and incorrect behavior, they will not accept it.

Benoit (1995b) gives the example of an executive who has no control over what employees do or say when they are not at work. It is also applicable to a teenage driver, whose parents claim that they cannot control the way he or she drives when they are not in the car.

The Wrongful Act was Accidental

Another aspect of evading responsibility is to claim that the wrongful act was an accident (Scott & Lyman, 1968; Semin & Manstead, 1983; Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981). Benoit (1995b) asserts that typically a party is only held accountable for a mistake when the factors were under their control. If a person is late to a meeting, he or she may not be held accountable if unpredictable traffic congestion caused the late arrival (Benoit, Gullifor, & Panici, 1991). Likewise, if a friend takes his car to another friend to get the car fixed, and ends up causing even more damage, the latter may be absolved since he was only trying to help in the first place.

The Act was done with Good Intentions

Finally, the notion that the act was done with good intentions (Benoit, 1995a). Here, as Benoit expresses it, the wrongful act is not denied; rather, the audience is asked to not hold the actor fully responsible because the act was realized with good intentions (1995a, p. 77).

Benoit adds "People who do bad while trying to do good are usually not blamed as much as those who intend to do bad" (1995a, p. 77). President Reagan, when put on the defensive for the Iran-Contra affair, used this technique in his discourse. In a state of the union address, Reagan emphasizes that his desire to return U.S. hostages, to bring about the termination of the war between Iran and Iraq, and the zeal to reduce international terrorism, served as the motivating factors for his involvement (Benoit, Gullifor, & Panici, 1991).

Reducing the Offensiveness of the Act

Reducing offensiveness, as determined by Benoit (1995a), is the attempt to reduce the level of ill feeling experienced by the audience. Coombs and Schmidt opine that, "reducing the offensiveness of the act tries to get publics to see the crisis or organization as less threatening" (2000, p. 165). This strategy has six variants: (1) bolstering, (2) minimization, (3) differentiation, (4) transcendence, (5) attacking one's accuser, and (6) compensation (Benoit, 1995b).

Bolstering

Bolstering, as in the case of the Tylenol capsule poisonings, is to restore the good name and image of the

product (Benoit & Lindsey, 1987). Tylenol made absolutely sure that it was focusing on its treatment and dealings with the public in the past so that customers would continue to use its products in the future. Bolstering serves as a way to restore good faith in the public, be it through advertisements, print, or other communications means. Thomsen and Rawson (1998) explain bolstering as a tactic in which the accused seeks to re-identify itself with values that are viewed favorably by the audience. In other words, bolstering allows the accused party to build up any positive traits they possess or positive actions they have carried out (Benoit, 1995b). Exxon tried to further bolster its image after the oil spill by placing a "Open Letter to the Public" in various newspapers. Exxon Chairman Lawrence Rawl emphasized that the company was moving swiftly to clean up the oil mess, and he praised Exxon's prompt response for the full attention that Exxon was giving to the crisis (Benoit, 1995a).

Minimization

Minimization may be employed when the accused party attempts to persuade the audience that the negative act isn't as bad as it appears (Benoit, 1995a). If the rhetor is able to persuade the offended public that the act isn't as detrimental as it appeared at first sight, the feeling

of animosity towards the accused is reduced, to where the latter's credibility is reestablished (Benoit, 1995a). Exxon tried to minimize any claim that their 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska would have any lasting environmental damage (Benoit, 1995a). Pepsi, facing accusations of syringe needles being discovered in Pepsi cans, strived to denounce any such incident by placing an ad which said that the company was proud to introduce absolutely nothing.

Transcendence

Transcendence operates by placing the act in a different context (Benoit, 1995a). More simplistically, Benoit (1995a) gives the example of Robin Hood suggesting that his actions be seen not as theft but as relief to the downtrodden and poor. When running against Jimmy Carter for President, Reagan employed the use of transcendence (Brummett, 1981). When Carter accused Americans of being gluttons in terms of consumption and production, Reagan rebuked the notion, asking citizens not to view their economic habits as greedy but rather as their divine right of "free enterprise" (p. 260). Foss (1984) gives transcendence a different but equally appropriate term of dissociation. Chrysler in the early 1980s attempted to purport a "new confidence" in its vehicles, an overt

response to an image that Chrysler made low-quality automobiles (Foss, 1984, p. 81).

Launching a Counterattack Against Accusers

The accused also has the option to launch a counter-attack against their accusers, wherein the credibility of the accusing party is questioned (Benoit, 1995b). In so doing, the offensiveness of the act may be diminished. Hillary Clinton, for example, employed this strategy against the Republican Party when her husband was on the brink of being impeached for perjury, calling it a "right-wing conspiracy." The O.J. Simpson defense team also exercised this same strategy by playing the race card against the Los Angeles Police Department (L.A.P.D.), claiming that certain police officers and detectives were racist.

Compensation

Compensation is a final potential strategy, where the person offers to remunerate the victim to thwart the negative sentiments that may arise from the offensive act (Benoit, 1995a). Benoit (1995b) proffers that this method of restitution can take the form of goods, services, or monetary reimbursement. "Compensation" Benoit states, "consists of a gift designed to counterbalance, rather than to correct, the injury" (1995A, p. 91). Ford, when it

was accused of making faulty models of the sports utility vehicle Explorer, provided the service of replacing the alleged Firestone tires free of charge to concerned customers. Another example could be that of Ford settling with victims of Explorer rollovers out of court in order to serve as equilibrium to what could otherwise be a tipsy and highly publicized court battle. Chrysler, in an attempt to have customers overlook negative aspects of its vehicles in 1979-80 offered rebates in order to sell its cars, thus compensating for other possible defects in them (Foss, 1984). Benoit sums up all attempts to compensate in this way: "In effect, compensation functions as a bribe" (1995A, p. 78).

Corrective Action

Corrective Action is another potential method in image restoration. In this strategy, the accused vows to correct the problem (Benoit, 1995a). While apologia, as suggested by Goffman (1971) may serve as a component, Benoit (1995b) argues that those accused of wrongdoing may take corrective action without confessing or apologizing, just as Tylenol did. Tylenol voluntarily introduced tamper-resistant containers while never accepting responsibility or apologizing for the product being

tampered with. Ford also initiated this type of action, not by coming out directly and issuing an apology for faulty Explorer models. Rather, Ford simply tried to amend any wrongdoing by offering replacement tires. Benoit (1995a) also points out that corrective action differs from compensation in that the former addresses the actual source of injury. Exxon in 1989 attempted to correct the results of the Exxon Valdez oil spill by pledging to clean it up (Benoit, 1995a).

Mortification

Mortification may also serve as another catalyst in image restoration. Benoit theorizes that

while the strategies of denial, evasion of responsibility, reduction of offensiveness, and corrective action attempt to repair the accused's image by distancing the accused from blame or altering the audience's perception of the act's offensiveness, in mortification the accused accepts responsibility for his or her unpleasant actions and apologizes. (1995b, p. 92)

Further, Benoit (1995a) dictates that if a public believes that the apology is heartfelt and sincere, it may opt to forgive the accused of the wrongful act. Benoit, Gullifor and Panici (1991) note that this option has two general options: First, the rhetor accepts responsibility and pleads for forgiveness. Second, if a believable promise to

'mend one's ways' or to make changes to prevent the recurrence of the undesirable act is issued, forgiveness or a pardon may be conferred. This of course is entirely dependent on the public's zeal to absolve the rhetor. It does not, in other words, relieve the accused of responsibility, but rather it gives them a second chance in the eyes of the public (Benoit, Gullifor, & Panici, 1991). For instance, the young boy who was caught stealing a candy bar by his mother might apologize repeatedly, and he would return the candy bar to the store. By going through the motions that might bring shame upon the boy, it would give him motivation not to steal again. Hence, the mother will eventually regain trust in her son.

Image Restoration Implications

It is possible for image restoration discourse to be applied, whether it is a single speech or a mass media campaign. Image restoration discourse doesn't necessarily have to respond to a prior attack. Image restoration discourse can be applied either to a consumer product's image or that of a person. How an organization, such as the U.S. Catholic church, uses all the possible communication and marketing applications as appropriate, will determine its image for years to come. As the

discourse of the Catholic Church and her leaders is analyzed, it will be debated whether or not the implementation of multiple tactics is a wide strategy or not. Benoit (1995a) posits that certain techniques should not be used in some cases. If other techniques are used improperly, the messages sent out by Catholic church leaders may be conflicting. "The apologist's changing stance could result in charges of inconsistency" Benoit (1995a, p. 163) points out. This is of utmost importance, as Downey (1993) gives the reminder that "the value of most modern apologia lay in directing the responsibilities and commitment of others in the future" (p. 52). The Catholic Church has needed and will continue to need to take that to heart, as the analysis of the leaders words and deeds are critically weighed. How the bishops, cardinals, and the Vatican respond will greatly affect the offended public as well as those wounded by sexual abuse and the cover-ups. The church's image is in need of not only repair, but also restoration.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The method to search for the implementation of image restoration in this project is to review the official press releases issued by certain dioceses throughout and within the U.S. Catholic Church's jurisdiction, and judge accordingly statements that apply to image restoration.

Procedure

In order to make the project voluble and logical, the project divides each tactic and sub-tactic of image restoration and gives examples accordingly for each category. The primary source for the analysis was newspaper articles from major newspapers which were used to evaluate the actions and statements made by the Catholic hierarchal leaders as well as the dioceses that are currently under fire. Selected press releases and transcripts of interviews were also analyzed. The interpretation of the results of the Catholic Church's approach are drawn from polls done by newspaper and television sources and other media outlets. Because image restoration as a theory strongly focuses on the statements of the rhetor, it is essential that the statements are

heavily weighed and properly applied. It is not the intent of this project to exhaust every source, every commentary, opinion, or thought of those who are either in accord or at odds with the U.S. Catholic Church and its handling of the sexual abuse scandal. Such a task is daunting for the most experienced researcher, and to attempt such is too time-consuming for the purposes of this project.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

It would be an understatement to say that the U.S. Catholic Church is in dire straits. Within and without its ranks, the Church is currently confronted by an offended public whose wrath is kindled due to the church's handling of sexually abusive priests. It may well be the greatest crisis and scandal that the U.S. Catholic Church has had to face. The righteous indignation is shedding forth from parishioners and non-Catholics alike concerning the words and actions of the bishops, cardinals, and the Vatican. When the "Boston Globe" broke the story that Father John Geoghan had molested many young children, and that he had been shifted from one parish to another by a conglomerate of high-ranking church leaders, there was almost immediate uproar which included calls for dramatic change in policy and resignations in Catholic leadership. Such expressed disdain of laypeople along with the media coverage of the story escalated the issue tremendously. The repercussions have not been kind to the Catholic Church leadership. Almost immediately Cardinal Bernard Law, head of the Boston Archdiocese, considered by many Catholics to be the

top-ranking official in the U.S. church, had a two-fold dilemma on his hands. First, the looming threat that he could lose his high-ranking position and second, that his archdiocese and the church facing a serious image crisis.

More reports of other priests who had sexually molested minors started to come out of the woodwork and made the crisis spread like wildfire across the country, engulfing other eminent members of the hierarchy: bishops, archbishops. For example, Bishop John McRaith of Owensboro, Ky., admitted that he keeps admitted child abusers as employees on his diocese payroll. As of late June 2002, McRaith had refused to give details of their crimes or current jobs (USA Today, 2002). Archbishop Elden Curtiss of Omaha confessed in 1993 he had previously removed documentation of child abuse from a priest's file (USA Today, 2002). Bishop Michael Driscoll of Boise, Idaho facilitated the transfer of admitted child abusers in 1985 to England and Mexico while serving as an administrator at another archdiocese (USA Today, 2002). Bishop John Nevins of Venice, Fla., gave no heed to more than a decade of complaints about one priest's inappropriate touching (USA Today, 2002). Bishop Alvaro Corrada del Rio, of Tyler, Texas, allowed a priest who resigned in 1997 on admission of sexual abuse charges of a teen, to head another parish

just two years later (USA Today, 2002). The list goes on, and the image of a worldwide church has been damaged.

This disaster is dividing leaders from many of its lay people, and creating an even-deeper rift of ideologies and ideas among its parishioners on both sides of the spectrum, including those who ascribe to more traditional conservative policies as well as those who embrace more liberal ones. Many of the church's leaders have failed to grasp the importance of media savvy, and have lamented over the way they have been maligned by the media. Among some of these leaders exists a sentiment that they have been used as scapegoats by the media. In partial response, some bishops and cardinals have attempted to make themselves victims, and have given lackluster responses that their actions were not as consequential as some dissenting voices claim. Nonetheless the image of the church and its leadership is damaged. By analyzing the church's response to the crisis according to the theory of image restoration, it is perhaps possible to determine if the church's actions have repaired its image.

Denial and Its Tenets

Denial has three tenets. First, the accused party can out-rightly deny the undesirable action. Secondly, the

accused party can lay claim that the act was not detrimental. Third, the accused can try to shift the blame, in essence saying that the act is not his fault (Benoit, 1995a).

Most discourse used by many of the Catholic hierarchy hasn't been a blatant denial that sexual abuse took place between predator priests and innocent minors. Nor has there been much discourse refuting the harmful nature of the acts, both points that Benoit (1995a) qualifies as a part of denial rhetoric. Perhaps one of the most blatant examples of flat-out denial is that of Cardinal Edward M. Egan, who stated that he handled the cases appropriately when he was the bishop of Bridgeport, Conn. (Henneberger, 2002a). So it appears that Egan in this instance remains unrepentant and unwilling to confess any wrongdoing.

Victimage Approach

A "New York Times" article reports that a group which represents nearly one-third of the nation's priests is beseeching Cardinal Law, pleading with him to grant them full legal rights in case they are accused of sexual abuse (Butterfield, 2002a). The group wants Law to ensure that priests are informed of the accusations against them and that they be allowed to be accompanied by a lawyer or a friend, (Butterfield, 2002a). Since January, five priests

have been defrocked upon being accused, as part of an implementation of the zero-tolerance policy implemented earlier in the year. According to Rev. Robert W. Bullock, chairman of the Boston Priests' Forum, these priests were removed before any investigation was conducted. Bullock's language regarding the matter serves as an example of denial: "...we believe that there is a presumption of guilt and a rush to judgment" (Butterfield, 2002a, p. A14).

Some accused priests have simply gone on the counteroffensive and have tersely denied any involvement in sexual acts with minors. An August 25 "New York Times" article reported that accused priests from approximately four dioceses filed a suit of slander against those who have accused them (Dillon, 2002a). The filing of a slander suit against those who made the initial accusation has major implications in denial discourse. First, this course of action entails denial that the alleged sexual abuse ever took place in the first place. Secondly, the accused are shifting the blame, otherwise known as victimage.

"Victimage is a poignant resolution to guilt because the goat is punished, not so much for what it has done, but for its ability to represent what the guilty themselves have done," says Brummett (1981, p. 256). The accused

priests are shifting the blame to those accusing them by employing language that makes them, the priests, victims to fabrications. Father Robert J. Silva, president of the National Federation of Priests' Council, referring to the priests, explained, "The guys sit back and say, 'How can we fight back?' So priests who consider themselves unjustly accused will become more assertive in defending themselves with a civil suit" (Dillon, 2002a, p. 1). Their counter-suit apparently has some weight. In the Oklahoma City Archdiocese, priests discovered that their accusers were men with criminal records who filed the sex abuse charges as they were preparing lawsuits seeking money from the Church (Dillon, 2002a).

This particular example doesn't fully fit the description of what Benoit calls denial, because the priests are not asking "If we didn't do it, who did?," which also composes a part of victimage (1995a, p. 75). However, in terms of how the audience responds in this case, denial is applicable because the public is hesitant to accept the priests' rebuttal on that premise. It appears that the credibility of the priests is unquestionably doubted, and any attempt to deny is perceived negatively. One group further vilified accused Cleveland Archdiocese Rev. Joseph Seminatore's suit as

"un-Christian, vengeful-style litigation that may scare others who have been accused and are hurting into remaining silent" (Dillon, 2002a, p. 1). Seminatore, who lashed back at one of his accusers, one Rodney Dukes, labeling him a "career criminal" who has had his fair share of prison time for felony crimes. Cuyahoga County, Ohio criminal records confirmed that fact with the article's author (Dillon, 2002a).

Scapegoating

Various bishops and cardinals of the Catholic Church have lambasted the media, in an attempt to make it the scapegoat for a story they argue is clearly overblown. While many lay Catholics feel that the media coverage of the scandal is fair and justified, the hierarchy has lashed out at the press for what it calls unfair treatment. This is another example of scapegoating, which is given the following signification by Brummett: "when guilt is collective within a group, the leaders of the group may, through public rhetorical pronouncements, transcend, bemoan, and redeem *guilt* for the group" (1981, p. 256). Brummett (1981) further notes that this type of rhetorical campaign is predictably used under two premises. The first premise is when the pressing problems endanger the national well-being and awaken the

possibility that guilty action have been the fount of those woes. The second premise is when the national social order falls under examination. Such is the case with the U.S. Catholic hierarchy. Obviously, its' social order has been the principal source that has brought the church shame, and the hierarchy is the culprit. As will be seen in more depth later in this analysis, the social order of the Catholic Church has also been vigorously attacked.

Returning however to the first premise, the discourse of certain hierarchal members has been blatant in trying to combat alleged brazen ripostes from the media. One press release from the Archdiocese of Boston states: "The steady steam of press reports about sexual misconduct by Catholic clergy has included more than a few articles extremely hostile toward the very existence of the Church in America" (Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, 2002, p. 1). The press release also dictates that:

a true cure [for sexual abuse] is predicated on an honest assessment of the problems. Media reports that *distort* or *grossly misstate* the root causes of *scandal* do little to help the victims, [and] much to *smear* the ranks of dedicated and virtuous clergy. (Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston, 2002, p. 4, italics added).

During the same month, Bishop Robert Lynch of the Palm Beach Diocese in a "MSNBC" article rebuked the

incessant media coverage of alleged sexual abuse. He was quoted as saying, "...every time I find myself on the front page or on the back pages with something negative that's been said about me, I wonder how much more of this the people have to take" (Smith, 2002, p. 1). Lynch implicates the media as being the instigators of the story, and not himself. Even more interestingly, he includes the public, aligning himself with them against what he considers smarmy commentary from the media. Victimage is also applicable in Lynch's rhetoric. "...I love this diocese. It's been hurt enough, and I don't want it to hurt anymore" (Smith, 2002, p. 1). Lynch expresses his remorse not only inwardly to himself, but also externally to his diocese, as he indicates that it too has been made a victim of the media coverage. The scapegoat is made of the media here, while the church and her parishioners are profusely and profoundly suffering; it is they who are the victims of media bias. Maintaining the same tone, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick of Washington told the "Washington Post" in April that,

Elements in our society who are very opposed to the Church's stand on life, the Church's stand on family, the Church's stand on education...see in this an opportunity to destroy the credibility of the Church. (Paulson, 2002a, p. A1)

The cardinal's exclamation that the media are simply pushing their own agendas while using the Catholic Church as a whipping boy is a victimage approach. McCarrick makes the case that the Church's doctrine is truly under attack, which he sees as a scapegoat. In an attempt to turn the tables, he suggests the doctrine as the victim of media whims.

Cardinal William H. Keeler of Baltimore delivers victimage discourse. "It's really the media of the United States that has made this an American problem," he said. "We're in this feeding-frenzy situation right now, where the coverage of cases of 20, 30 years ago is being plastered in the headlines" (Paulson, 2002a, p. A1). Keeler suggests that the sexual abuse problem isn't a Church problem; rather it is an *American* problem. Hence, the media are just pulling a full-blown blitz on the Church, which is the victim. Cardinal Norberto Rivera in lockstep, said that the media focus was a "unjustifiable attack" that put a platitude of 'sexual deviant' upon the Church and all its priests when in fact the accused are a scarce few (Sullivan & Jordan, 2002). Archbishop John J. Meyers of Newark remarked

I just think that a line has been crossed. The media seem to go through certain frenzies, in which they don't let go. And I just think that

having some bad story about the Catholic Church on the front page, or prominently repeated in newspapers and electronic media every day, is just inappropriate. (Paulson, 2002a, p. A1)

More blatant rebuttals to media coverage came in May from a Vatican-approved journal, "La Civilita Cattolica", which painted American media with "morbid and scandalistic curiosity" (Paulson, 2002b, p. A1). The journal article continued to say that "for many newspapers and television stations maybe it seemed too good to be true to be able to slap the monster of the day on the front page, and this time it was the turn of the Catholic clergy" (Paulson, 2002b, p. A1). This is unequivocal speech, clearly saying in layman's terms that, 'This is overblown. This is not the clergy's fault. This is the media rearing its ugly head at the Church.'

As Brummett (1981) defines scapegoating, the guilty find an object, (in this case, bishops and cardinals scapegoat the media), seeking to punish it in a response to their own feelings of culpability and remorse, with the hope that they'll be absolved from the offensive act. Such a tactic is questionable in this accusation that the media are over-blowing the situation. To the injured, the debate here isn't whether or not the media are actually guilty of pushing unfair, biased stories. As will be discussed

later, in the eyes of the public, the scapegoating approach is a blunder. Benoit (2000) proffers the reminder that the focal point of any attempt to alleviate offensiveness isn't whether the relevant audience believes *in fact* that the accused caused the damage. No, it is, as Benoit (2000) states, that the audience *believes* that the accused party *is* the culpable source for the dastardly act. Hence, the offended public isn't buying into a media blitz on the church, no matter how cavalierly the media may approach the crisis.

Instead, the offended parties view church leadership rather skeptically. This is a possible repercussion as Benoit (1995a) observes that a person's reputation will suffer in proportion to the extent to which they are personally or individually held accountable for the undesirable act. The majority of parishioners and non-Catholics alike believe that both the cardinals and bishops should make themselves a ransom for its sins, rather than seeking to sacrifice the media. The majority of the church's offended public perceives the latter as an unfit offering. Larry J. Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics and a Roman Catholic labeled the media reportings as "justifiable feeding frenzy" (Paulson, 2002a, p. A1). Sabato further

emphasized: "...the information becoming public completely justifies the media's focus on the subject. The media would be guilty of dereliction of duty if they did not reveal these patterns of sexual abuse of minors" (Paulson, 2002a, p. A1).

Benoit predicted that "trying to make a serious problem seem trivial can be perceived as unethical, irresponsible, and inappropriate" (1995a, p. 163). To reiterate, it isn't the fact that these denial approaches aren't altogether false in their claims; rather, it is that they detract from the larger and more pertinent issue of the greater harm done to the injured.

Mention should be made that Cardinal Law, who has gotten his fair share of attack from journalists and parishioners, not to mention ample media coverage, has not employed the strategy of victimage or scapegoating. This is quite a strong reversal from Law's rhetoric some years before. In 1993 Law called down the "power of God" on the media for their reports of similar accusations of Rev. James Porter. However, in this case Law stated that

The crisis of clergy sexual abuse is not just a media-driven or public perception concern in the United States, but it is a very serious issue undermining the mission of the Catholic Church. (Law, 2002a, p. 1)

Evading Responsibility

Evasion of responsibility is a proper approach when "rhetors who are unable to completely deny performing the act in question may be able to evade or reduce responsibility for it" (Benoit, Gullifor, & Panici, 1991, p. 276).

Application of Provocation and Victimage

Evasion of responsibility has its variety of strategies, the first being provocation, which Benoit et al. (1991) refer to as a diluted approach of victimage. Provocation specifies that the rhetor may claim that the act in question was performed in response to another wrongful act. To the church's credit, there have been no statements that either the sexual abuses or the cover-ups transpired because the kids were asking for it, or some irrational statement of that sort. For that purpose, the approach of breeding a scapegoat was placed under the method of denial, in an attempt to show that the media were making a bigger story out of the crisis. Also, false accusers were coming forward, and, making innocent and goodly priests victims to an overblown phenomenon. Denial is a more appropriate sphere for which those tactics apply.

Defeasibility Discourse

The Catholic Church hierarchy has taken a different road to evade responsibility. Cardinal Bernard Law has often tried to evade responsibility for the shifting of predator priests by noting time and again that his actions were well intended, also known as *defeasibility*. This of course is a plea to the public that his past acts were done with good intentions, a tactic that Law employed at the outset. In a press release from Law on January 9, 2002, he expressed remorse, but tried to emphasize that he had actually taken action long ago to prevent the problem of sexual abuse. In it Law noted that he promulgated a policy in the Boston Archdiocese, which went into effect on January 15, 1993. This date is of significance, a year that many high-ranking leaders used in explaining *why* they did what they did (Law, 2002b). Law doesn't negate the fact that he transferred priests with sexual abuse records. Rather, he purports in regards to charged predator priest Paul Shanley, "The attestation that he was a priest in good standing at the time accords with the facts as I knew them" (Mehren, 2002, p. 2). He also states the "I was not aware until these recent months of the allegations against [Shanley] from as early as 1966" (Mehren, 2002, p. 2). He testified a third time: "Before

God, I assure that my first knowledge of an allegation of sexual abuse against this priest was in 1993" (Mehren, 2002, p. 2).

Bishops named as defendants in lawsuits have taken the same course of action. Bishop John McCormack of Manchester, New Hampshire, said that he "did not know about any sexual misconduct with a minor by Paul Shanley until 1993" (Mehren, 2002, p. 2). Bishop Thomas V. Daily also issued a statement of profound regret regarding some of his decisions while in Boston (Mehren, 2002, p. 2). Bishop Alfred C. Hughes wrote "There was no allegation about physical abuse brought to me during my tenure" (Mehren, 2002, p. 2). In a similar vein, Cardinal Roger Mahony implemented the defeasibility method. In April Mahoney said "If I had known in 1986 or '87 what I know in 2002, obviously we would have done things differently" (Stammer, 2002a, p. 3). The cardinal made sure to add that he had "relied very heavily" on the recommendations of psychologists and others. He concluded: "Their recommendations today to us are far different" (Stammer, 2002a, p. 3). Mahony asked for forgiveness for the same misdeed of not removing priests from the ministry who had a record of sexual abuse, but added that he only did so on

the premise of "not understanding earlier the extent of the problem" (Winton, 2002, p. 1).

Bishop Robert J. Banks of Green Bay, Wisconsin, approached any possible involvement in the transfer of sexual abusive priests as purely accidental. This qualifies as having done the act with good intentions. Benoit (1995b) refers to the act being done with good intentions as one where the negative repercussions were done without the foresight that it would be hurtful. A "New York Times" article described Banks as "baffled and hurt by the suggestion that he might have made mistakes" (Belluck, 2002a, p. A1). Banks remarked,

I was doing the best I could. I was acting in good conscience. Father McCormack and I were very serious about this issue. We were not into punishment. We were into prevention. Any case that came to us we would look at very carefully. (Belluck, 2002a, p. A1)

Banks is trying to say that any such mishandling of a troubled priest was entirely accidental, with only the best of intentions. Such a statement can have either positive or negative ramifications. In the case of leadership among the cardinals, the public has been less than forgiving, even with the most contrite petitions seeking pardon.

Reducing Offensiveness

Reduction of offensiveness includes six tenets that seek to reduce the perceived offensiveness of the deed (Benoit, 1995b). Reducing effectiveness can be extremely useful, since it has greater implications in its use. In what Foss (1984) appropriately entitles the rhetoric of redemption, the potent possibility of reducing offensiveness may even be symbolic of physical action. The effort to reduce offensiveness has been a major launch of the response by all three major tiers of church leadership: the bishops, the cardinals, and the Vatican.

In what was reported as an unprecedented turn of events, the Pope summoned many of the U.S. Cardinals to Rome on April 15, 2002. The summons of the Pope was reported extensively as an unprecedented event by media; even the cardinals were taken back by the call. The magnitude of the call to Rome served as a sign to Catholics that the Vatican was beginning to realize the severity of the crisis. Cardinal Adam J. Maida, archbishop of Detroit, upon hearing the call to Rome, discerned that "Branding together this level of Church leadership in Rome on the most serious issue is the right move at the right time" (Paulson & Kurkijan, 2002, p. A1). The Vatican tried to convey to the public that it was not a threatening,

unapproachable entity. Rather, the summons of the pope to his cardinals made it seem that the Vatican was aware of the severity of the sexual abuse crisis. Bishop William S. Skyslad, Vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted that

This speaks to the sense of urgency Rome feels in trying to address the situation here. This is a very serious time here in the American Church, and it's also a great moment of opportunity. People who are in very strong leadership positions can assess the situation and see what can be done.... (Paulson & Kurkijan, 2002, p. A1)

Bolstering a Better Image

Bolstering, as Benoit, Gullifor, and Panici defined it, "may be used to mitigate the negative effects of the act on the rhetor's image by strengthening the audience's positive affect for the rhetor" (1991, p. 277). Benoit and Lindsey (1987) explained bolstering as essential for restoring a damaged image; denial does not suffice. The bolstering method occurred in the Los Angeles Archdiocese, which has been able to focus on the new cathedral Our Lady of the Angels. The opening of the cathedral on Labor Day garnered not only a predictable front-page story on the "L.A. Times" but a less celebratory story as well on the front page of the "New York Times." The four-hour mass was shown on local television stations. Local station "KNBC"

ran nightly features on the cathedral prior to its dedication. The front-page story made only one mention of the clergy sexual abuse crisis. Overall, the opening of the cathedral brought some positive light on the Church for a change. Cardinal Roger Mahony remarked in a "New York Times" article shortly before the opening that the cathedral was designed in a sense to survive the moral lapses of its celebrants. "It is dedicated in the shadow of scandal in this moment of the Church's life" (Broder, 2002, p. A1).

Hence, while the story had little to do with the scandal, the Catholic Church managed to bolster its image by deflecting the current crisis and make the Church look resilient in the eyes of the public. Mahony drove the point home by expressing that "From this day forward, the stones of this building will sing, echoes rolling down the ages, telling of love and justice through the lives of all who come and go from this house of prayer of all people" (Stammer, 2002b, p. 1). He also referred to the cathedral as an "anchor for the ages," (Stammer, 2002b, p. 1) trying to invoke a sense of stability and vigor for a church that finds itself in a riptide of controversy.

Bolstering has not limited itself to the opening of the new Los Angeles cathedral. In early August, it was

reported that eight American bishops in a letter proposed a massive gathering of both lay people and Church leaders with the purpose of reaffirming traditional core beliefs that have come under wide scrutiny. The topics that are to be reaffirmed included the Church's teaching of sexual morality, celibacy, and the authority of bishops. The plenary council would be only the fourth of its kind in the United States and the first since 1884 (Pfeiffer, 2002a). This has many possible bolstering implications.

First, in the language of one Catholic observer, "This was not written by a group of disgruntled conservative bishops," an obvious retort to the label of "conservative" that the media have given to the pope and his appointed cardinals. The same observer stated that what the letter does mean is that the bishops "recognize that this is not the kind of discussion that can be dealt with in two weekend bishops' meetings a year" (Pfeiffer, 2002a, p. A3). As bolstering is defined as an attempt to restore the good name of accused party (Benoit 1995b), at least some of the Catholic hierarchy in this instance is attempting to justify the doctrines and traditions that have come under serious attack from dissenting sources. This attempt to bolster the doctrine is geared towards the more traditional side of the pew, with the objective of

securing in the hearts and minds of the offended that the doctrine is still edifying and sound. It is the approach of re-identification and atonement with some of the parishioners whose confidence was lost for a time. Perhaps more importantly, particularly in the eyes of the audience that sees it as favorable, it is an appeal that the authority of the bishops has not been forever tarnished.

The Approaches of Differentiation and Transcendence

Benoit (1995a) posits that differentiation and transcendence strive to diminish the negative results stemming from the unpleasant deed. Cardinal Mahony's discourse includes ample evidence of transcendence rhetoric. Continuing his remarks regarding the new cathedral, Mahony states:

[The cathedral] will see a lot of [scandal] in the coming years, standing apart as a place of purification and renewal. In the next 300 or 400 years, there will be scandals, maybe world wars, racism and discrimination and continuing problems in the Church. Unfortunately that is the nature of human journey. (Broder, 2002, p. A1)

Mahony attempts to place the entire topic of sexual abuse in a different context. It is not an act that priests alone in the Catholic Church are suspect of; rather it is a sign of a imperfect world, one that the Church must face. It isn't the society of the Catholic

Church alone that is imperfect; rather it is an entire world at large that is ensnared in unrighteous and degrading behavior. Bishop Frank J. Rodimer, head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Paterson, N.J., used similar discourse of transcendence, when he said "I deeply regret that I did not know 20 years ago what our society had come to know about such matters as pedophilia" (Jones, 2002, p. B5, italics added). Rodimer's language is ambiguous, perhaps for the purpose of transcending the clergy abuse accusations as an act of society at large, and not something solely confined within the ranks of the Catholic priesthood. The discourse is employed to have the public see it as something that society as a whole had failed to grasp. Whether or not Rodimer's discourse was referring to the society of the Catholic Church, the hierarchy, or society at large remains unclear, perhaps purposefully.

The crisis has also raised the debate over the doctrinal basis on which priests are selected and ordained. In order to circumvent the negative tide of criticism facing the Church from conservative, moderate, and liberal ideologies, Cardinal Mahony made sure to transcend the doctrinal issues in his discourse. When asked in an interview about the issue of priests being allowed to marry, Mahony responded: "I think those issues

are not related at all. And we're trying to stay away from linking those two issues...there's absolutely no relationship" (FOXWire/Foxnews, 2002, p. 3). In regards to homosexuality and gay priests, he retorted: "I think again that that issue is unfortunate, because again, just like with the married people, celibates, *there is no relationship whatsoever between homosexuality. That's a very wrongful conclusion*" (FOXWire/Foxnews, 2002, p. 3, italics added). Mahony asserted that the Church was looking for men who were chaste and capable of commitment to a celibate lifestyle, and that "if someone has a heterosexual inclination, or homosexual inclination, *is not really the issue*" (FOXWire/Foxnews, 2002, p. 4, italics added).

Mahony's forthright discourse is an obvious approach to transcend all subsequent issues; the rhetoric infers that there are no appendages of celibacy that link it to unchaste conduct. Thus, Mahony argues that the doctrine, whether celibacy or homosexuality or marriage, does not pertain to whether or not child abuse augments or diminishes with the inclinations of the priest. In the eyes of the cardinal, the issue of celibacy is one of sexual abstinence, and he strives to separate sexual inclination from that of priestly behavior. There is no

sin, no heresy, or fallacy in the doctrine. He doesn't acknowledge any possible chain between that and priests being ordained. He clearly transcends the issue.

Pope John Paul as well defended the issue of celibacy, saying that it was not up for debate. He firmly vouched for it in his discourse, emphasizing that the import of celibacy is "a complete gift of self to the Lord and his Church...[it] must be carefully safeguarded" (Henneberger, 2002b, p. 1). He ardently defends celibacy, calling it a "gift." His rhetoric indicates no intention of changing the policy and doctrine of celibacy under his watch, thus separating the issue entirely from sexual abuse. He doesn't even mention sexual abuse in the sentence, thus employing both minimization and transcendence strategies. He emphasizes that celibacy is still a gift of God, not an archaic prerequisite to becoming a priest. To put it simply, celibacy is *different* from sexual abuse. Former Denver Archbishop J. Francis Stafford wholeheartedly concurred with the mandate of celibacy being a "gift." He explained that "There must be a greater awareness of why the church calls [priests] to live a celibate life and to know that celibacy is a gift of God" (Henderson, 2002, p. A1). One may conclude from

these remarks that celibacy is not the sinful practice; sexual abuse is.

Minimization Tactics

Minimization reduces the potency of negative sentiments linked with act. The hope of minimization is to ease the amount of ill feelings aimed toward the accused (Benoit, 1995a). Cardinal Law, in his first press release dealing with the crisis, said "Since our knowledge and experience in dealing with such cases have evolved *both within the Church and society as a whole*, I want to be certain that our policy is effective as it might be" (Law, 2002b, p. 1). This type of rhetoric is an attempt to minimize the problem that may be seen as exclusively grandiose within the church. Law's language here is trying to knock down the sexual abuse to size, in an attempt to say that it is not merely the church, but *all* of society. Hence, the sexual molestation of minors should not be seen as a product of Catholic priesthood, but rather a condition of society and her flaws that escapes no one entirely.

Former Archbishop Stafford also tried to minimize the overall problem of priests who sexually abuse minors. He typified the crisis in the church as a "relatively contained" problem (Henderson, 2002, p. A1). Cardinal

Dario Castrillon Hoyos, leader of the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy, took a different minimization approach. In mid March, Hoyos, answering reporters in response to the crisis, inveighed it as an American problem. Due to the entourage of questions being asked in English, Hoyos said "It's already an X-ray of the problem that so many of the questions were in English" (Henneberger, 2002c, p. A1).

The Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which was drafted and consented upon by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in mid June is solid proof of minimization. The Church has had to combat what it deems incessant and sometimes inimical coverage from media outlets that the number of priests who partake in sexual abuse has been minimal. The charter addresses that issue with in the conclusion of the document:

We must increase our vigilance to *prevent those few* who might exploit the priesthood for their own immoral and criminal purposes...the sexual abuse of young people is not a problem *inherent* in the priesthood, *nor are priests the only ones guilty of it.* (Catholic Bishops, 2002, p. 6 italics added)

The Charter concludes: "The vast majority of our priests are faithful in their ministry and happy in their vocation." The pope even expressed the same sentiment, asking the church to "think of the vast majority of dedicated and generous priests and religious whose only

wish is to serve and to do good" (Bruni, 2002, p. 1). This attempt to minimize what has been viewed to be a ripple effect in the church is imperative in order to retain the good name of both priests and higher-ranking officials across the United States.

Throughout the entire scandal, Catholic cardinals and bishops have tried to direct their rhetoric towards the offended party with words of sympathy. Many press releases and statements reported in the press express sorrow and regret concerning what has happened to innocent parishioners in the pews, for the children who have been sexually abused.

Compensation

The purpose of compensation is not to correct the harmful act, which in this case is impossible anyway. So the purpose of compensation is simply to provide a gift that will counterbalance the damage done. Schonbach (1980) defined compensation as a form of restitution to the victim with the purpose of soothing the victim's ill feelings. Benoit (1995b) adds that restitution may take the mold of goods, services or monetary reimbursement. Benoit (1995b) concludes that if the audience perceives the offering as appropriate, it could reduce negative feelings, thus repairing the rhetor's image. This is of

particular interest to the U.S. Catholic Church, because the United States is unique in its legal character when it comes to financial compensation for sex crimes committed. Similar cases in Canada and Europe have resulted in much less in terms of monetary compensation. England, which in many ways is similar to the U.S. Court system, also has required much less monetarily in comparable sex abuse cases. In foreign lands, large sums of money do not tend to change hands (Liptak, 2002). One reporter who covers the Vatican for an Italian newspaper made the following observation concerning the Vatican's monetary approach:

The Church is very centralized in its ruling hierarchy, but very decentralized when it comes to its finances. These scandals are hurting the American Church, but that will not impact the Vatican. (Sennott, 2002, p. A13)

The scandal is taking its monetary toll on the U.S. American Church. In late April it was reported that due to the total costs of lawsuits, settlements, lawyers fees, counseling for victims as well as abusive priests might run as high as \$1 billion (Sennott, 2002). Dioceses such as Santa Fe and Dallas have been driven to the brink of bankruptcy. In early March 2002, Cardinal Law issued the promise of a \$15 million to \$30 million settlement to the 86 alleged victims of convicted sex offender John Geoghan (Burge, 2002a). In a public relations snafu, Law rebuffed

that settlement, stating, "he regretted not describing the settlement agreement...more cautiously" (Burge, 2002a, p. 1). This sort of rhetoric has been detrimental to Law's reputation. As noted before, there have been relentless and incessant demands from lay people and non-Catholics alike that Law resign his post, a notion that Law himself entertained in a private meeting with the Pope. It has also struck at the financial heart of the archdiocese, which has had to cut its budget by 40 percent (Burge, 2002b, p. B2). Notwithstanding Law's foolhardy backpedaling, a final \$10 million agreement was reached between 86 accusers of priest John Geoghan and the Boston Archdiocese on September 18, 2002 (Belluck, 2002b, p. 1). For the Boston Archdiocese alone, the cost of compensation has resulted in over \$40 million in settlements. It is estimated that the archdiocese could pay approximately \$100 million in compensation settlements (The Boston Globe, 2002c). Undoubtedly, other archdioceses including New York and Los Angeles, will face similar lawsuits.

Corrective Action

As discussed earlier, corrective action and apologia are related, though Benoit (1995b) argues that those accused of wrongdoing may initiate steps to remedy the

problem without actually surrendering an apology.

Corrective action likewise entails a "face the public" type approach, where the fount of the injury is addressed, which may contain expressions of outrage and concern (Benoit & Lindsey, 1987). Corrective action "is taken when the rhetor promises either to repair the damage by an offensive act or to prevent recurrence of the offensive act or both" (Benoit, 1995b, p. 92). Benoit (1995b) recognizes that with taking corrective action steps, it is possible to make amends in a crisis without issuing an actual apology.

Concerning both doctrine and the sex abuse scandal, bishops, cardinals and the Vatican have been accused of having largely ignored dissenting voices ranging from local parish priests and laymen and victims. One "Boston Globe" article charges that Church officials have often viewed change with suspicion (Paulson, 2002c). The article provides examples of Catholic dissent groups such as Voice of the Faithful, Parish Leadership Forum, Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests, otherwise known as SNAP, and Boston Priests Forum who want change but all they can do is talk about it with others, since various tiers of Catholic leadership, in their view, won't. "Every time you say something, you're identified as a

troublemaker," opined one member of a dissent group (Paulson, 2002c, p. A1). Hence while Catholic Church leadership seeks forgiveness from the offended public, many of its parishioners are fuming in the pews.

In order for leaders to remedy their negative image of isolation, secrecy and distance from lay people, the nation's Roman Catholic bishops appointed a lay panel consisting of 13 prominent Catholics to represent the public angered by the crisis. Entitled the National Review Board, the panel is headed by Gov. Frank Keating of Oklahoma, and includes the membership of Robert Bennett, Clinton's former defense lawyer, Justice Anne Burke of the Illinois Appeal Court, and Michael Bland, an abuse victim and former priest (Bayles, 2002). The panel is a clear attempt of corrective action, a term employed by Keating himself. Keating, while recognizing that the Vatican alone retains the authority to dismiss bishops, explained "but for us to get on a mountaintop and shout into the darkness the need for corrective action against a clearly indifferent, negligent, or corrupt bishop, it will be heard by someone" (Bayles, 2002, p. 4A, italics added). Keating further outlined that it is up to the diocesan review boards to investigate allegations of negligence or obstruction of justice by bishops within their respective

dioceses (Bayles, 2002). This may be one of the more helpful steps the church can take to restore its image. Because the people of the church have taken such offense to the way the crisis has been handled, one of the best and appropriate ways to amend the distance between the two is to involve the voice of the common church member.

In April, the Pope admonished the cardinals in their meeting in Rome that "Behavior which might give scandal must be carefully avoided, and you yourselves must diligently investigate accusations of any such behavior, where it is found to exist" (Henneberger, 2002b, p. 2). In keeping with the pope's admonition, and in pursuit to regain favor with the public, Cardinal Law also included laity in the process of corrective action. In a July decision, Law announced that he would hire a lay person to oversee implementation of new child protection policies (Cullen, 2002). Child protection policies will entail the education of children concerning how they can protect themselves from sexual abuse. This curriculum would be introduced in religious education classes in the fall of 2003. What's more, the archdiocese of Boston said that it would develop a comprehensive training program for priests. In addition, the archdiocese announced that it had plans to create an advisory board to oversee a

victim's advocacy center, which would be run by mostly lay people (Cullen, 2002). Finally, the establishment of a new internal review board to handle allegations against priests and lay workers was announced (Cullen, 2002). Obviously, these are clear corrective action measures aimed to ease the anger of offended parishioners. The L.A. archdiocese also implemented the Clergy Misconduct Oversight Board, which included the lay membership of a sexual-abuse survivor, parents of young children, mental-health professionals, and attorneys (Watanabe, 2002a). Mahony expressed the sentiment that the board represents "another chapter in efforts of the archdiocese...to make certain that all [churches] are safe for children and young people" (Watanabe, 2002a, p. 1). In order to save face, these archdioceses have realized that the inclusion of its lay people is vital to thwart the pressing problems that have damaged the church's image. This course of action also may reduce the offensiveness of the act, wherein the level of offensiveness by the offended party might be diminished over time.

Application of Mortification and Apologia ,

The final method in image restoration is mortification. It is concluded by Benoit (1995a, 1995b)

that mortification is relative to apologetic criticism. Downey states that the worth of modern apologia "lay in directing the responsibilities and commitment of others in the future" (1993, p. 52). Mortification is closely tied to Downey's apologia caveat, since mortification is an apologetic statement. Benoit (1995b) elucidates that mortification consists of a confession of committing the wrongful act and a petition for forgiveness. It is suggested that mortification constrains the guilty party to own up to the act and to deliver an apology to those injured (Thomsen & Rawson, 1998). Finally, Benoit points out that though mortification and corrective action may be used independently, "it may be wise to couple [mortification] with plans to correct" (1995a, p. 79).

Perhaps the most amply profound and recognized step in restoring the church's image came when the National Conference of Bishops attempted to reconcile themselves with those wronged. Perhaps aside from the clear use of compensation in the church's approach, the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" was the most clarifying statement from any tier of Catholic leadership. The straightforward document from the National Conference of Bishops stemmed from a conference of the 286 U.S. bishops held in Dallas on June 13-14, 2002. The accord

introduced a new zero-tolerance policy, the purpose of which was to ease the pain of scandal and to make provisions concerning the transfer of troubled priests would not again occur. The June conference took major steps to atone for the sexual abuse by the limited number of priests who had been convicted of improper relations with minors. The rhetoric in the charter is very straightforward and apologetic, seeking atonement for the estrangement between the hierarchy and the victims, parishioners, and other offended parties.

The Preamble of the Charter identifies the current sex abuse problem as a "crisis." The diction of "crisis" is not quite as provocative as "scandal," (even though most major newspapers have used the two terms simultaneously in their articles). Secondly, the preamble recognizes that "in the past, *secrecy* has created an atmosphere that has inhibited the healing process, and in some cases, enabled sexually abusive behavior to be repeated" (p. 1, italics added). This is a very poignant phrase in the preamble; it is a confession that confirms media accusations and the victim's position that the Church leadership has too much reticence in its ranks in regard to the sexual abuse matter.

Article 13 of the charter is an apt example of how mortification and corrective action can be used together (Benoit, 1995a). Article 13 dictates that:

"Dioceses/eparchies will evaluate the background of all diocesan/eparchial and parish personnel who have *regular* contact with minors" (p. 5, italics added). However, the language implemented here is a loophole waiting to happen. The charter would be much better off in reassuring those offended by the sex abuse scandal if it were to say "any" instead of "regular" interaction. Benoit posits that in the ideology of corrective action where the problem may be a recurring one, "the actor's position may be enhanced by provision of assurances that changes will prevent it from happening again" (1995a, p. 79). In this instance, the language of the policy isn't persuasive enough to be thoroughly convincing. Rather, it may have the opposite effect of cultivating askance in the minds of the injured. There is the absence of unequivocal proclamation such as "there will be absolutely no way that a child's virtue is ever put at risk". "Regular" therefore becomes a risky proposition, even though the requisite of background checks is an effective step to curtail priests who may behave as sexual predators. The rhetoric here could appear as pie in the sky window dressing to the injured.

Both Catholic cardinals and bishops have offered apologies in an attempt to procure forgiveness for the wrongful act. Mortification is therefore identical with contrition and confession, the latter concept separating mortification from corrective action (Benoit, 1995b). First, in April, Cardinal Law, under relentless pressure to resign his post, actually addressed the issue personally with the pope, explaining his actions as a way to prove to the Vatican the seriousness of the issue. He added: "the fact that my resignation has been proposed as necessary was part of presentation" (Butterfield, 2002b, p. A20). Here, the actions spoke louder than perhaps anything that Law had said to show his mortification. Ultimately however, his attempt to show mortification and disdain for his actions was superseded by the Pope, who insisted that Law retain his assignment as the head of the Boston Archdiocese.

The Charter, written in concert by the U.S. bishops repeatedly laments in the first three paragraphs alone that the bishops are partly responsible for the continuance of the sexual maladies. In short, they indicate in their rhetoric that they are mortified by what has transpired. The preamble exudes statements of apologia and mortification: "As bishops we acknowledge our mistakes

and our role in that suffering, and we apologize and take responsibility for too often failing victims and our people in the past" (2002, p. 1). Then this additional statement:

From the depths of our hearts, we bishops express great sorrow and profound regret for what the Catholic people are enduring" (National Conference of Catholic Bishops/United States Catholic Conference [NCCBUSCC], 2002, p. 1). Finally, the bishops offered this apology: "We apologize to [the victims] for the grave harm that has been inflicted upon them.... (NCCBUSCC, 2002, p. 1)

In the fourth paragraph of the preamble comes an rebuke of the sexual abuse from Pope John Paul, which the charter adopts as its own. The fourth paragraph reads, "sexual abuse of young people is 'by every standard wrong and rightly considered a crime by society; it is also an appalling sin in the eyes of God" (NCCBUSCC, 2002, p. 1). Three paragraphs later the charter emphasizes once again that the "bishops [are] obligated to protect children and young people and to prevent sexual abuse" (NCCBUSCC, 2002, p. 2).

Another statement reads "With a firm determination to resolve this crisis, we bishops commit ourselves to a pastoral outreach to *repair* the breach with those who have suffered sexual abuse and with all the people of the Church" (NCCBUSCC, 2002, p. 2, italics added). These

statements are obvious petitions of the Church to its victims that it will mend its ways. Seeking in earnest to rectify the conundrum, Article 2 of the charter states: "Dioceses/eparchies will have mechanisms in place to respond promptly to any allegation where there is reason to believe that sexual abuse of a minor has occurred." Article 2 also pledges that there will be a "competent assistance coordinator" to assist those who claim to have been sexually abused (NCCBUSCC, 2002, p. 3). In September, the National Review Board, the 13 member lay panel appointed by the bishops in the Dallas reunion to help enforce policy regarding priests, sanctioned the bishops' abuse policy, and further urged religious orders to comply (Associated Press, 2002). The panel affirmed that most dioceses have implemented the plan, and that the review board would soon identify bishops who did not implement it. There has been some resistance from the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, which in August determined that it would allow most abusers to work in the Church as long as they were away from parishioners (Associated Press, 2002, p. 1).

The Vatican had its objections regarding the newly confirmed U.S. policy. The policy calls for provisions and castigations that run contrary to canonical law; the plan

is destined to face pitfalls from canon lawyers and Church officials both in the U.S. and Rome (Goodstein & Bruni, 2002a). This type of action may be a blow to apologia and mortification strategies. Remarks by one senior Vatican official in September prophesied of problems in the Charter, which further jeopardizes attempts of mortification in an already disturbing Church maelstrom. Said he: "The real topic of discussion is about how norms for one country fit in with canon law for the whole Church" (Goodstein & Bruni, 2002a, p. 1). Clearly discourse such as this coming from the Vatican is inopportune for a struggling U.S. Catholic church, as it fails to ameliorate the scandal. This is a sharp reversal for the U.S. Catholic Church, considering that the Rev. Richard P. McBrien, a theologian at the University of Notre Dame, predicted approval, and not disdain of the policy from the Vatican. "They [the US bishops] are not going to go out on a limb and have someone at the Vatican saw it off. Anything they approve in Dallas will be something they're confident Rome will approve" (Paulson, 2002b, p. A1).

In September, in a survey done by the nation's Roman Catholic bishops, it was reported that 76 percent of the nation's 195 dioceses have review boards to evaluate

accusations of abuse. The survey also showed 82 percent are now conducting background checks on both clergymen and volunteers that work with minors; 92 percent have a written policy on sexual abuse that is available to the public (Goodstein, 2002, p. 1). Reportedly, approximately 54 percent of the dioceses are reporting cases of sexual abuse to civil authorities, something that the charter left up to each individual diocese to report to local authorities (Goodstein, 2002, p. 1). Monsignor Francis J. Maniscalco, spokesman for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops emphasized that the survey was just a "snapshot" that shows that the bishops left Dallas intent on putting the protections of the charter in place as soon as possible," and "were able to do it because the measures reflect the steps" some dioceses had already carried out (Goodstein, 2002, p. 1).

In the eyes of many Catholics, neither the discourse nor the steps taken, while a healthy token of repentance, have been nearly enough. Words, in the eyes of the offended, mean little when the actions say even less. Realistically, in terms of public relations and the restoration of its image, the U.S. Catholic Church will be in spiritual arrears for some time to come. David Clohessy, director of Survivors Network of Those Abused by

Priests, or SNAP, said: "A monastery represents a change of locale for a priest. Our goal is to keep children safe. The way you do that is to prosecute and incarcerate molesters" (Pfeiffer, 2002b, p. A11). Clohessy added that "Whether or not this is progress, it's simply too early to tell" (Pfeiffer, 2002b, p. A11). The Catholic Action League, issued a statement saluting many aspects of the charter, but the group also rebuked the policy for its failure to address accountability. "While the bishops dealt firmly with molesting priests, they did virtually nothing about those bishops who enabled offending priests" (Pfeiffer, 2002b, p. A11). Then this clinching statement indicative of so many other lay people's sentiments: "Unless some resignations are forthcoming, *lay Catholics will not be satisfied*" (Pfeiffer, 2002b, p. A11, italics added). Deal W. Hudson, publisher of "Crisis," a Catholic magazine states, "...where the cardinal or archbishop is inaccessible behind three desks of secretaries and nobody answers the phone, then there's a willingness to accept the worst" (Dillon, 2002b, p. A21).

Finally, in one of the more scathing rebukes the bishops could have received, prominent Roman Catholic, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia challenged their moral authority to speak out on moral issues. Shortly

after the new policy was decreed in June, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops filed a brief stating that a death penalty of the retarded "cannot be morally justified" (Denniston, 2002, p. A4). Without making direct reference to the sexual abuse crisis, Scalia retorted:

The attitudes of that body regarding crime and punishment are so far from being representative, even of the views of Catholics, that they are currently the object of intense national [and entirely ecumenical] criticism. (Denniston, 2002, p. A4)

These statements are only a sample of brickbats from the injured. They do denote that it will be some time before the moral authority of prelates is once again considered genuine by the injured.

Results of the Actions taken by Catholic Leadership

Catholics' Response to the Charter

In May, approximately a month preceding the official meeting of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, an "CBS News" poll revealed that 83 percent of non-Catholic Americans and Catholic Americans stated that the Church had done a poor job handling the recent sex abuse charges (CBS Worldwide Inc., 2002b). A June 23 "CBS" poll showed that 44 percent of Americans (not Catholic) and 38 percent of American Catholics were dissatisfied with the Church's handling of

the scandal. An equal amount of 29 percent of both non-Catholic American and American Catholics labeled their reaction as "angry" to the handling of the crisis (CBS Worldwide Inc., 2002a).

The aftermath of the Charter as prescribed by the bishops was met with much skepticism by Americans, both Catholic and non-Catholic. In short, many say that the Charter simply doesn't go far enough. A "LeMoyne/Zogby" poll showed that 79 percent of Catholics endorsed the new zero-tolerance policy (LA Times/Times Wire Services, 2002). A similar "CNN/USA Today" poll revealed that 56 percent of Catholics approved the policy, and 63 percent said that it would be effective (LA Times/Times Wire Services, 2002). Dissenter Richard Kirby coined it this way: "10 years ago [the bishops] apologized, too, and we're here today. It's actions that count" (Grossman & della Cava, 2002, p. 1A).

In a late June "ABC/Beliefnet" poll taken by 1,023 Americans, including 251 Catholics, it was shown that 77 percent of Catholics had originally believed that the Dallas meeting would bring about "meaningful results" (Watanabe, 2002b, p..2). However, after the resolution was approved by the bishops the Dallas reunion, only 44 percent of Catholics opined that anticipated results had

been realized. The same poll also showed that eight of ten Americans and seven of ten Catholics favored criminal charges against bishops who failed to act on abuse allegations (Watanabe, 2002b, p. 2). The striking attitudes in these polls (most of which were taken after the bishops' meeting) is that this was *after* the fact, *after* the meeting of the bishops, *after* the new policy was drafted. The offended public remains offended, which does not bode well for the U.S. Catholic Church. This could have perennial effects upon its hierarchy and its membership where a lack of trust inevitably ensues.

An Injured Party's Attitude Towards Church Leaders

"Beliefnet", an "respected" website that reaches approximately 5 million people monthly (Watanabe, 2002b, p. 1) named Cardinal Roger Mahony as one of the nine worst cardinals when it came to handling the sexual abuse scandal. It also indicted Bishop Charles Grahmann of Dallas, Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien of Phoenix, Bishop John B. McCormack of New Hampshire, Archbishop Manuel Moreno of Tucson, Bishop Gerald Gettelfinger of Evansville, Indiana, Bishop William Murphy of Rockville Centre, New York, Bishop Elden Curtiss of Nebraska, and predictably, Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston. The "Beliefnet" poll

results extolled Bishop Donald Wuerl of Pittsburgh, Bishop John Kinney of St. Cloud, Minnesota, and Bishop Wilton Gregory of Belleville, Ill., for "exemplifying a positive approach to the crisis" (Watanabe, 2002b, p. 2). David Clohessy, national director of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests exclaimed

For survivors the question for weeks has not been, 'Should Cardinal Law resign?' It's 'Should five or six bishops resign, including those who have served under Law and had as much or more direct knowledge' of priests accused of sexual misconduct? (Paulson & Rezendes, 2002, p. A1)

The majority of Catholics apparently have no desire to let up on the church's handling of the sexual abuse mess. A "Boston Globe/WBZ-TV" poll in April showed that an estimated 61 percent were following the stories with careful observation (The Boston Globe, 2002a), significantly higher from a poll taken by the same group in February. The February poll showed that 49 percent of Catholics were following the stories meticulously in February, shortly after the Geoghan story broke (The Boston Globe, 2002b).

The flurry of public opinion has been harsh towards Cardinal Law. In the already referred to "CBS" poll taken in May among 647 adults, 64 percent of Americans said that Law should resign. Among the Catholics that took that

poll, 64 percent also agreed that Law should resign (CBS Worldwide Inc., 2002b, p. 2). Contributing to this already devastating statistic is the view that Law only apologized because of the stories being circulated in the media.

Another "Boston Globe/WBZ-TV" poll of 800 Catholics taken in mid April revealed that Law, after going on a media fast for over two months, only 15 percent saw the cardinal in favorable terms (The Boston Globe, 2002a). Only 51 percent were confident that Law would be able to implement his procedures, down from 62 percent in February (Paulson, 2002d). In addition, 61 percent do not buy Law's argument that poor record-keeping was a meaningful factor in the Paul Shanley case, who, in spite of his record as a child molester, was transferred all over the place, east coast to west (Paulson, 2002d). Only 40 percent are somewhat inclined to forgive Law for his cardinal sins, down from 51 percent in a February poll (Paulson, 2002d).

Perceptions of the Vatican and the Pope

The Vatican and the Pope both saw their approval ratings drop in a June "CBS News" poll. Sixty four percent of Catholics said that the Pope and the Vatican had done a poor job in handling the crisis compared to 45 percent that had said the same thing in an April poll (CBS Worldwide Inc., 2002a, p. 2). What's more, in late

September, the *modus operandi* of the Pope and the Vatican was reported to be more unlikely to accept the policy, and the end resulting in policy compromise. As one Vatican official expressed it, "The pope-only the pope-can create new laws" (Goodstein & Bruni, 2002b, p. 1).

Catholics' Attitudes towards Their Faith and Local Leaders

It is evident that many Catholics are putting their faith *in* their faith, while their confidence plummets in many of their bishop and cardinal leaders. A majority of 53 percent of Catholics said that they have lost confidence in the Catholic Church as a religious institution (Paulson, 2002d). However, 92 percent say that their faith isn't lessened by the scandals (Paulson, 2002d). Eighty one percent of those polled said that they were still attending Mass as they were before the scandal (Paulson, 2002d).

A June "USA Today/CNN/Gallup" poll found that 22 percent have questioned whether or not they should leave the church because of the crisis (LA Times/Times Wire Services, 2002). Parishioners are much more kind to their local leaders. A June "CBS News" poll disclosed that 50 percent of Catholics feel that their local bishop has done a good job handling the charges of sexual abuse (CBS

Worldwide Inc., 2002a). An even higher number of 69 percent say that their parish priest has done a good job handling the scandals (CBS Worldwide Inc., 2002a).

Financial Consequences of the Scandal

The crisis has definite financial ramifications as well. The April 17 "Boston Globe/WBZ-TV" poll revealed that in Massachusetts alone, 31 percent of area Catholics admit that they are giving less money to the church (The Boston Globe, 2002a) up from 18 percent in a February poll (The Boston Globe, 2002b). The same April poll disclosed that there are reports that archdiocesan fund-raising efforts have dwindled, and that the Catholic Charities are having difficulty raising money (Sennott, 2002). As one affluent Massachusetts Catholic explained, "Cardinal Law just doesn't realize the anger that is out there over this scandal. Catholics want to help the church do good, but they don't want to pay for its misdeeds" (Sennott, 2002, p. A13).

Catholics' Dissidence on Policy and Doctrine

In February, a "Boston Globe/WBZ-TV" poll asked 800 Catholics for their thoughts on a variety of doctrinal and policy-related issues. Among total responses, 74 percent disagree with the church's position that priests remain celibate (The Boston Globe, 2002c). Sixty five percent of

total respondents stated that they disagree with the church's position that women should not be ordained as priests (The Boston Globe, 2002c, p. 1). Sixty-three percent declared that they disagree with the church's position on divorce, while 54 percent are at odds with the church's teachings on pre-marital sex (The Boston Globe, 2002c). Concerning birth control, 70 percent disagree with the church's teachings, while 51 percent aren't in concert with the Catholic position on homosexuality (The Boston Globe, 2002c). Regarding the controversial issue of abortion, 48 percent of total respondents disagree, while 44 percent concur with the pro-life stance (The Boston Globe, 2002c). Finally, 43 percent of total respondents echo the sentiments of the church's teachings against capital punishment, while 39 percent aren't in concert (The Boston Globe, 2002c).

An April "CBS News" poll discovered that there has been an increasing number of Catholics who believe that priests should be allowed to marry. Seven in ten Catholics said that priests should be allowed to marry, a significant difference from a 1971 "Gallup" poll that revealed that 49 percent of Catholics said that priests should be allowed to marry (Elder, 2002).

The polls do not imply that the scandal is the sole reason for disaccord between the parishioners and the church. Obviously, there has always been a lack of agreement between the lay people and the church regarding stark differences of opinion on several doctrinal and procedural issues, and it would be unwise to state that a crisis, even as detrimental as this, is the birth of the bedlam. What these statistics do indicate is that the lay people of the church and the bishops, cardinals, and the Vatican are at odds on nearly every issue in terms of the abuse. Such disunion is not new. Issues such as abortion, birth control, the death penalty, and others have been at the root of discordance for decades. What the polls do suggest is that the only confidence that most Catholics have is in their local leaders and their faith, and not in their leaders.

The topics of sexual morality, celibacy, and the authority of bishops are also now up for debate among lay people. A recent Boston College program initiated a forum that will deal with the controversial topics. Moreover, there will be debate over the ordination of women and married priests, the consultation of the lay people regarding the selection of clergy (Paulson, 2002c). These are issues that have graced many editorial pages and have

been embraced with great fervor of most major newspaper
and magazine publications.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this analysis has been to study the theory of image restoration and the application of its tenets in regard to the U.S. Catholic Church sexual abuse crisis. First, it was stressed that many leaders in the church employed in part *denial* tactics of victimage and scapegoating, emphasizing that they were the unfair recipients of media bias and attack. In terms of *evading responsibility*, there have been consistent attempts to convey that though the actions were wrong, the intention to do the right thing was the motivating factor. Also, there was a plea that the leaders involved were not privy to the information that would've indicated that the predator priests were indeed that - predators, until 1993. Third, the changes were made with good intentions. Many of the statements made indicate that the actions taken were done with the best of intentions, that the transactions were results of counsel that the problem priests were rehabilitated.

The church also tried to *reduce offensiveness* in a variety of ways. First, in an unprecedented action taken

by the Vatican, the bishops were called to Rome in mid April. This was an obvious yet startling indicator that the Vatican began to take the crisis seriously. More specifically, the church across the nation has tried desperately to *bolster* its image. Certain church leaders also have tried to use the aspect of *transcendence*, making the crisis just that - a crisis, completely detached and void of relevance pertaining to doctrine and policy of the church. *Minimization* is also a pertinent vehicle of image restoration discourse. The bishops and cardinals attempted to make the crisis appear as a small thing plaguing only a modicum of priests.

In terms of *corrective action*, the church has commissioned an ad hoc layperson committee to gain greater perspective into the hearts and mind of its parishioners. In addition, the church has formed smaller-scale committees that include lay people on a more local basis. This strategy is simply trying to reduce offensiveness with the pledge that such outcries of abuse would never reach the same scope and coverage that it currently has. In direct response to laity demands for change, the bishops assembled in June and created a stronger zero-tolerance policy.

Finally, *mortification*. The church simply has to say, in layman's terms, "I'm sorry." The hierarchy has emphasized that it is saddened, horrified, shocked, in short, "mortified" that such abuse has taken place within its walls.

Observations and Recommendations

Benoit and Lindsey pointed out that image restoration and the "focus of argumentative claims may shift over time" (1987, p. 145). A review of what Catholic leaders have done since the birth of the crisis indicates that the message strategies have evolved for the better. First, with the tactics of denial and evasion of responsibility, cardinals and bishops attacked the media, and some of their accusers, and it may be said that church leaders have sent mixed messages. The attempt to scapegoat and employ a victimage strategy has thus far backfired with the injured public. "If an audience accepts that another is to blame," says Benoit, "the rhetor's image is to be restored" (1995b, p. 90). The fact that in this case the injured party reacted so negatively to any scapegoating or victimage tactics from the bishops and cardinals, it is possible that the audience may heap greater culpability and ire on the heads of leadership.

Bolstering may assist an offending entity since they "can describe valued traits they possess of positive actions they have performed" (Benoit, 1995b, p. 91). The highly publicized cathedral opening of Our Lady of the Angels is an apt application of bolstering. Bolstering could have drawn away the cloud of suspicion from other pressing problems in the church, but it simply wasn't used enough, and had it been used, it may have had only superficial effects.

Transcendence, differentiation, and bolstering in the attempt to reduce offensiveness may have some effectiveness. Since the doctrine of the church is quite a different topic than its procedure, it may be argued that the leaders effectively curtailed arguments of doctrine to get back to the issue of sexually abusive priests. One poll (The Boston Globe, 2002c), stipulates that Catholics are divided over doctrinal issues, which is nothing new, according to a second poll (Elder 2002). The aforementioned polls did not ask questions regarding any possible links of sexual abuse of minors to celibacy or homosexuality.

While Mahony and others apparently managed to transcend and minimize these controversial issues, there is no solid evidence that suggests that transcendence

eliminated blame of church leaders. Eliminating blame or guilt is one of the purposes of transcendence and minimization discourse (Thomsen & Rawson, 1998). It is also questionable whether or not church leaders have succeeded in making the issue of sexual abuse a societal disease instead of a Catholic curse. Hence, the entire premise of having reduced the offensiveness of the act is in question.

Returning again to the notion that human action itself is rhetorical (Foss, 1984), the Catholic Church had its greatest success in the rhetorical advances of corrective action and mortification. It is the observation of this analysis that these two methods tend to best represent what Foss (1984) calls the rhetoric of redemption. Benoit (1995a) points out that it may be a greater bulwark to the church to implement both mortification and corrective action simultaneously. This is what the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops did. The charter that was presented as the new zero-tolerance policy had voluminous discourse of apologetic nature, and it further stated what would take place so that further problems would be circumvented. The language is insufficient to have any conclusive results. As someone has said, to be kind to the wolf is to be unkind to the

sheep. This is how the injured feel. Had the mortification and corrective action been words and deeds that even the Vatican would sanction wholeheartedly, the U.S. Catholic Church may have won back the hearts of her members more quickly. Now it may be that the church pays the price until the last farthing. Striking at the root of this distrust and dissonance between the two parties, Boston priest Father Walter Cuenin opined:

Laypeople have been treated like so many immature children, incapable of having a real voice in a Church that has proved itself pitifully inadequate in running and policing itself. (Wilkes, 2002, p. 51)

Image restoration and the tenets thereof are not a perfect balm for a bereft Gilead. Benoit testified that "We should realize that image is dynamic and almost certainly cannot be 'restored' to exactly its state before the offensive act" (2000, p. 42). Nonetheless, rhetoric may lend itself to partial restoration, which presumably is far better than none at all. The use of image restoration may make at one that which was lost, and the offender and the injured may walk in harmony again.

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