

April 10, 2007 - After Asceticism, by Linacre Institute - BOOK REVIEW
UNITED STATES Catholic World News, The Forum: Church scandal reflects ascetical
breakdown, authors argue.

The sex-abuse crisis within the Catholic Church was brought on in large part by a collapse in the traditions of ascetical discipline, especially among the clergy. That is the argument of an important book about the crisis, and after years of research on the topic, I find that argument persuasive. Just over one year ago, the Linacre Institute released *After Asceticism: Sex, Prayer, and Deviant Priests*.

Regrettably, the book has received little public attention-- certainly nowhere near the attention it deserves. Perhaps this is understandable. The secular media, which have done so much to expose the failings of the Catholic clergy, have little interest in promoting traditional Catholic spirituality. So we couldn't expect the media to recognize the value of *After Asceticism*.

Church leaders should have snapped up the Linacre Institute's argument. Bishops, religious superiors, and seminar rectors should have recognized an important argument on the proper formation of priests. They did not, and that fact should tell us that something was amiss. But then, we already had plenty of evidence on that score!

The Linacre Institute, which was founded within the Catholic Medical Association to develop position papers on various bioethical issues, has taken a special interest in the role that the sciences and professions have in shaping judgment and opinion on sexual ethics, and the treatment of disturbed priests, and has supported efforts to advance Catholic social teaching in these areas.

With *After Asceticism* the Institute has made an important contribution to a discussion-- long overdue-- about the collapse of clerical discipline that allowed the sex-abuse crisis to develop.