

1-11-08 - Therapist tells VOTF abusers can be rehabilitated

Frank Fay, The Hour, Norwalk CT

The recidivism rate of all sexual predators after psychological treatment is only 15 percent.

The proportion of Roman Catholic clergy and religious responsible for almost all of the sexual abuse of boys and girls is only 3 percent.

The Roman Catholic priesthood is composed of between 40 and 60 percent homosexuals, but that sexual orientation has no correlation to the problem of sexual abuse by the clergy.

The great talents of scores of Roman Catholic nuns have been subjugated by the male-oriented church authority.

The as-yet unreported involvement of priests and married women will be a relative tsunami.

These statements were among the many offered to members of the Voice of the Faithful in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport on Thursday night in the First Congregational Church of Fairfield by Leslie Lothstein, Ph.D., director of psychology at Hartford Hospital's Institute of Living.

He and his colleagues have treated more than 600 Roman Catholic priests and 100 Protestant ministers, a rabbi and 50 women religious from around the world who suffered various psychiatric disorders.

It was from his 16-years of ongoing experience at the institute that Lothstein drew his remarks.

He suggested it a crime that law enforcement, judicial and legislative leaders of this society have wrongly concluded that the vast majority of sexual predators are incapable of rehabilitation.

"Those people are treated like lepers and when they are incarcerated for a decade, say, they are given treatment for only the last few months of their sentence."

The clinical psychologist, who learned through his treatment of priests and bishops that at least one bishop would regularly order up prepubescent boys for his sexual gratification, suggested that the church in its current manifestation, seems to be operating as a direct descendent of the decadent Roman Empire.

"Wherever there is isolation and secrecy, you have the basic ingredients for untoward behavior," he said, in remarking about the unhealthy manner in which the church runs its seminaries. "The seminarians are warned not to develop friendships with contemporaries, when, in fact, that is exactly the opposite of what should be done."

Lothstein spoke of the conference in St. Louis that he attended where the subject was the rehabilitation of wayward priests and nuns.

"There were some heavy hitter there, including two who were later made cardinals," he said. "But I came away from that conference with the realization that the nuns there were light years more creative and more talented than their male counterparts."

The VOTF members were held spellbound by Lothstein for 90 minutes, and he has been invited back for an encore.