

## A Church in Crisis

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The Church in India is passing through some difficult times, A Cardinal Archbishop is accused of mismanaging or misappropriating a large amount of Church funds. Another bishop is accused of raping a nun who has filed a criminal case against him. Several bishops, priests and nuns seem to have sexually abused a large number of boys and girls.

On the other side there is a multiplication of pious practices: 13-hour adoration in one Church, 39-hour adoration in another Church and novenas of all kinds in other Churches.

Then there is the question of alms-giving. An elderly priest who is in charge of an orphanage for poor boys complains of not getting any help from the Church for the orphanage. “The rich have money only for churches and monuments where their names will be displayed prominently.” There are many other things which do damage to the Church.

Now what is the response of the Catholic believers to this situations?

Generally speaking four responses from the side of the Church may be found:

1. Many people lose faith and say that something must be done to improve the situation. And they remain quite passive.
2. Some others sit in judgement and condemn those

bishops, priests and nuns who have created the bad situation in the Church and for the Church. This has led to a lot of anger and bitterness in the Church.

3. Internal emigration: Because of a feeling of helplessness, many emigrate from the Church emotionally and do nothing about the bad situation in the Church. This can easily lead to the formation of sects as it happened in some Indian religions like Hinduism and Buddhism.

4. In this situation the religious are under constant threat. Fed up with what is happening in the Church many may be seen as indifferent in matters religious.

## Reflections

As a believing community people make reflections:

1) Human beings are weak and sinful. They make mistakes and commit sins.

***“We pass by this earth only once. So we shall try to do all the good we can while we are here.”***

Hence all of us have to be compassionate.

2) Jesus has asked us not only not to judge harshly, but also not to judge at all.

3) In order to judge a person we need to know the persons background, outlook on life, the temptations the person is exposed to, and the pressures under which person lives. We do not know all these; only God does. So let him judge.

4) As has been said, ‘We pass by this earth only once. So we shall try to do all the good we can while we are here’

5) It is always better to love, encourage and build up rather than put them down.

## Looking to the Future

These are some practical steps we can take to improve the situation and prevent such things from happening again.

1) Evangelization

We have to clarify the goal of evangelization. It is not directed to the numerical expansion of the Church, but for the establishment of the kingdom of God here on earth. Hence we should not be eager to win for the Church people who do not accept the demands of the kingdom of God. After D. Bonhoeffer there is talk about cheap grace and costly grace. When a person fails to prepare himself/herself for grace that it is being given, then it is “cheap grace”. When a person receives the grace of conversion and the membership of Christ’s Church, then it is cheap grace with no preparation classrooms. Our evangelizing work should not be to offer cheap graces. So adequate preparation must be made to equip the whole family (community) for the celebration of baptism.

2) As the child grows up, it has to be taught catechism by competent teachers. I am not sure that classroom is the right place for teaching Catechism. It will give the impression that catechism is a subject to be learned like any other subject. But this is not the case. It is a special subject which can help a person to find meaning to the whole of his/her life.

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***“In the Church, the religious are the professional followers of Christ.”***

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Catechism should be taught in a place close to the place of worship. Taught in the school it can get the colour and taste of secular subjects. This is reinforced by giving of prizes. Some years back a convent school in Bangalore divulged the questions of the diocesan examination in Catechism so that their children got the top prizes. I wonder what message these sisters are communicating to the young.

Since the religious are looked upon as the bearers of the holiness of the Church the superiors should take

special care to select the candidates strictly and form them painstakingly so that a new generation of young men and women come forth from our formation houses, vibrant in

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faith, burning in love and thoroughly determined to give their lives away in the service of God and his people. Equally important

is their ongoing formation since many get lost after the first formation. In the Church the religious are the professional followers of Christ.

As the priests and bishops are called to lead the Christ they are in a special way expected to be Christ-like persons. The Church spends a lot of money in running huge seminaries. The Bishops are expected to give their best priests to staff the major seminaries. This is not happening adequately.

I am quite familiar with the situation as I live. I was on the staff of a Major Seminary for more than 40 years – I can say this.

The Catholic Church should take a firm stand against Hindutva which is advocating communalism. We are not against Hindus. We seek to promote communal harmony in this our dear land.

The Church as a whole has to adopt a clear policy: All Church finance must be managed by competent, well-trained lay people. For this task competent lay people should be properly oriented. Once oriented he/she must be left free to do their job. He/she must not be interfered with by clergy, especially the higher clergy.

In this way we will proceed to a common goal in an orderly and peaceful way.

## Another India Is Possible!

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The idea of India, constitutionally envisioned as a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic, and founded on the values of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, is being hijacked today by an aggressive religious nationalism. A majoritarian Hindu Rashtra is being promoted. Concerned citizens are apprehensive that Indian democracy could eventually convert into illiberal philosophy of Hindutva. The impoverished minority communities are deeply aggrieved to see countless contrasts and contradictions, hostility and hatred, prejudice and

bigotry among communities. The deliberate and barbarous crushing of people-in a country that boasts reverence for life-has left Indian traditions of welcome,

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courtesy, acceptance, pluralism, and hospitality in shambles. In such a tragic situation, we cannot afford to remain ensconced in the protective bubbles of our institutions or just throw our hands up in the air in despair. We need not behave hysterically in horror either. Can we creatively imagine that another India is possible?

Undoubtedly, India is a great country. It has made substantial progress since its independence. Gone are the