



# Sexual Abuse and the Culture of Catholicism: How Priests and Nuns Become Perpetrators

*Myra L. Hidalgo*

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**Sexual Abuse and the Culture of Catholicism: How Priests and Nuns Become Perpetrators** Myra L. Hidalgo

An inside look at the reasons Catholic priests and nuns commit sexual abuse

*Sexual Abuse and the Culture of Catholicism* digs beneath the public scandals to explore the underlying causes of sexual abuse by priests and nuns from the unique perspective of an abuse victim/survivor who is an experienced mental health practitioner and social science researcher. This powerful book includes the author's personal account of sexual abuse by a nun and her years of struggle to recover. Passionate but scholarly and objective, the book advocates the need for healing dialogue, empirical research, and informed prevention strategies to bring a meaningful resolution to the crisis of sexual abuse in the church.

Popular explanations for the reasons behind the crisis have included issues related to celibacy, homosexuality, the power structure of the church, and poor seminary screening practices. But none of these theories are supported by research nor can they explain why Catholic priests and nuns may be more likely to abuse children than other adults in positions of trust. *Sexual Abuse and the Culture of Catholicism* uses a complex, systemic approach to draw parallels between the church as a human system and a family that has experienced incest, presenting a model for a sexual trauma cycle in the church based on systemic sexual shame passed down through the beliefs and practices of Catholicism.

*Sexual Abuse and the Culture of Catholicism* examines:

- the prevalence and characteristics of sexual abuse by Catholic priests and nuns compared to sex offenders in the general population
- celibacy, homosexuality, and the power structure of the church as contributing factors in the sexual abuse crisis
- an analogy of the church as a family in which incest occurs
- the effects and causes of sexual offending from one generation to the next
- how current research on sexual offending applies to sexual abuse by priests and nuns
- healing and empowerment for those affected by religious-based sexual trauma
- reform and renewal within the Catholic Church
- and much more

*Sexual Abuse and the Culture of Catholicism* is a unique and important resource for clergy, religious order, and lay leaders in the Catholic Church and other Christian denominations; social science researchers; social workers and mental health professionals; lay and religious members of the Catholic Church; and anyone recovering from religious-based sexual trauma.



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