

The 'Spotlight' on crimes against children

The 'Spotlight' on crimes against children It is the responsibility of all to protect society's most vulnerable. There comes a time when truth has to be revealed, when the secrecy of crimes can no longer be contained and denied, and when the guilty must be held to account. History shows that secrecy and cover-ups keep that day of reckoning at bay but one day the truth will come out.

That is the story of Spotlight, a film about a team of investigative reporters at the Boston Globe newspaper who exposed sex crimes against children by priests and the church cover-up.



It is an award-winning film that will shine at the Oscars this year for the pure strength of its powerful and honest storytelling of a most painful subject in the Catholic Church.

This truth-telling film has won the prestigious and coveted Catholic SIGNIS Jury Prize at the Venice Film Festival. Vatican Radio said that in this film the Globe reporters "made themselves examples of their most pure vocation, that of finding the facts, verifying sources, and making themselves — for the good of the community and of a city — paladins of the need for justice."

The film reveals that when the secret cover-up of crimes against children by the powerful leaders of the institutional church in Boston, where as many as 90 members of the Boston clergy were involved, the powerful citizens and Archbishop Law tried to stop the journalists from pursuing the truth. They failed.

The subsequent media revelations shocked the world because of the extent of the cover-up and the stories opened the floodgates of protests and complaints against the clergy. The number of offending priests eventually reached 159, according to Boston's Cardinal Sean O'Malley who in 2011 made a complete list public.

Similar revelations had come to light in the early 1990s in Canada, Australia, Ireland, United Kingdom and Germany. They have not yet broken out in the Philippines as cover-up is the practice and private cash settlements are common in secular society and church circles.

The Globe had its own guilt, admitted to in the film. Years previously, writers and editors of the

newspaper had been informed many times by victims and their families of the child sexual abuse by priests and had buried the stories or ignored them. The Spotlight investigative team — as it was called and hence the name of the movie — continued despite harassment and threats. Only one lawyer had the courage to take up the cases of the victims, Mitchell Garabedian, played by Stanley Tucci.

The Boston Globe courageously published 13 reports about the crimes and their cover-up from June to December 2002 culminating in the resignation of Cardinal Law as archbishop of Boston on Dec. 14, 2002. He now lives in Rome.

Cardinal O'Malley said the movie "depicts a very painful time in the history of the Catholic Church in the United States and particularly here in the Archdiocese of Boston."

"The media's investigative reporting on the abuse crisis instigated a call for the church to take responsibility for its failings and to reform itself — to deal with what was shameful and hidden — and to make the commitment to put the protection of children first, ahead of all other interests."

"We have asked for and continue to ask for forgiveness from all those harmed by the crimes of the abuse of minors."

The love of power and prestige by some church leaders of the institutional church and their loss of faith and practice in the message of Jesus of Nazareth in Matthew 18: 1-8 led to the spread of this obnoxious and toxic sex crime against children by those sworn and entrusted to protect and help them. The offenders ignored the words of Jesus of Nazareth.

When asked by the Jewish leaders and elders of his day who were the most important, Jesus shocked them by placing a child in front of them. A child had no rights or standing in society at the time.

He told them bluntly unless they became as innocent as the child, they cannot enter God's Kingdom and whoever accepts a child accepts me, he said. And he added that whoever abuses a child should have a millstone tied around his neck and be drowned in the deepest ocean. He made enemies that day.

Jesus equates himself with the innocent child and abusing a child is to abuse Him. That is what is so outrageous and obnoxious, the hurt and pain inflicted on the child and the sacrilegious blasphemy of the crime.

We need to be dedicated and committed to protecting and healing child-abuse victims and to reporting abuse and taking a stand for justice for them. It is always the powerful abusers over the weak. The weak need champions and guardians, and adults must be there for them. No excuse, no exemption, no cop-out is acceptable.

It ought to make us cringe with shame to think of such terrible child abuse and to be as angry as Jesus was when he saw his disciples pushing the children away from him. They did not accept his words either.

What we Christians need is a righteous godly anger at the criminal betrayal of all that is pure and beautiful in the world — childhood. Our faith is primarily rooted in the words and practice of Jesus

Christ and imbedded in our conscience to decide what is right and what stand to take. It can only be one thing — justice for the child victims.

Irish Father Shay Cullen, SSC, established the Preda Foundation in Olongapo City in 1974 to promote human rights and the rights of children, especially victims of sex abuse.

Shay Cullen, - UCAnews