

Special Issue *Trauma and Addiction*

A word from the Editor.....



Affective maturity presupposes an awareness that love has a central role in human life. In fact, as I have written in the encyclical Redemptor Hominis, "Man [sic] cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself; his life is meaningless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it."

We are speaking of a love that involves the entire person, in all his or her aspects - physical, psychic and spiritual - and which is expressed in the "nuptial meaning" of the human body, thanks to which a person gives oneself to another and takes the other to oneself. A properly understood sexual education leads to understanding and realizing this "truth" about human love. We need to be aware that there is a widespread social and cultural atmosphere which "largely reduces human sexuality to the level of something commonplace, since it interprets and lives it in a reductive and impoverished way by linking it solely with the body and with selfish pleasure." Sometimes the very family situations in which priestly vocations arise will display not a few weaknesses and at times even serious failings.

In such a context, an education for sexuality becomes more difficult but also more urgent. It should be truly and fully personal and therefore should present chastity in a manner that shows appreciation and love for it as a "virtue that develops a person's authentic maturity and makes him or her capable of respecting and fostering the 'nuptial meaning' of the body."

(John Paul II, Pastores dabo vobis, Chapter V: He Appointed Twelve to be with Him. The Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood. ¶ 44).

This second issue of *Guest House Review* addresses a critically important, emerging issue within

the clinical sciences that directly impacts the practice of priestly formation and spiritual direction. Underlying issues of trauma and their relationship to addiction and other forms of compulsive behavior are receiving increasing attention.

Trauma refers to the impact of overwhelming life-events that render people powerless and/or living in fear for their very lives. **Inadvertent** or **unintentional** traumas, such as a natural disaster (recent catastrophic events in Myanmar or China, for example) or the death of a loved one are overwhelming experiences that have a huge impact on persons' psychological functioning and sense of existential security. They are difficult to handle because they demonstrate the inherent unpredictability and uncertainty of human existence. Yet, people often learn to cope through the use of important re-frames of the experience: it was just bad luck or a chance event; it was God's will; somehow it fits into God's plan; there are things in life to overcome; we all have our crosses to bear.

Intentional traumas, however, are more difficult to handle. There are inherent elements of viciousness and abuse that cannot be explained away; these traumas deeply wound the potential to trust another and return to relationship. These elements are often taken "inside" the person where they injure (perhaps destroy?) the capacity of persons for connection and trust. They assault what is truly human in us, that is, our call to relationship. And, these effects are heightened when trauma happens repeatedly or at psychologically and developmentally vulnerable times. Think, for example, of the trauma of war or the experiences of children (or pastoral ministers) in the "war-zones" that exist in many of our cities. Think of the events around 9/11 or the periodic school-shootings that happen around the country. Think of the "living hells" that are too many of our homes – even in "nice" neighborhoods – where physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as neglect are all too often the experience of family members. Think of the rape and assault that too many U.S. women (and men) have to endure.

If left unaddressed, these experiences of trauma fester at the core of persons. There, these experiences germinate into serious and ongoing life complications, and many times this impact is hidden from full view. Anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, anger, feelings of betrayal, troubles with authority, difficulties trusting and connecting with others, isolation are the symptoms associated with unresolved trauma. **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**, or PTSD, is the psychiatric diagnosis most often associated with trauma and its effects.

While many persons experience symptoms from traumatic experiences that never reach the

severity of a full diagnostic syndrome, many of the troubling symptoms and conditions listed above lead people to seek pleasure (euphoria) or self-medication (analgesia, distraction) with alcohol, drugs, food, sex, spending and other addictions. Childhood abuse, combat stress, and sexual assault, among many other forms of trauma, have been documented in recent research into the linkage between trauma and substance use disorders, such as alcohol & drug abuse/addiction. Unfortunately, the refuge from trauma that is sought in substance abuse and addiction becomes its own hell over time. Research consistently documents the high rates of trauma with addicted and substance using clients. Several studies have now documented that a majority of women entering addiction treatment have experienced high rates of childhood physical and sexual abuse (56% - 66%) as well as adult victimization, such as partner violence (87%!). Among women who experience posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at some time in their lives, 28% will also develop an alcohol use disorder, while 27% will have a drug use disorder.

Such trauma and substance use rates are not limited to women, however. In recent studies high rates of incest and childhood physical abuse have been reported in chemically dependent men. Among men with lifetime PTSD, 52% develop alcohol use disorders and 35% develop drug use disorder. The findings of multiple studies indicate that (a) trauma, especially childhood trauma, is an important risk factor for the development of chemical dependency, and (b) failure to address appropriately clients' trauma histories may be a critical factor in the occurrence of addiction relapse.

Because of the unpredictable and traumatic nature of substance abuse and addiction, people who are chemically dependent and those in the addict's family (spouses, children, siblings, parents) usually experience some form of psychological damage. Family members as well as many addicts present disorders that extend across a range of clinical syndromes, such as anxiety disorders, depression, psychosomatic symptoms, psychotic episodes, eating disorders and their own substance abuse, as well as developmental deficits, distortions in self-image, confused inner world with disorganized internal dynamics, and co-dependence. Chronic tension, confusion and unpredictable behavior, as well as physical, emotional and sexual abuse, are typical of addictive environments and create trauma symptoms. Individuals in addictive systems behave in ways consistent with the behaviors of victims of other psychological traumas.

The impact of trauma on addiction, its negative consequences for human development more generally, AND its role in the genesis of destructive patterns in the lives of victims that lead them to visit trauma on others – these have become critical areas of investigation. Perhaps less visible

is the role that trauma can play in the *spiritual & formational* development of persons. The statistics are alarming. If one in every four or five American adults (20% to 25%) acknowledges being sexually abused in childhood or adolescence (1 in 3 women; 1 in 5-7 men) – and this is sexual abuse; imagine the numbers for physical and emotional abuse as well as neglect! – how are these experiences integrated by the person into religious formation or spiritual direction? Does the Church have adequate means for discovering whether someone in clerical, religious, or pastoral formation has a history of trauma? Do *formators*, spiritual directors, and religious superiors feel competent to deal with the fallout from such experiences? For example, retreat and spiritual directors acknowledge that it is not uncommon for directees to encounter their own “woundedness” in prayer before even confronting their sinfulness before God. How might we help BOTH directors and directees, superiors and subjects to face these issues compassionately and effectively?

Trauma, addiction, and psycho-spiritual development. The contributors to our **Features** section of *GHR* are important voices in this emerging area of study. Each author was asked to present his (sic) perspective – from his particular discipline and professional experience – on the intersection of trauma and addiction. Each contributor accomplishes this task clearly and forcefully. While no one author speaks fully for Guest House or its staff, we believe each voice needs to be heard at this time and in our ongoing discussions.

We also believe that the papers in this section need to be complemented with reflections from pastoral theologians, spiritual directors, and those responsible for formation. We eagerly invite contributions from women and men involved with these Church ministries for our next issue of *Guest House Review*. [Please submit responses and analyses to Guest House Institute by Christmas 2008 for inclusion in our February issue.] It is our hope to spark dialogue on issues of trauma and addiction, and their impact on formation and the full human development of men and women religious, priests and seminarians.

In this issue physician Robert Anda for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) presents the currently available data from their Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study and discusses the connection between early trauma and addictive illness. The largest and most comprehensive study of its kind, ACE provides compelling information about the relationship of numerous health-threatening conditions with early and ongoing adverse experiences. Robert Grant, Ph.D. then presents two perspectives on the implications of this data, while providing a

model for understanding trauma and its connections to adult behavior. In particular he presents perspectives into both the implications of trauma experiences within religious and formational contexts, and the processes of healing from traumatic experiences. He challenges the Church to become more forthright in facing these issues. Rev. Richard Chiola, Director of Ongoing Formation of Priests for the Diocese of Springfield, IL, examines how issues of trauma play out in the lives of clergy and religious through a focus on sexual compulsions and addiction. Finally, we include a revised essay from noted psychiatrist, George E. Vaillant, regarding the “positive” emotions and their connections both to recovery from addiction and to the survival of humanity. Our **Updates** section contains reviews of several books that address this same set of issues. Dr. Robert Grant, psychologist and consultant to dioceses and religious congregations around the world, brings a wealth of experience and wisdom to these issues, and we are pleased to include a comprehensive review of his major publications to this forum. The controversial book by retired Bishop Geoffrey Robinson of Australia, *Confronting power and sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the spirit of Jesus* (2008), is also reviewed. Dr. Vaillant’s new book on the positive emotions, *Spiritual evolution: A scientific defense of faith* (2008), will be reviewed in our next issue.

We hope that these papers and reviews become a catalyst for dialogue. From our position as a treatment center in service to the Church and its ministers, we believe that these materials provide critical information that needs to be integrated into spiritual, religious, and priestly formation.

The opening quote for this *Word from the Editor...* comes from the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Pastores dabo vobis* (March 25, 1992). The careful thinking laid out in this Exhortation, the solemnity of its presentation following a world-wide Synod of Bishops, and its use as a major

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source for programs of priestly formation mark it as an historic and fundamental touchstone for the Church and the training of its ministers. Clearly, the formation of priests has been on the minds of Church leaders for some time.

However, the misconduct and scandals of recent years have taught us to be humble as we approach the topic of formation. This is not an exact science. This is a deeply human and challenging enterprise that – at least for some persons at some times – has (and had) its failures, and likely has persistent gaps even in its contemporary practice. The results have been pain, shame and trauma for many of those who have been victimized. The Church, both as the People

of God gathered around Eucharist and as an institution, has also suffered. What is clear, and likely to be lost or forgotten in the current climate, is that many of those priests and religious who victimized others were themselves wounded. And they, too, are our brothers and sisters! Guest House, and other similar institutions of service to the Church, deals directly with these wounded sisters and brothers.

It behooves us, then, and all who read the essays in this journal to invest our love and resources into investigating and re-visioning the formation models and practices we currently have. In order to do this we need to understand what we are dealing with, and we need to face it forthrightly. We need to have the faith and courage of Christ as we face the challenges ahead. And, we need the help of the human and clinical sciences to assist us.

Ask a simple (?) question: Suppose we had no organized system of formation currently. Imagine that we could start from scratch to design a system of formation, and a method of human, intellectual, moral, spiritual, and pastoral development to meet the demands of ministry in the 21st century? What if we could set aside all the current and competing systems of formation, and we could rely instead on the best knowledge from contemporary theology and the clinical and human sciences?

How would we construct an effective formation program or course of spiritual direction in a world where *one or two in every five persons* (and perhaps more) who come to us has experienced some form of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional) before the age of eighteen years old? In addition, we know that many, many of those persons have *multiple experiences of abuse or trauma* as part of their history. And, even more, we understand clearly that **John Paul II was correct in saying (above) that “Sometimes the very family situations in which priestly vocations arise will display not a few weaknesses and at times even serious failings.” That is, the “domestic church,” as Vatican II calls it, the “sanctuary of life” and the “centre and heart**

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of the civilization of love,” as John Paul II describes it, has for these persons become a hell of abuse!

Not really so “simple” a question, is it? And yet, it is one that must be asked and answered. *Guest House Review* is publishing the papers in this volume as a way to encourage a conversation. We invite members of the Church, especially those who deal with formation, spiritual direction, with the addicted and the victimized, to respond with essays of their own. We hope, too, that the essays here will encourage many of those who are in recovery from addiction, from abuse and

trauma, from troubled families – perhaps Guest House alumni or those who may need our services. You are not alone! And, we continue to learn from you.

As a help in the conversations that ensue, we list below a number of websites and links that indicate the Church's willingness to listen and learn. We hope our readers find them helpful.

This “special issue” of *Guest House Review* – only our second issue overall – addresses an important topic. In order to facilitate a large readership as well as wide dissemination and discussion, The Guest House Institute is also publishing this “special issue” as a stand-alone monograph available for purchase from Guest House. We encourage Church leadership, formation personnel, seminaries and houses of formation to obtain copies and discuss them broadly.

We look forward to hearing from you.

One final word....

The artwork that accompanies this issue of *Guest House Review* has been made available to us through the kindness of Christopher Edwards-Haines and the good auspices of the Gnibi Gallery at Southern Cross University, Australia. A brief biographical piece on Christopher and his work accompanies this Editor's Note on our **Cover** section. We are grateful to him for allowing us to use these pieces; his art has become a way of recovery for him in facing his own trauma.

We hope that giving his work some added publicity might encourage others.

Oliver J. Morgan, Ph.D.
Editor, *Guest House Review*

Important References

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

<http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/charter.shtml>

(USCCB). *The Nature and Scope of the Problem of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic*

Priests and Deacons in the United States. A Research Study Conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

<http://www.usccb.org/nrb/johnjaystudy/>

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), ***Towards Healing: Principles and Procedures in responding to Complaints of Abuse Against Personnel of the Catholic Church in Australia*** (20 September 2007).

<http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/documents/200711231131.pdf>

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See *Program for Priestly Formation, Fifth Edition* (2006). Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB),

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For a Catholic theological reflection on the family as a “school of love” and the theology of John Paul II, see Wendy Wright’s essay for *A Colloquium of Social Scientists and Theologians*, sponsored by the USCCB’s Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women & Youth. Oct 24-25, 2005. Available at <http://www.usccb.org/laity/marriage/Wright.pdf>