Priests Behaving Badly: The Problem of Scandal in the Early Modern Catholic Church[*]

Celeste McNamara

Dublin City University

ABSTRACT

In the twentieth century, many Catholic authorities prioritized the suppression of scandal over the punishment of criminal priests, and the Church now faces an even greater scandal as the extent of this coverup becomes known. While the specific situation may be new, the Church's aversion to scandal is not. This article connects the contemporary situation to the struggles faced by the Counter-Reformation Church regarding scandal. Applying sociological and anthropological theories of scandal, it argues that an institution whose authority is threatened (like the Church in both eras) will almost inevitably become scandal averse. Building on the work of Dyan Elliott using theology and legal history, it argues that in Reformation Europe, the Church had a particular need to suppress scandal, using methods Elliott demonstrates had been developed over centuries. Finally, using social historical methods it examines the disciplinary strategies of Gregorio Barbarigo, bishop of Padua from 1664-1697, chosen because of his unusually lengthy tenure, devotion to reform, extraordinarily detailed records, and sainthood. By examining over a thousand investigations undertaken by Barbarigo and analyzing his responses to a wide range of abuses, before presenting four case studies of repeat offenders, the article demonstrates both the rationale for and the weaknesses of the Catholic Church's preferred disciplinary strategy. From a historical perspective, this demonstrates that scandal and its management was yet another obstacle to early modern Catholic Reform. Connecting this to the contemporary Church can help us to better understand the complex motivations and moral ambiguities of institutions like the Catholic Church.

Twenty years ago, reporters at the Boston Globe uncovered extensive evidence of both abuse by Catholic priests and the Boston Archdiocese's failure to protect children.[1] Since the revelations of the Spotlight team, investigators have continued to unearth evidence of abuse perpetrated by Catholic priests and its concealment by Catholic authorities around the globe, primarily in the second half of the twentieth century.[2] The 2002 reporting by the Boston Globe was not the first contemporary case of child abuse, nor even the first major case in the United States; in 1984-85, a Louisiana priest, Gilbert Gauthe, was sentenced for abusing thirty-seven children in the 1970s and 1980s.[3] But the Globe's reporting made it clear not only that there were abusers in the priesthood but also that the Church hierarchy was well aware of their existence and had made concerted efforts to keep this information from the faithful and the public at large.[4] Their attempts to avoid scandal had, in the end, caused a much greater one, in which the institution's culpability was clear.

In the intervening decades, journalists and scholars alike have investigated the Catholic Church's sexual abuse crisis. Some have focused on the issue of the abuse itself, an important topic but one that I will not explore here.[5] Others have turned their attention to the actions of bishops, cardinals, and other officials who were alerted to abuse and chose to bury evidence and move priests around, endangering exponentially more children.[6] These researchers have typically assumed that deliberate suppression of clerical crimes is a problem of the contemporary church, and they suggest varied causes, from poorly trained bishops to clericalism and the stark divide between priests and laity. While these issues may well have contributed to the Church's handling of scandal in the twentieth century, the suppression of scandal goes back at least to the medieval Church, and that history helps to explain the Church's entrenched and systematic policies to keep clerical abuses hidden.[7]

The word “scandal” is multivalent. It derives from the Greek verb “scandalon” (σκάνδαλον), which means “to cause another to stumble.” This is the meaning most relevant in a religious context: a scandal, often caused by the transgressive behavior or speech of a member of the clergy or religious community, may cause others in that community to doubt their faith, leave the church, or assume that certain moral or doctrinal guidelines need not be followed.[8] But a scandal can also be a broader, secular phenomenon, one that causes public moral outrage.[9] In the latter sense, scandal may not cause a crisis of religious faith, but it has the potential to damage the reputation of those caught up in it. By implication, it can also damage the reputation of any institution they represent.[10] And it still has the potential to lead others down a morally questionable path, as a scandal can serve as a litmus test for social norms, perhaps encouraging others to violate them.[11] For the Catholic Church, all of this is a serious threat. Anyone’s sin, once publicly known, might lead others to sin too, and a priest’s sin bears an added threat to the Church’s reputation. Moreover, because a priest is expected both to represent and to promote the Church’s doctrine and moral codes, his sin is not only immoral but hypocritical as well, adding fuel to the scandalous fire.[12]

Scandal is an especially dangerous phenomenon for an institution facing a crisis of authority. An institution that is not under intense scrutiny may find it easier to weather a scandal or confine the reputational damage to the individual, rather than letting it infect the institution.[13] This is particularly true if the institution is willing to target a scapegoat quickly or remove the person responsible; we see this repeatedly with police departments that handle racist incidents by labeling one police officer a “bad apple” and removing that individual. The US Army has similarly handled scandals such as Abu Ghraib, avoiding significant damage to the institution as a

whole. But an institution already under intense scrutiny is in a much more perilous position. This is the situation the modern Church finds itself in, as it struggles in an increasingly secularized world. This, I would argue, is a key factor in the widespread attempts to cover up sexual abuse committed by priests in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, which have themselves become the root of an even greater scandal in the past two decades.

The Church was in a similarly precarious position in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation.[14] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Catholic Church was subject to significant anticlericalism and a shocking blow to its authority as Catholics across Europe left the Church for new Christian denominations. Although there was a brief period in the sixteenth century of some bishops clamping down on bad priests accused of concubinage, having children, poor pastoral care, and other abuses of laity, increasingly the institutional Church pushed for the defense of the institution (and consequently the clergy) rather than the protection of the laity.[15] In this atmosphere, the fear of scandal was heightened, and managing it became one more challenge bishops had to face, on top of jurisdictional conflicts, insufficient clergy, and lackluster resources. Though both the specific challenges and the specific clerical abuses were very different then and now, we can see comparable attempts to suppress scandals, regardless of their nature.

The Church's vulnerable position may help explain why officials attempted to avoid or suppress scandal, but it does not explain how it was possible. The ability to prevent scandal requires control over information and the process by which grievances are handled. Here the Catholic Church has long had an advantage. In the premodern period, the Church was largely self-regulating, and clergy were – at least in theory – protected from secular courts by clerical immunity.[16] Clerical crimes were

to be tried by Church courts, and the early modern Church fought hard to maintain that privilege. Although priests can now face criminal charges in secular courts, the Catholic Church has still made every attempt to resist secular interference, not only suppressing evidence of crimes committed by priests but also obstructing Catholics' ability to come forward through particular oaths of secrecy.[17] Thus while the state does sometimes possess jurisdiction, it is often not capable of asserting it effectively.

By understanding how and why the early modern Church attempted to suppress scandal, we can better understand the decisions made by the contemporary Church. Scandal's ability to undermine not only ecclesiastical authority but also the faith of people otherwise untouched by the root cause makes it a real and potent threat to the Church. In dealing with sins and crimes that may give rise to scandal, the Church has often chosen to sacrifice the few in order to save the collective, reckoning this to be the least damaging path. There is no comparison between the scandalous behaviors of early modern clergy treated here, which largely consist of immoral actions and concubinage and rarely of violent crimes, and the horrific sexual abuses of children of which contemporary priests have been accused.[18] Yet the early modern and the contemporary Church, while operating in very different contexts and handling vastly different offenses, followed similar damaging patterns. A clearer understanding of the decisions made by early modern ecclesiastical leaders helps to challenge facile explanations of contemporary problems and pushes us to think more about the complex motivations and moral ambiguities of institutions like the Church.

The Fear of Scandal in the Medieval and Early Modern Church

As historian Dyan Elliot has argued, the fear of and concern about scandal is embedded deep in Christian theology, beginning with the New Testament. At least by

the Middle Ages, "scandal-averse policies … existed at every conceivable level of the ecclesiastical hierarchy."[19] According to the Gospel of Matthew, Christ had harsh words for anyone who caused scandal: "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!"[20] In this passage, the "stumbling block" refers to something that causes another to sin; in other words, Christ rails against those who cause scandal. The fear of scandal is made more serious by I Corinthians, wherein Paul makes clear that sin is not even required for a scandal to arise: it is enough that someone thinks a sin has occurred. Addressing the issue of food sacrificed to idols, Paul acknowledges that the faithful know there are no idols, and thus eating the food offered to the idols is neither good nor bad. However, they should still not partake: "But take care that this liberty of yours [eating the food] does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if others see you, who possess knowledge [faith in Christianity], eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed."[21] Christians, therefore, must be vigilant not only against sinful behavior but also against any behavior that might *appear* sinful to another.[22] Even an innocent act that could be misconstrued constituted a danger to another's faith.

Ideally, of course, scandal would simply be avoided. But when it does happen, it must be addressed. Scandal can be seen as a social drama and a ritual, one in which norms or boundaries are transgressed, tested, and reasserted.[23] The community, in other words, witnesses or learns of the actions of one of its own and decides whether a

transgression has occurred. If there is a transgression and at least some members of the community publicly express their disapproval, scandal ensues, and the social force of scandal makes the community's boundaries clear to all. In the Catholic Church, the sacrament of penance offers a way to complete the ritual process.[24] In the early Church, penance was a public affair. For serious sins, the repentant sinner was required to make public restitution and apology, as when Henry II had to undertake a barefoot pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas à Becket, assassinated by Henry's knights. In this way, the transgressor was, in anthropological terms, in a liminal space, reintegrated into the community only after the completion of the penitential ritual.[25]

Even with the ritual reintegration, however, public penance was not considered sufficient to restore the reputation of a priest. This put the Church in a difficult position: priests caught in a heinous sin had to be deposed, and no one who had performed public penance was eligible for ordination.[26] Although in theory these rules were meant to ensure that clerical behavior was generally above reproach, it is entirely possible that they resulted in sins being covered up and not atoned for to avoid deposing active priests or reducing the pool of candidates for the clergy. Nor did this possibility escape the notice of laity, who may have witnessed their own priests' misbehavior themselves. In the fourth through sixth centuries, some Christians in Carthage broke from the Church over this issue, arguing that sacraments administered by sinful clergy were invalid.[27] These claims were refuted by St. Augustine of Hippo, who asserted that the sacraments are given by God through the priest, and thus the priest's sins have no bearing on the efficacy of the sacraments. While this theoretically solved the problem of lay fear and resistance, it also confirmed for many faithful, as Elliott has noted, "the possibility of the priest as a secret sinner, moldering in his own private hell yet with his priestly power intact."[28]

Beginning in sixth-century Ireland, Wales, and Cornwall, public penance started to give way to private confession, which only made it easier for sins to be concealed.[29] Though tied to a canonical need to defend the *fama* or reputation of the accused, it also served to prevent scandal, and Elliott argues that the development of private penance "was intrinsically bound up with the sins of the clergy and the need to create a forum where the fallen cleric could atone for his sins in secret."[30] Some medieval clergy explicitly justified the suppression of scandal: the scholastic philosopher and theologian Henry of Ghent (c.1217-1293), for example, argued that the good of the sinner rather than the public should inform how a superior handled problems among his subordinates. He even suggested that a priest who confessed he was corrupting his parishioners should be moved, but not so fast as to arouse suspicion; likewise, the new community to which he was sent must not be warned.[31] Theologians also continued to make this point in the early modern period: the Dominican friar Luis de Granada (1505-1588), for instance, wrote that causing scandal was the worst of all sins, for "other sins, even if great, harm only he who commits them; but this harms not only he who causes it but also others, who leave the true path."[32] Scandal must thus be prevented whenever possible. The same arguments were also presented in some of the medieval penitentials Elliott explored, which assigned far lesser penalties to priests whose sins remained unknown to the laity.[33]

Similar ideas were inscribed into canon law; Gratian's *Decretum* explicitly created a policy of suppressing scandal (which remains in modern canon law). At the same time, ecclesiastical authorities reserved jurisdiction over clerical crimes to their own courts.[34] The *Decretum* notes that those whose sins remained hidden could simply make a secret confession to a priest, perform their assigned penance, and have their clerical status preserved.[35] Moreover, their penance should be done privately, not

publicly as was sometimes required of laity, lest "the flock of the faithful thus suffer scandal."[36] This may avoid scandal, but in many cases it also leads to high rates of recidivism and increased victimization of vulnerable members of the Church.

As Elliott convincingly demonstrates, the structures and justifications for suppressing scandal were fully developed in the medieval period, ready to be used when needed. They were needed soon. The issue of what to do with errant clergy during the Catholic Reformation was particularly fraught, creating the kind of crisis that called for minimizing scandal. In 1545, ecclesiastical authorities met in the city of Trent to discuss possible reforms and determine a path forward, responding to the crisis of the Reformation. The Council of Trent, which finally concluded in 1563, reaffirmed the validity of Catholic doctrine but acknowledged the need for institutional reforms, which they called on bishops to oversee. The conciliar decrees called for the deposition of clergy in certain instances, such as recalcitrant concubinage, but only after the priest was punished more discreetly with warnings, fines, deprivation of benefice in part and in whole, and temporary suspension.[37] Trent also reconfirmed the need for public penance for public sin, but the reformers agreed that private offenses could be atoned secretly and left leeway for bishops to commute public penances to private ones.[38] At least some reformers favored stricter policies towards expelling bad priests: Alessandro Campeggi of Bologna argued that "if we take pains to expel the wicked and ignorant priests, we can easily restore Christianity to its old splendor and dignity; if not, we will waste our energy in devising regulations and statutes."[39] In other words, the reformers recognized that sometimes removing a priest was necessary, but in most cases a misbehaving cleric must be given multiple chances to reform, to avoid both scandal and unmanned posts.

In the late sixteenth century, we can see the results of this tension between the need to excise the truly problematic priests and the need to tread lightly to keep churches staffed and avoid scandal. Some bishops of this era chose a strict approach, such as Carlo Borromeo, archbishop of Milan (abp. 1564-1584), who restored the use of public penance (though primarily for the laity) and did not hesitate to excommunicate errant priests for offenses like concubinage.[40] Another example was Agostino Valiero, who suspended a large number of Istrian priests in 1580 for having concubines and children.[41] This sort of approach raised complications, however; Borromeo was resented for his stringency and faced censure from the Spanish government, which told him he was defaming Milan in the public sphere with his draconian disciplinary practices. [42] His protégé Nicolò Ormaneto, bishop of Padua from 1570 to 1577, faced similar ire from the Venetian Senate for suspending too many priests. They told him it was better for parishes to have priests "of mediocre erudition than none at all."[43]

By the end of the sixteenth century, the Church itself was pushing back against stringent policies; many bishops found their sentences overturned on appeal, when misbehaving priests brought their cases to papal authorities.[44] A similar message came through in manuals for pastoral visitations. Several made very clear that trials against priests could not make public a secret crime or abuse, lest they cause aversion toward clergy among the laity.[45] A Neapolitan manual from 1602 went even further, noting that any clerical abuses that had not created scandal, infamy, or prejudice should not be publicly punished.[46] Bishops of the end of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries seem to have bowed to institutional pressure and followed the latest manuals, adopting a more merciful and fraternal approach to clerical abuses and avoiding rigorous and public penalties. Whether intentionally or not, the methods

favored by François de Sales in Geneva (bp. 1602-1622), Carlo Bascape in Novara (bp. 1593-1615), and Gregorio Barbarigo in Padua (bp. 1664-1697), among others, did little to discourage priests from their sinful actions.[47] At least in Barbarigo's case, this method was tied to a clear concern for the effects of scandal. In a moment when the Church was attempting to reassert its authority and undertake meaningful reform, scandals caused by the clergy were considered more dangerous than the sins that gave rise to them.

Scandal in the Diocese of Padua

Cardinal Bishop Gregorio Barbarigo was bishop of Padua from 1664 to1697. He was beatified in 1727 and canonized in 1960 for his heroic attempts to reform the Catholic Church.[48] A dedicated reformer, he was a champion of clerical and lay education and took his pastoral duties very seriously, spending much longer in each parish he visited than his contemporaries and predecessors both in Padua and elsewhere in Catholic Europe typically did.[49] He even made a point of speaking to both laity and clergy in each village to solve whatever problems he found. He was also a strong defender of episcopal privilege and power, working to prevent interference by the Venetian state and the papacy to preserve his own authority.[50] And yet, his method for dealing with errant clergy was prudent, cautious, and fraternal, a choice that historian Pierantonio Gios argued was "born of the desire to save the esteem and reputation [of the priest] before the people, wherever it was possible and practical."[51] His methods were also noted in his beatification process, praised as evidence of the heroic virtue of mercy, while the negative effects of abusive or ineffective clergy on laypeople were ignored.[52]

Barbarigo's dedication, long tenure, and copious record keeping make his episcopacy a valuable one for historians. During his visitations, Barbarigo dealt with more than a thousand instances of clerical misbehavior committed by somewhere between a third and a half of his six to seven hundred rural priests. Understanding the scope and range of offenses is crucial for contextualizing his disciplinary approach. A small number of priests committing mostly minor offenses would make Barbarigo's response much more justifiable, but unfortunately for the laity of rural Padua many of the sins Barbarigo uncovered were malignant and widespread.[53] An image of the diocese itself is also necessary: it was one of the wealthiest in the Italian peninsula. Individual priests were generally financially stable as well, with a large majority receiving more than was presumed necessary for a "decorous life,"[54] so financial constraints were rarely an excuse for either ineffective disciplining or poor comportment. Additionally, because Barbarigo's episcopacy occurred relatively late in the period of Catholic Reform according to most traditional historiography, we see the calmer and more considered plans of a reformer whose project was to restore and renew his Church, not the potentially panicked and rushed first strategies of reformers reacting to a schism as it unfolded. Barbarigo was a skilled administrator with a degree in civil and canon law who was also deeply devout. In his three decades in Padua, he struggled to reconcile the problem of clerical sin with the threat of scandal. It was an unsolvable conundrum, but in the end he prioritized what he considered the larger threat: scandal.

Barbarigo's inquisitions and letters consistently demonstrate a concern for scandal that often overshadowed his worry about clerical sins. In his understanding, a priest's sins tarnished his soul, but scandal created by a priest could damage the faith of the quarter of a million souls in the diocese. His first priority was simply to avoid

scandal in the first place: his goal was the eradication of all sins, and he warned his clergy as well to avoid anything that might give rise to scandal, even if it was not actually sinful.[55] To this end, he was also extremely cautious in his own life to avoid any hint of scandal, setting an example for his priests. His fear of causing scandal meant, for example, that laundresses were not permitted to enter the episcopal palace to collect the washing, and Barbarigo refused to be in a room or be a guest in a house where his only companion or host was a woman.[56] He had clearly taken St. Paul's instructions to the Corinthians to heart. Beyond the spotless example he hoped to provide his clergy, he issued letters and decrees, established clerical organizations, developed seminary curricula, held synods, and spoke directly to clergy during his pastoral visitations about the need to behave appropriately, take their responsibilities seriously, and not lead their flocks astray.[57]

His constant admonitions for priests to live a life free of sin were not always effective, however, and many priests committed sins ranging from the minor to the truly shocking, scandalizing laypeople in the process. When this happened, Barbarigo's first concern was to minimize the damage wrought by scandal. Many sins came to light in his interviews of laypeople, who clearly understood that the word "scandal" was a trigger for the bishop and thus repeated it incessantly to get his attention.[58] With certain offenses, it is easy to accept that people were legitimately scandalized by their priest's behavior and lost faith in his ability to serve them. Priests who were accused of murder, rape, procuring abortion, or even the less violent or shocking offenses of keeping a troublesome woman, having lots of children, or drunkenly abusing the people may well have caused moral outrage or even led the laity to doubt the power or authority of the priest and perhaps the Church.[59] In a few of the more severe cases, the laity not only mentioned the concept of scandal but also

told Barbarigo they doubted the efficacy of the sacraments, particularly penance, in the hands of a scandalous and sinful priest. They questioned the Catholic dogma of *ex opere operato*, just as Donatist heretics had. In the village of Pontelongo, for example, the sacristan told Barbarigo their priest had a disreputable woman and several daughters, adding that "there are many who fear to confess to the vicar fearing that the confession is not valid because he is so scandalous."[60]

With other offenses of lesser severity, it is perhaps less likely that parishioners were truly scandalized, rather than simply being displeased with their priest's behavior. Their gossip about the priest may constitute a scandal by a more secular definition, but likely did not threaten their faith.[61] When priests wore short vestments, had long hair, or engaged in business on the side, laypeople often gossiped and did not hesitate to complain to Barbarigo.[62] Their claims that they were scandalized may indicate they had internalized the Church's idea that the clergy should be a separate state, and thus felt outrage when their priests did not operate within these relatively new social norms. Certainly many of the abuses or sins they complained about were behaviours commonly accepted a century earlier, such as concubinage.[63] By the seventeenth century, however, many Paduans complained of the scandals caused by clerical concubines, suggesting that they may have finally accepted the expectation of clerical chastity.[64] It seems less likely that they were accordingly tempted to commit sins themselves, however, or to doubt the teachings or ceremonies of the Church. Such claims may also simply indicate a savvy understanding that this particular framing of their complaints would guarantee the bishop's intervention.

As Barbarigo made his way around his diocese, visiting more than three hundred parishes, he investigated the state of parochial communities and the behavior of roughly seven hundred rural priests. A sizeable minority, between one-third and

one-half, committed a wide variety of sins that I have divided into two broad categories: negligence of duty and moral failings. Those in the first category ranged from minor negligence of catechism and devotional activities – such as failing to teach every Sunday or not leading rosary devotions – to more serious issues, such as abusing the laity during mass. One priest, for example, preached "against the community with very injurious words and contempt … calling them Hebrews, Thieves, and Heretics," [65] while another called his parishioners "a herd of asses, sacks of lice, dirty peasants, and similar things" from the pulpit.[66]

In the second category of sins, the most common problem was with improper sexual conduct with women; more than two hundred complaints dealt with the issue of concubinage or suspected struggles with chastity. Other priests had problematic leisure activities, including attending balls, gambling, and excessive drinking. One drunk priest wandered through town in the middle of the night shouting obscenities and disturbing the peace; another liked to call his parishioners buggers (*buzzerone*) whenever he was drunk, which often coincided with times when he was called to perform the sacraments.[67] And finally, there were problems with violence: one priest was accused of murder, two of threatening violence outright, one of traveling about with armed thugs, one of attempted rape, and another of repeated rape, among other examples.[68] In spite of the shock and scandal these crimes must have engendered among the laity, these priests were allowed to remain in their parishes and continue to serve, without facing appropriate punishment lest this make their crimes known to the wider public.

Barbarigo's responses to the abuses reported by laypeople and other priests were clearly intended to limit scandal as much as possible, prioritizing the reputation of clergy and the Church over the quality of pastoral care provided to the local

community. In most of these cases, however, the scandal had already affected the individual parish. Whereas in most modern sexual abuse cases knowledge of the crime was limited, allowing the priest to be moved to another parish, here the strategy was one of containment. There was little Barbarigo could do (once the sin was known to the parish) to prevent the local scandal, but at the village level it was possible that the priest, as a member of the community, might be given some benefit of the doubt. There was also little that Barbarigo could do – beyond removing the priest – that would help repair the damage already done, and he seems not to have considered how to repair the local harm. At the very least, Barbarigo may have hoped that the scandal would only damage the priest's reputation, rather than ballooning into a threat to the reputation of the clergy as a whole. Should the scandal spread to other villages that lacked a personal connection to the priest, however, that risk would increase dramatically.[69] This gave rise to quiet punishments that would not feed rumors. Barbarigo also tried to investigate potential causes for scandal quietly; in one letter to one of his vicars, he wrote that he had heard about a parish priest who "practiced licentiously" with a young woman. Because he "desire[d] to avoid the scandals that could grow [from this] … [he wanted] a secret and diligent report of the facts" and also wanted to know about "the concept, and rumors" held by the people about this affair.[70] Clearly, the extent of the laity's knowledge and their opinions about the situation would color how Barbarigo handled this priest.[71]

Although Barbarigo's reactions to these clerical abuses are not always preserved in his visitation records, the several hundred responses that remain are overwhelmingly quiet reactions meant to contain scandal.[72] In this, he was in line with the practices of many other bishops, especially in the Italian peninsula.[73] Of the hundreds of inquisitions Barbarigo conducted into clerical behavior, the offense and

the bishop's response are recorded in about four hundred cases, in which 436 punishments were levied for 770 offenses (table 1; many priests committed more than one offense, and Barbarigo sometimes imposed multiple penalties). When faced with clerical sin and abuses, in nearly half of the cases Barbarigo began with a private warning or admonition intended to make the priest want to mend his ways.[74] Priests were most often warned for neglecting catechism or parochial duties in general, inappropriate dress, or scandalous relationships with women.[75] In these cases, Barbarigo typically said to the priest "we warn you" to correct whatever faults he had discovered, sometimes adding that his warnings were "paternal" in nature.[76] In another roughly 18 percent of cases, Barbarigo opted for a strongly worded demand that priests amend their behavior.[77] Priests who had concubines, neglected catechism or the parish, dressed inappropriately, or failed to perform required services might find themselves "exhorted" to correct their faults.[78] On one occasion, Barbarigo decided not to punish a priest for his inability to remain chaste, and instead prayed for the man to gain the strength to reform himself.[79]

For more serious examples of negligence, Barbarigo might levy fines, another discreet way of punishing misbehaving priests.[80] The fines had an added utility in some cases: if the priest's negligence had left the parish in bad shape, the fine could be applied to the parish church's fabric fund.[81] In some instances, Barbarigo added a threat to his warning or order, promising fines, criminal punishment (from his court), banishment, or even suspension from divine services if priests failed to fall in line; these threats together account for about 17 percent of Barbarigo's reactions.[82] He most commonly threatened fines for neglecting the parish or catechism; ecclesiastical criminal trials for concubinage; banishment for a range of offenses committed by foreign priests; and suspension for concubinage or neglect of parish or catechism.

Barbarigo did sometimes choose more public measures, ordering priests in twenty-one cases to pay for a temporary replacement and go to Padua to perform the Jesuit Spiritual Exercises, to engage in spiritual reflection, or to spend a period of time living under episcopal supervision and example in the episcopal palace.[83] The Spiritual Exercises were required most commonly for priests found neglecting their parishes, but also for cases of gambling, inappropriate relationships with women, and neglecting catechism. Episcopal supervision, on the other hand, was most commonly ordered for general bad behavior, non-residency, neglecting the parish, and inappropriate dress. As far as public punishments went, however, these were also fairly discreet. In ten cases, Barbarigo ordered the local vicar, part of his bureaucratic network, to keep a closer eye on the offending priest, typically when he was neglecting his duties to his parish or skipping the monthly congregations that each vicarage held to provide a sort of continuing education to rural clergy.[84] As supervision of priests was part of the vicar's normal task, a slight increase in surveillance may not have aroused suspicion.

For the truly egregious, Barbarigo did have other tools at his disposal, though he used them very rarely.[85] On six occasions he suspended a priest's license to hear confessions; this punishment was levied for parochial neglect, fighting, unlicensed exorcisms, secular business, concubinage, bad behavior, gambling, and charging for services.[86] He also banished seven priests, all foreigners, who were found guilty of celebrating Mass without a license, behaving badly, neglect, drinking, gambling, and charging for services.[87] Finally, he suspended twenty-four priests for a total of fifty-one abuses, including neglect, bad behavior, not saying required masses, concubinage, excessive drinking, non-residency, unauthorized use of the parish house, neglecting catechism, secular business, failing to study, inappropriate dress, violence, secular

pleasures, gambling, blasphemy, celebrating without a license, and procuring abortion, all serious offenses for a priest.[88] While he did resort to suspension in these cases, he stopped short of deposing even the worst among his offenders. His suspensions were also relatively short: most lasted a month or less and were minimally disruptive.

These last few options were harder to hide and thus raised the specter of scandal, which might cause laypeople to doubt their priests, the Church, and even God. Even if we count all the more public punishments together, they account for almost 16 percent of responses.[89] In other words, in the overwhelming majority of cases, Barbarigo chose to respond to sinful priests in a quiet, private way that limited the risk of scandal. At the same time, he clearly hoped that these brief episodes of liminality, in which the priest was temporarily removed from his post or lost certain privileges, might allow for both reform and reintegration into the parish community.

Looking at Barbarigo's responses by the offense, rather than the punishment, further demonstrates that his overarching concern was one of image (table 2). If the minimal and private punishments he levied were primarily for relatively minor sins, one could argue that his strategy was informed by mercy and an understanding of the frailty of human nature. But unfortunately for the laity in many villages, this was not the case. Barbarigo's responses to about thirty-four different categories of offenses are recorded. Most could and likely did disrupt parochial life. Some priests failed to perform their duties well, leaving parishioners without necessary services, sacraments, and pastoral care; these account for about 44 percent of the offenses to which Barbarigo responded. Many also engaged in conduct unbecoming a priest, whether failing to remain chaste, drinking too much, gambling, or otherwise misbehaving, accounting for about 42 percent of the problems Barbarigo addressed.[90]

In other words, 86 percent of the offenses to which Barbarigo responded had the potential to deeply disrupt parish life, yet he responded strongly only in about 16 percent of cases.[91]

A final way to examine both the rationale for and the inefficacy of Barbarigo's attempts to limit scandal is to consider repeat offenders. Barbarigo's inquisitions do not always record the priest's full name, and in some cases priests have very similar names. It is therefore not always clear if the same man changed parishes or if the seeming repetition of a name is mere coincidence. But of the 376 priests whose full names are given, sixty were repeat offenders. Forty-two men were cited twice, nine were investigated three times, and one was examined a stunning five times. From Barbarigo's response to eight others, it is clear that they had been previously cited for their offenses, but the record of the previous case has been lost. Looking at a few of these cases makes it clear that Barbarigo's strategies were ineffective, at least for some of his worst priests. In most cases he escalated his response excruciatingly slowly; but even with the ten priests who were cited three or more times, he suspended only four and threatened to suspend just two more. The four priests who were suspended after being cited three to five times were deeply problematic men who caused serious issues in their parishes, most for decades. Cases like these make it harder to justify the bishop's attempts to minimize scandal and difficult to avoid laying some of the blame for recidivism at his feet; his cautious responses created a space for the repetition and escalation of clerical sins. Ironically, then, Barbarigo's fear of broad-based scandal may have exacerbated parish-level scandals, as truly bad priests were left in place and continued their egregious behavior for decades.

Priests Behaving Badly

A closer look at some of the most egregious cases Barbarigo faced clearly demonstrates both the priority he gave to suppressing scandal and the deleterious effects of his decisions. Lorenzo Munari, Carlo Rodriguez, Francesco Balzan, and Pietro Zanone, the priests investigated three to five times before their eventual suspension, committed a dazzling range of offenses, and yet in each case it took Barbarigo years of hearing complaints and gossip from parishioners to take decisive action. At best, in these years the parishes were poorly served; at worst, laypeople were left traumatized.

Gregorio Barbarigo first encountered Lorenzo Munari in 1668, when the latter was a young chaplain. Munari was ignorant and scandalous, notorious for blaspheming and for refusing to adopt the cassock and tonsure, the required dress and hair style for priests. Barbarigo temporarily suspended him and made his reinstatement contingent upon learning the mass and deciding to "live religiously, honestly, and ecclesiastically."[92] Seven years later, the two men met again; by this time Munari had risen in the ranks and was serving as the parish priest of a nearby village. According to many of his parishioners, he behaved indecorously and absurdly during mass and other religious rituals; evidently, he had not learned from his earlier suspension.[93] Barbarigo's response to this visit is not recorded, but thirteen years later, when the bishop returned to the village in 1688, he discovered that Munari's behavior had deteriorated further. In addition to his antics during mass, he was in the habit of saying vulgar and obscene things, even in the presence of women. He reportedly also spent some of his free time working in the fields "like a peasant," in a state of relative undress.[94] Most shockingly, he had exposed himself to a bride and asked her to touch him.[95] Witnesses described him as "extremely dirty, scandalous of words, speaking always of infamous and dishonest things" and said he "always had

his mouth full of carnal filth [which he speaks] as much before married women as young virgins."[96] He had also on at least one occasion suggested to a parishioner that anal intercourse was an effective form of contraception.[97]

After listening to several villagers discuss their priest's shortcomings, the bishop summoned Munari to defend himself. He admitted to saying "some dirty words" such as "prick, balls, son of a whore, and other similar things," mostly when he had been drinking.[98] Witnesses had also mentioned his use of the word "bugger"; when Barbarigo asked him about this, he denied having used that particular epithet. He similarly denied having "raised a woman's dress in order to look at her genitals."[99] The bishop demanded that he tell the truth, as he believed the priest had once "over the altar lifted his sister-in-law's dress in the presence of other people and asked her if her vagina was dripping [bleeding?] to the horror of those who were present."[100] Munari, caught in the lie, admitted he had done this but insisted it was a joke; similarly, his offensive language in the presence of women was another form of joking, never done with malice. He then tried to marshal St. Augustine to his cause, arguing that for an action to be sinful it must be done voluntarily with evil intentions.[101] Unamused, Barbarigo responded with St. Bernard, telling Munari that "trifles in the mouths of laity are trifles, but in the mouths of priests they are blasphemy."[102]

In the end, Barbarigo decided to suspend Munari.[103] His suspension was lifted only two weeks later, but his full reinstatement was conditional on him completing eight days of Spiritual Exercises under the supervision of the Jesuits at the Paduan seminary. He was back to his parochial position approximately six weeks after Barbarigo's visit.[104] Clearly his parish was already scandalized, but perhaps with this minimal disruption Barbarigo hoped to strike a balance between the risk that the tale

of Munari's escapades would spread and the desire to force him to modify his behavior.

Barbarigo seems to have adopted a similar strategy in dealing with another recidivist priest, Carlo Rodriguez, who earned the distinction of being investigated five times between 1666 and 1694. In 1666, Barbarigo visited the village of Sant'Eulalia and found Rodriguez to be negligent and morally questionable. He sometimes skipped mass or other services despite his clear obligations as parish priest. When he did come to mass, he often abused his rural parishioners from the pulpit. He rarely preached, and his parishioners said he was lazy. He was reluctant to hear confessions or attend to the sick, and, tragically, two people had died without last rites. He also had a *malandrina* (bad woman) in his house, and the parishioners' sense that he was inappropriately involved with her seemed to spill over into a distrust of the priest around their daughters. Several laypeople expressed concern that Rodriguez did not find female teachers for the girls' catechism classes and chose instead to teach them himself.[105]

Things did not improve over the next several years. In 1669 Barbarigo returned, and this time Rodriguez was causing greater scandal. He now had an eighteen-year-old woman in his house, and people gossiped that she was his sexual partner.[106] He dressed inappropriately, wearing vestments that did not cover his knees and flaunting colorful hose, which the witness said "indicated a soul dedicated to vanity."[107] He also went around town with armed thugs (*bravi*) who threatened the parishioners.[108] One parishioner told Barbarigo that "it would be a holy and excellent result [of the visitation] if this our parish priest were to be removed from this church and sent elsewhere" because he was not serving the village's needs.[109] But he was not removed, and he was found negligent yet again in 1675: his parish was in disarray,

and he was neither teaching catechism nor preaching. At this point Barbarigo gave him a “grave warning” to improve his performance.[110]

Twelve years later, the situation had deteriorated further. Rodriguez was still negligent and avoiding catechism, but now he was also providing a house for an unwed mother whom he visited frequently, and whose twelve-year-old son was presumed to be his. He was also now involved in the business of selling wheat, and parishioners complained that he was cheating them in business deals.[111] Finally, because he traveled for his mercantile interests, a few more people had died without receiving last rites.[112] Although the visitation record does not contain a response, a later record notes that Rodriguez was fined in 1688.[113]

Barbarigo made a final visit to the town in 1694 and found that Rodriguez was still involved in business and still had a woman in his house. Barbarigo finally suspended Rodriguez and threatened him with jail, privation of benefice, and other penalties should he have any further contact with the woman currently residing in the parish house.[114] Although it is clear that Barbarigo’s strategies had no effect on Rodriguez, they were mentioned by several witnesses in the bishop’s beatification trial. Witnesses described Rodriguez as “very arrogant and proud,” a foil to Barbarigo’s extraordinary “softness and sweetness.”[115] They added that at one point the bishop had ordered Rodriguez to perform the Spiritual Exercises and did in fact finally have to imprison him briefly.[116] Although this was about as strong a response as Barbarigo ever gave, it took nearly thirty years of continual struggle with Rodriguez for him to arrive at that point.

In contrast to the lengthy histories with Munari and Rodriguez, the problems created by Francesco Balzan unfolded over just a few years, though one suspects the interaction was cut short by Barbarigo’s death, not Balzan’s rehabilitation. The two

men met in 1695, at which point Balzan had been in the parish of Grisignano for about six years. Barbarigo began speaking with another priest who served in a secondary church in the parish, who hinted that things might not all be well. Balzan had several unauthorized relatives in his house, including his sister, sister-in-law, and two nieces, and there were some complaints in the village about him because he was reluctant to administer the sacraments promptly in cases of emergency. This priest had also heard, though he could not confirm, that one man had died without the sacraments.[117]

The next day, Barbarigo began interviewing parishioners. One confirmed that the priest "many times let souls die without wanting to administer the sacraments."[118] Another had been at the bedside of one of these poor parishioners and told Barbarigo that he had gone three times in three days to beg the priest to come, and "always he said now I cannot, I will come, I will come."[119] On the third day he begged the priest to come "for the love of God" and Balzan replied that "now he could not because of a certain thing he had to do."[120] The man died that evening, without receiving extreme unction. This witness also added that there were rumors about women, because many of them came and went from his house "with some scandal."[121] Finally, he added, the priest managed some lands for the prominent Grimani family, an activity that sometimes caused him to be away from the village at inopportune times. Another villager echoed the complaint about Balzan's refusal to tend the sick, noting that his own mother had died without last rites due to the priest's negligence. This same man added that Balzan had also refused to bury his infant daughter because the man could not afford to pay anything, and he had been forced to travel to another village to beg another priest to perform this act of charity.[122] Barbarigo responded by ordering

Balzan to report to the seminary of Padua and complete eight days of Spiritual Exercises.[123]

Barbarigo met Balzan again in January of 1697, in the context of a trial in the episcopal palace. Somehow Barbarigo had been made aware that Balzan had deflowered Domenica Bortolamiele and pursued an ongoing sexual relationship with her, and that she had gotten pregnant. Because this whole situation "smelled of scandal," Balzan was warned, under penalty of suspension from divine services and other penalties up to and inclusive of imprisonment, "not to dare in the future to admit Domenica Bortolamiele in the parish house, or in any other familiar location."[124] He faced no other penalty at this point. Six months later, however, Barbarigo was again in Balzan's village, and he discovered that two young women were often in the parish house, "to the greatest detriment of their good names and reputations," as the people suspected sexual impropriety.[125] In addition, he learned that the priest had arranged for Domenica Bortolamiele to have an abortion of "an animated fetus," indicating a termination after quickening.[126] For these and his other offenses, which "gave birth to scandal in the entire village," Balzan was finally suspended.[127] As Barbarigo died rather suddenly thirteen days later, it is unclear whether Balzan even observed his suspension, but in any case he had finally gone too far for the bishop to ignore his sins.

The final repeat offender was perhaps the most problematic for Barbarigo, who struggled to control him for twenty years. When Barbarigo first encountered Pietro Zanone in the village of Alano in 1674, it seemed that he was a bit neglectful, as the church was in disarray, but there was a more serious problem afoot. Barbarigo discovered that the locals thought they had a miraculous shrine and that Zanone had been encouraging this belief. Though Barbarigo does not seem to have suspected

Zanone in 1674 of intentionally misleading his people, there are suggestions that the priest was the originator of the rumors of miracles, rather than just their collector. Many of the laypeople told Barbarigo that they had heard the stories of the image's miracles from the priest, and he was definitely the source of the most significant one, the temporary resurrection and speedy baptism of a stillborn infant.[128] Barbarigo determined that the image was not miraculous and ordered Zanone to turn over all the alms collected to the local confraternities, who would oversee their charitable distribution.[129]

When Barbarigo returned to the village in 1686, he discovered that Zanone had found a new project: he had built an unlicensed addition onto the parish church, which he had turned into a so-called convent.[130] Inside were nine women who called themselves nuns, but that was where the resemblance to a religious house began and ended. The "nuns" took no vows, their only religious guidance came from Zanone, and cloister was unenforced (and indeed unenforceable, given how the structure was built, with large windows opening into the parish church, several entrances, and a door directly into the sacristy). The women spent most of their time singing and teaching music lessons, and most of their students were young men in their twenties.[131] No part of this was acceptable to the bishop, but to make matters worse Zanone had planned ahead and had his "convent" legally declared a lay space, which allowed him to bar the bishop from entering it.[132] Barbarigo thus had to suspend his visit for over a year until he could get permission from the Venetian *podestà*, or governor, to enter the structure. When he was finally able to enter the convent, he threatened Zanone with suspension if he did not avoid contact with the women and asked the Venetian Senate to send the women home.[133]

Though this should have ended the saga, when Barbarigo returned in 1694 he found that while the women had moved back to their homes, several had begun spending a few nights a week in the parish house. The local Augustinian hermit testified that he had seen one of the women exiting the house and knew she had slept there "because she came down the stairs dressing herself and adjusting her braids."[134] Several villagers described these women as "those who were in the priest's harem or convent," adding that "the people marvel that your Excellency who is such a holy man does not remedy such scandals"—invoking the key word.[135] As Zanone had clearly ignored Barbarigo's previous threat of suspension, the bishop informed him that he was already suspended *ipso facto* and thus had been celebrating mass under impediment for some time.[136] Zanone's suspension lasted longer than most, partly due to his attempts to get it lifted. He first approached the Venetian government, who told him it was not their concern. Next, he begged the hermit to appeal to Barbarigo on his behalf, only to be disappointed when the hermit returned from his journey with a demand from the bishop that Zanone appear personally in Padua. Zanone finally trudged to Padua, where Barbarigo commanded him to spend several months living in the episcopal palace.[137] It is not clear exactly when he was reinstated, but in 1698 when a census was taken for the new bishop he was back in his parish, and it is unlikely that he was away for more than a year.[138] In yet another case, then, even when the issue of scandal had so clearly affected the local community, preventing knowledge of the scandal from spreading further was more important than removing a clearly unfit priest.

In all four of these cases (as in many others) we can see Barbarigo struggling to handle problematic priests, even as it became clearer that their offenses were not unique occurrences and that his previous engagements had not borne fruit. His anger

and disgust with these priests' behavior is often palpable in his decrees, yet he chose not to remove them. Instead, he assessed relatively minor, discreet penalties, hoping to reform them and reintegrate them into the community. The extent to which these priests created local scandals that might damage the faith of their parishioners is debatable, though it is not hard to imagine laypeople losing respect for and faith in their priests under these circumstances, and then perhaps losing faith in the bishop's willingness and ability to protect them as time went on. But for Barbarigo, clearly, the bigger threat was that these scandals might spread if he imposed more public punitive measures.

CONCLUSION

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Catholic Church faced a crisis of authority arguably worse than any in its prior history. Though it was hardly the first time the Church was subjected to deep criticism and faced threats from heretical movements, the scale of the threat, as well as the resulting proliferation of Christian denominations, was unprecedented. In this particular historical context, it became imperative for the Church to reassert its authority and trustworthiness, to make a case for why members of the Church should stay rather than adopting a new faith. Of course, such change was easier for some people than others, and in many cases Catholics had little choice but to remain in their natal faith tradition. Yet the knowledge that people could choose to leave made the risk of scandals, particularly those caused by members of the clergy, particularly severe. Eradicating clerical sin, while ideal in theory, was not possible; so when efforts to improve the clergy fell short, a reforming bishop might well think it necessary to suppress or contain the resulting scandal. Moreover, that was the approach pushed by papal nuncios, Roman

congregations, and pastoral manuals. By the seventeenth century, it was seemingly impossible to be a strict disciplinarian bishop.[139]

In light of the variety and number of clerical offenses discovered by Gregorio Barbarigo across his three decades in Padua, his disciplinary strategies seem oddly ineffectual and inappropriate unless they are understood in the context of the desire to limit scandal. He – like all bishops – faced logistical and material challenges in dealing with clerical criminality that help explain his methods, but such obstacles as jurisdictional overlap or conflict, lack of sufficient clergy, or inadequate resources and authority do not fully explain Barbarigo's choices. Scandal must also be considered. The policies Barbarigo adopted, moreover, were consistent with theological and legal justifications for suppressing scandal developed over centuries to protect the Church and its flock, which the ecclesiastical hierarchy promoted in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He tried to reform his priests, and he succeeded occasionally, when material resources or education were sufficient to bring about improvement. But whenever that failed, his next priority was to protect the diocese from scandal, choosing quiet punishments and attempting to prevent secular interference. Barbarigo was a deeply devout, pious, and morally upright man who took his mission to reform his diocese so seriously that on his deathbed he feared damnation because he had not succeeded in completely eradicating sin among his flock.[140] For him, the suppression of scandal was not a cynical plan to protect abusive clergy or even simply to maintain a good image for the church; it was a misguided attempt to protect the faith of the laity. For this, among other things, he was celebrated. While it was certainly not explained with reference to scandal or reputation management at the time, his disciplinary style was lauded and held up to eighteenth through twentieth-century bishops as an example in his beatification and canonization proceedings.[141]

At least since the second half of the twentieth century, the Catholic Church has again faced a crisis of authority in an increasingly secularized world, one marked by several social movements often at odds with the Church's typically conservative politics. It is in the context of this crisis that members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy made ethically indefensible decisions to cover up crimes committed by priests. In this same period, the power of bishops was increased by Vatican II, and the Church has continued its efforts to prevent secular interference whenever possible.[142] None of these individual factors – policies to suppress scandals, increased episcopal authority, or the preservation of ecclesiastical jurisdiction – makes the Church's current scandal inevitable, but together they create an environment that makes the widespread coverup of sexual abuse not only possible, but likely. This suggests that more serious consideration must be given not only to the power of clergy and bishops, or the training and screening of priests, but also to broader ecclesiastical and secular power structures in order to root out this damaging tendency to suppress scandal at the expense of victims.

---

[*] This article began as a conference paper presented in 2016 at the *Renaissance Society of America* conference in Boston. It was further developed for invited talks at the Venice Seminar held at Cambridge University in 2018, at Bowdoin College in 2018, and at the College of William and Mary in 2019. I would like to thank the audiences at each of those talks for their helpful comments and questions, as well as the organizers who invited me. In addition, I would like to thank Ross Carroll, Lu Ann Homza, Kathryn Woods, and this journal's anonymous reviewers, all of whom offered extensive and helpful critiques and suggestions at various stages of this article's development.

[1] Michael Renzedes, "Church Allowed Abuse by Priest for Years," *Boston Globe*, January 6, 2002, https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/special-reports/2002/01/06/church-allowed-abuse-priest-for-years/cSHfGkTIrAT25qKGvBuDNM/story.html. All of the reports of the Spotlight Group, the Boston Globe's special investigative reporting unit, as well as related information to this investigation, have been collected at "The Story behind the 'Spotlight' Movie - The Boston Globe," *The Boston Globe*, accessed January 16, 2020, http://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/movies/spotlight-movie.

[2] Cases continue to come to light, courts have recently found the Church liable, and there are pushes for further investigations, especially in Italy. For a small sampling of recent articles about abuses in Europe, Australia, and the United States, see Rick Noack, "8 Former French Bishops Accused of Sexual Abuse, Church Says," *Washington Post*, November 7, 2022, sec. World, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/11/07/french-bishops-sexual-abuse-

church/; Christopher Knaus, "Victorian Catholic Diocese Found Vicariously Liable for Child Sexual Abuse in Landmark Ruling," *The Guardian*, January 4, 2022, sec. Australia news, https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/jan/05/victorian-catholic-diocese-found-vicariously-liable-for-child-sexual-abuse-in-landmark-ruling; Ruth Graham, "Sex Abuse in Catholic Church: Over 1,900 Minors Abused in Illinois, State Says," *The New York Times*, May 23, 2023, sec. US, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/23/us/illinois-catholic-church-sex-abuse.html. A recent report accused Joseph Ratzinger, former pope Benedict XIV, of failing to act when he was archbishop of Munich. Harriet Sherwood, "Former Pope Benedict Accused of Inaction over Child Sexual Abuse Cases," *The Guardian*, January 20, 2022, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/20/former-pope-benedict-accused-inaction-child-sexual-abuse-cases.

[3] For more context on this case, see Jon Nordheimer, "Sex Charges Against Priest Embroil Louisiana Parents," *The New York Times*, June 20, 1985, sec. U.S., https://www.nytimes.com/1985/06/20/us/sex-charges-against-priest-embroil-louisiana-parents.html.

[4] There are also now questions about what Pope John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła) knew when he served as archbishop of Kraków. Shaun Walker and Katarzyna Piasecka, "'What Did the Pope Know?': Poles Divided over John Paul II Abuse Cover-up Claims," *The Guardian*, May 16, 2023, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/may/16/pope-poles-divided-over-john-paul-ii-abuse-cover-up-claims. And several media outlets have addressed the Church's response over the past two decades since the abuse came to light. Francis X. Rocca, "After Two Decades, Abuse Crisis Has Humbled the Catholic Church," *Wall Street Journal*, December 13, 2021, sec. World, https://www.wsj.com/articles/after-two-decades-abuse-crisis-has-humbled-the-catholic-church-11639400404; "How Has the Catholic Church Reckoned with Sexual-Abuse Claims?," *The Economist*, accessed February 23, 2022, https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2021/10/11/how-has-the-catholic-church-reckoned-with-sexual-abuse-claims.

[5] For a few examples, see Brendan Callaghan, "On Scandal and Scandals: 'The Psychology of Clerical Paedophilia,'" *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 99, no. 395, (2010): 343–56; Kathryn Dale and Judith Alpert, "Hiding Behind the Cloth: Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church," *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 16, no. 3 (2007): 59–74; Tom McCarthy, "The Called, the Chosen, and the Tempted: Psychologists, the Church, and the Scandal," *American Catholic Studies* 125, no. 4 (2014): 1–49. Most scholarship treats this as a modern aberration, but there is some acknowledgement of the longer history of the problem of sexual abuse, including two books that trace it back 2000 years. See Thomas Doyle, A.W.R. Sipe, and Patrick Wall, *Sex, Priests, and Secret Codes: The Catholic Church's 2000-Year Paper Trail of Sexual Abuse* (Los Angeles, 2006); Francesco Benigno and Vincenzo Lavenia, *Peccato o crimine: La Chiesa di fronte alla pedofilia* (Rome, 2021).

[6] For a few examples, see Jean Bartunek, Mary Ann Hinsdale, and James Keenan, eds., *Church Ethics and Its Organizational Context: Learning from the Sex Abuse Scandal in the Catholic Church* (Oxford, 2006); Thomas Doyle, "Roman Catholic Clericalism, Religious Duress, and Clergy Sexual Abuse," *Pastoral Psychology* 51, no. 3 (2003): 189–231; Doyle, Sipe, and Wall, *Sex, Priests, and Secret Codes*; Frank Herrmann and Gerald Kochansky, "Shame and Scandal: Clinical and Canon Law Perspectives on the Crisis in the Priesthood," *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 27 (2004): 299–319; John O'Malley, "The Scandal: A Historian's Perspective," *America*, May 27, 2002; John Wirenius, "'Command and Coercion': Clerical Immunity, Scandal, and the Sex Abuse Crisis in the Roman Catholic Church," *Journal of Law and Religion* 27, no. 2 (2012): 423–94.

[7] Recently, Massimo Faggioli has called for a more historical (and global/comparative) understanding of the abuse crisis. This article aims to contribute

to that goal. Massimo Faggioli, "The Need for the Historiographical Approach to Understand and Address the Sex Abuse Crisis in the Catholic Church," *Journal of Moral Theology* 3 (2023): 265–80. Another recent article explores the history of clerical child sexual abuse in Spain, arguing that it can be traced as widespread at least back to the sixteenth century. Faisal Rashid and Ian Barron, "Clerical Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church in Spain: A Contemporary or Historical Phenomenon?," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 23, no. 2 (September 2022): 227–37.

[8] John Dardis, "Speaking of Scandal," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 89, no. 356 (2000): 309-323, 318.

[9] John Thompson, "Scandal and Social Theory," in *Media Scandals: Morality and Desire in the Popular Culture Marketplace*, ed. James Lull and Stephen Hinerman (Cambridge, 1997), 34-64, 38–39.

[10] Thompson, 47, 58.

[11] Ari Adut, "A Theory of Scandal: Victorians, Homosexuality, and the Fall of Oscar Wilde," *American Journal of Sociology* 111, no. 1 (2005): 213-248, 223.

[12] As Thompson notes, many scandals involve hypocrisy. Thompson, "Scandal and Social Theory," 41. This risk is especially high for religious figures, who publicly tell others how to live. See Joshua Gamson, "Normal Sins: Sex Scandal Narratives as Institutional Morality Tales," *Social Problems* 48, no. 2 (2001): 185-205, 189.

[13] Thompson, "Scandal and Social Theory," 59.

[14] Massimo Faggioli has likewise explicitly compared the Reformation to the contemporary abuse crisis, arguing that the latter is the biggest crisis the Church has faced since the former. Faggioli, "The Need for the Historiographical Approach," 272; Massimo Faggioli, "The Catholic Church's Biggest Crisis Since the

Reformation," *Foreign Affairs*, October 11, 2018, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2018-10-11/catholic-churchs-biggest-crisis-reformation.

[15] Michele Mancino and Giovanni Romeo, *Clero criminale: L'onore della Chiesa e i delitti degli ecclesiastici nell'Italia della Controriforma* (Rome, 2013), v–vi.

[16] For a discussion of the history of clerical privilege or immunity, along with connections to how elements of this persist in modern canon law, see Wirenius, "'Command and Coercion.'"

[17] For an in-depth explanation of how the seal of confession, the secret of the Holy Office, and perpetual oaths of secrecy are used to ensure that sexual abuse by the clergy remains an internal matter, see John Beal, "The 1962 Instruction Crimen Sollicitationis: Caught Red-Handed or Handed a Red Herring?," *Studia Canonica* 41 (2007): 199–236.

[18] The evidence I have examined for the Tridentine period yielded no clear evidence and very few vague hints of the sexual abuse of minors, but Dyan Elliott's recent book does demonstrate continuity of the sexual abuse of boys at least for the medieval period. Dyan Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys* (Philadelphia, 2020). There is also limited evidence of early modern/post-Tridentine clerical sodomy, some of it pedophilic, discussed in Benigno and Lavenia, *Peccato o crimine*, chapter 2. As Benigno and Lavenia note, the fact that this evidence is limited does not mean the abuse was rare, but its prevalence is impossible to determine. Finally, Rashid and Barron trace child sexual abuse by priests back to the sixteenth century in Spain. Rashid and Barron, "Clerical Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church in Spain." It is thus not true that sexually abusing children is only a problem of the contemporary church; but that crime will not be dealt with in this article.

---

[19] Dyan Elliott, “Sexual Scandal and the Clergy: A Medieval Blueprint,” in *Why the Middle Ages Matter*, ed. Celia Chazelle et al. (London, 2012), 90–105; Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys*, 11. This section draws heavily on Elliot’s work, while expanding upon it.

[20] Matt. 18:6-7 (NSRV). The passage continues with an exhortation to maim oneself, should a limb or eye be cause for stumbling.

[21] 1 Cor. 8: 7-13.

[22] On this point see also Elliott, “Sexual Scandal,” 91.

[23] Kerstin Jacobsson and Erik Löfmarck, “A Sociology of Scandal and Moral Transgression: The Swedish 'Nannygate' Scandal,” *Acta Sociologica* 51, no. 3 (September 2008): 203-216, 207–8; Victor Turner, “Social Dramas and Stories about Them,” in *On Narrative* (Chicago, 1981), 137–64.

[24] For more on the history of the development of penance, see Abigail Firey, ed., *A New History of Penance* (Leiden, 2008); Patrick O’Banion, *The Sacrament of Penance and Religious Life in Golden Age Spain* (University Park, PA, 2012).

[25] On liminality, see the foundational works of Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago, 1960); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York, 1969).

[26] Elliott, “Sexual Scandal,” 92.

[27] In this way, the Donatists argued against the doctrine of *ex opere operato* (from the work performed), which signifies that the efficacy of the sacraments come from the sacrament itself, not from the person performing that ritual (*ex opere operantis,* or from the agent’s activity). For recent scholarship on Donatism, see Alexander Evers, “Augustine on the Church (against the Donatists),” in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed.

Mark Vessey (West Sussex, 2012), 375–85; Maureen Tilley, "Redefining Donatism: Moving Forward," *Augustinian Studies* 42 (2011): 21–32.

[28] Elliott, "Sexual Scandal," 92–93.

[29] Rob Meens, "The Historiography of Early Medieval Penance," ed. Abigail Firey, *A New History of Penance*, 2008, 73-95, 85–86. Meens notes that recent historiography has pushed back against the narrative that private penance replaced public penance, arguing instead for a diversity of practices through much of the medieval period; however, the point remains that private penance offered sinful clergy an alternative to a public ritual. Meens, 89-90.

[30] Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys*, 44.

[31] Elliott, "Sexual Scandal," 98–99.

[32] Luis de Granada, *Trattato dello scandalo*, trans. Giovanni Domenico Florentio (Venice, 1605), 15.

[33] Elliott, *The Corrupter of Boys*, 71.

[34] Wirenius, "'Command and Coercion,'" 434–35.

[35] Anders Winroth, ed., "Decretum Gratiani - First Recension (Unpublished Working Edition)," 2019, D. 50 c. 34, 129-130, http://gratian.org/.

[36] Winroth, D. 82, c. 5, page 183. In the 1917 and 1983 codes, these ideas persist. In the current (1983) code, it is clearly stated that "a public penance is never to be imposed for an occult transgression." The superior is also given latitude, "according to his own conscience and prudence," to "defer the imposition of the penalty … if it is foreseen that greater evils will result" from immediate punishment. Finally, if the penitent's sin is not known in his current location, the penance can be suspended partially or entirely "whenever the offender cannot observe it without danger of grave scandal or infamy." "Code of Canon Law," Vatican Archive, 1983, C. 1340, C. 1344,

C. 1352, http://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html. These are restatements of canons in the 1917 code, Edward N. Peters, *The 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law* (San Francisco, 2001), C. 2312, C. 2288, C. 2290.

[37] H.J. Schroeder, ed., *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Charlotte, NC, 1978), 251.

[38] Wietse de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden, 2001), 63–64.

[39] de Boer, 39.

[40] Public penance had largely fallen out of use, but when Trent reconfirmed the validity of public penalties for public sins, Borromeo was eager to restore it in Milan. de Boer, 63–67, 216. For more on Borromeo, see Giuseppe Alberigo, "Carlo Borromeo come modello di vescovo nella chiesa post-tridentina," *Rivista storica italiana* 79 (1967): 1031–52; Agostino Borromeo, "San Carlo Borromeo arcivescovo di Milano e la curia romana," in *San Carlo e il suo tempo. Atti del convegno di Milano*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Rome, 1986), 237–301; John Headley and John Tomaro, eds., *San Carlo Borromeo: Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century* (Washington, DC, 1988); Danilo Zardin, *Carlo Borromeo: cultura, santità, governo* (Milan, 2010).

[41] Mancino and Romeo, *Clero criminale*, 61.

[42] de Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul*, 249.

[43] Paolo Preto, "Un aspetto della riforma cattolica nel Veneto: l'episcopato padovano di Niccolò Ormaneto," *Studi Veneziani* 11 (1969): 325-363, 347.

[44] Mancino and Romeo, *Clero criminale*, 6, 130, 186.

[45] This same point is repeated in the 1581 manual by the bishop of Sarno, the 1589 manual by a Dominican from the Valtellina who served as papal nuncio to Germany

and Austria, and the 1593 manual by a canon of the Milanese cathedral. Mancino and Romeo, 79.

[46] Mancino and Romeo, 80.

[47] Jill Fehleison, *Boundaries of Faith: Catholics and Protestants in the Diocese of Geneva* (Kirksville, MO, 2010); Thomas Deutscher, *Punishment and Penance: Two Phases in the History of the Bishop's Tribunal of Novara* (Toronto, 2013).

[48] On Barbarigo's beatification and canonization processes, see Celeste McNamara, "Molding the Model Bishop from Trent to Vatican II," *Church History* 88 (2019): 58–86.

[49] Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France, 1580-1730* (New Haven, 2009), 177; Allyson Poska, *Regulating the People: The Catholic Reformation in Seventeenth-Century Spain* (Leiden, 1998), 52.

[50] For example, although Venice mandated that bishops ask permission to interview laypeople on visitation and imposed restrictions on the content of the interviews, Barbarigo considered the request a formality (and was angry when permission was not freely given) and largely ignored other restrictions. He also attempted to avoid secular interference in various conflicts he encountered, most notably a decades-long battle with his Cathedral Canons. On the permissions, see the delayed and limited permission granted by one official and a letter in which Barbarigo expressed frustration, preserved in Archivio della Curia Vescovile di Padova (henceforth ACVP), *Inquisitiones*, b. 84 (n.p.). On the battle with the canons, see Catia Magni, "Cinque anni di 'liti affannosissime,'" in *Governare la diocesi nei conflitti: lettere di Gregorio Barbarigo ai familiari, 1671-1676*, ed. Catia Magni, vol. 7, 9 vols., San Gregorio Barbarigo - Fonti e ricerche (Padua, 2011), xiii–ccxv. On his handling of jurisdictional challenges overall, see Celeste McNamara, *The Bishop's Burden:*

Reforming the Catholic Church in Early Modern Italy (Washington, D.C., 2020), 96–107.

[51] Pierantonio Gios, "Gregorio Barbarigo visto da vicino. La testimonianza dell'arciprete di Asiago Giovanni Stefano Viero," *Civis* 21 (1997): 79-121, 104.

[52] McNamara, "Molding the Model Bishop," 68.

[53] The situation in Padua was hardly unusual: the state of the clergy was in many places quite poor, due to lackluster education, training, and funding. Clericalization, or the creation of an educated clergy that was a class apart from the laity, was a key goal of Catholic Reform, but also a very long and difficult process. See for example Andrew Barnes, "The Social Transformation of the French Parish Clergy, 1500-1800," in *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Barbara Diefendorf and Carla Hesse (Ann Arbor, 1993), 139–57; Kathleen Comerford, "'The care of souls is a very grave burden for [the pastor]': Professionalization of the clergy in early modern Florence, Lucca, and Arezzo," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 85 (2005): 349–68; Wietse de Boer, "Professionalization and Clerical Identity: Notes On the Early Modern Catholic Priest," *Nederlands archief voor kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 85 (2005): 369–77.

[54] On the finances of the diocese, see Giovanni Silvano, "Appunti sulla mensa vescovile di Padova al tempo di Gregorio Barbarigo," in *Gregorio Barbarigo: patrizio veneto, vescovo e cardinale nella tarda Controriforma*, ed. Liliana Billanovich and Pierantonio Gios, vol. 3/1, 9 vols., San Gregorio Barbarigo - Fonti e ricerche (Padua, 1999), 797–814. Barbarigo wanted all priests to have benefices worth more than 100 ducats, considered sufficient to live honorably; Francesco Caffagni surveyed benefices of priests in 222 rural parishes and discovered that 83.3

percent held benefices worth more than the minimum amount. Francesco Caffagni, "Clero curato e benefici parrocchiali nella diocesi di Padova: quadri statistici e linee di tendenza nel XVII secolo," in *Gregorio Barbarigo: patrizio veneto, vescovo e cardinale nella tarda Controriforma*, ed. Liliana Billanovich and Pierantonio Gios, vol. 3/1, 9 vols., San Gregorio Barbarigo - Fonti e ricerche (Padua, 1999), 703-722, 719–21.

[55] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 31, fol. 21r.

[56] Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Gregorio Barbarigo e le donne: 'buone cristiane' e 'false sante,'" in *Gregorio Barbarigo: patrizio veneto, vescovo e cardinale nella tarda Controriforma*, ed. Liliana Billanovich and Pierantonio Gios, vol. 3/2, 9 vols., San Gregorio Barbarigo - Fonti e ricerche (Padua, 1996), 845-866, 851.

[57] See McNamara, *The Bishop's Burden*, chapter 4.

[58] Parishioners frequently referred to "scandalo/i" in reference to bad clerical behavior, described priests as "scandaloso" or "scandalosissimo," or referred to lay reactions as "scandalizato/i" or "scandalizatissimo." Though some variation on the word "scandal" appears most frequently, they also had other ways to indicate scandal, for example by telling the bishop that the whole town was "murmuring" or "always talking" about the priest's bad behavior. Moreover, it is clear that this is not simply a convention; many laypeople reported clerical behaviors they did not object to without any glossing. For example, they might explain that the priest gambled or hunted, activities that Barbarigo considered unacceptable but that laypeople often weren't bothered by, with simple declarative statements absent any indication of scandal or gossip. Based on the frequency of the use of forms of "scandal" and its absence in many other testimonies, I consider the laity's vocabulary choice intentional and meaningful.

[59] These were all accusations Barbarigo investigated on at least one occasion (the violent crimes were rare, nonviolent relatively common). For an example of each, see: ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 57, fols. 242-252 (murder); *Inquisitiones*, b. 86, fols. 245-53 (rape); *Visitationes*, b. 66, fol. 32v (procuring abortion); *Visitationes*, b. 61, fols. 393-405 (troublesome woman); *Inquisitiones*, b. 85, fols. 316-321 (children); *Visitationes*, b. 58, fol. 18r (inebriation).

[60] "Vi sono molti che temono andarsi a confessare dal Vicario temendo che la confessione non vaglia per esser così scandaloso." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 61, fol. 395r. This priest was taken to task by Barbarigo for his negligence and his scandalous behavior and ordered to send the women away under penalty of suspension *a divinis* but faced no concrete penalty. *Visitationes,* b. 61, fol. 404r-405r. For another case in which laypeople expressed concern about the validity of confession, see *Inquisitiones*, b. 84, fol. 432r.

[61] For more on gossip and scandal (and their social/community policing purposes) see Sally Merry, "Rethinking Gossip and Scandal," in *Toward a General Theory of Social Control*, ed. Donald Black (New York, 1984), 271–302. Thompson argues that the necessary characteristics of a scandal are a transgression of values, norms, or moral codes which is known or believed by those outside the event, some of whom must disapprove and express that disapproval publicly. By this definition, even less troubling incidents described by laypeople constitute scandals. Thompson, "Scandal and Social Theory," 39.

[62] These were common offenses – Barbarigo investigated 62 priests for short vestments, 27 for offenses related to their hair (length and/or lack of tonsure), and 54 for various side businesses. For an example of each, see ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 84,

fol. 55v (short vestments and long hair); *Visitationes,* b. 58, fols. 369v-371r (lack of tonsure); *Visitationes*, b. 66, fol. 353r (secular business).

[63] On concubinage and its general acceptance, see Michelle Armstrong-Partida, "Priestly Marriage: The Tradition of Clerical Concubinage in the Spanish Church," *Viator* 40, no. 2 (2009): 221–53; Michelle Armstrong-Partida, "Priestly Wives: The Role and Acceptance of Clerics' Concubines in the Parishes of Late Medieval Catalunya," *Speculum* 88, no. 1 (January 2013): 166–214; Roisin Cossar, *Clerical Households in Late Medieval Italy* (Cambridge, MA, 2017); Gaetano Greco, "Fra disciplina e sacerdozio: il clero secolare nella società italiana del Cinquecento al Settecento," in *Clero e società nell'Italia moderna*, ed. Mario Rosa (Rome, 1992), 45–114; Giovanni Romeo, *Amori proibiti: i concubini tra Chiesa e inquisizione: Napoli, 1563-1656* (Rome, 2008); Adriana Valerio, "Donne e celibato ecclesiastico: le concubine del clero," in *Donne e religione a Napoli: secoli XVI-XVIII*, ed. Giuseppe Galasso and Adriana Valerio (Milan, 2001), 67–90.

[64] Other historians have noted a similar mixed reaction to concubinage in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Marc Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages* (Ithaca, 1992), 23, 204; Marc Forster, *Catholic Revival in the Age of the Baroque: Religious Identity in Southwest Germany, 1550-1750* (Cambridge, 2001), 31–32, 169; Philip Hoffman, *Church and Community in the Diocese of Lyon, 1500-1789* (New Haven, 1984), 50.

[65] "Contra il comune con parole di tanta ingiuria, e sprezzo e vilipendio … nominandoli Hebrei Furbi et Heretici." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 44, fol. 190r.

[66] "All'altare disse queste formali parole pessi di asini, sacchi di pedocchi, contandinacci, e cose simili." ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 85, fol. 113r.

[67] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 55, fol. 119r; *Inquisitiones*, b. 86, fol. 158v.

---

[68] ACVP, *Visitationes,* b. 57, fols. 242-252 (murder); *Inquisitiones*, b. 85, fols. 182v-202r; *Inquisitions*, b. 87, Sant'Eulalia, n.p. (violence); Archivio di Stato di Padova, *Archivio Giudiziario Criminale, Processi*, b. 29, fols. 4-8 (thugs); ACVP, *Inquisitiones,* b. 84, fol. 199v (attempted rape); and *Inquisitiones*, b. 86, fols. 245-253 (repeated rape).

[69] Thompson notes that a scandal need not always undermine reputation and trust in either the individual or their institution. Thompson, "Scandal and Social Theory," 59. Given that rural priests were typically natives of their own parishes, deeply embedded in their communities, it seems likely that their neighbors would be better equipped to rationalize their behavior than strangers, who might associate their behavior with the group (clergy) they represent.

[70] ACVP, *Registro di Lettere, 1674-1697*, fol. 86v.

[71] Although no response remains in the archive, this issue was not raised in the next visitation to this village, which occurred just over two years later. Three priests were noted for various failings (the chaplains for ignorance and failure to produce ordination papers, and the parish priest in question for general lack of diligence and care). ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 63, fols. 328r, 422v.

[72] Data compiled from ACVP, *Visitationes*, bb. 31-66; *Inquisitiones*, bb. 84-88. The offenses in question were all in his jurisdiction, not that of the Holy Office or secular courts.

[73] Mancino and Romeo, *Clero criminale*, 83–84.

[74] Similar responses from other bishops are noted in Carlo Socol, *La visita apostolica del 1584-85 alla diocesi di Aquileia e la riforma dei regolari* (Udine, 1986), 164; Mancino and Romeo, *Clero criminale*, 65; Poska, *Regulating the People*, 43.

[75] Barbarigo issued 210 warnings (of 436 responses), and warnings were issued regarding 396 separate issues (of 770). There were eighty-four cases for neglecting catechism classes and seventy-three for neglecting parochial duties in general. Forty priests were warned about their inappropriate dress and another twenty-three for their concubines or suspicious relationships with women. Private admonition is called for in canon law, but Barbarigo's reluctance to advance beyond this was a deliberate choice.

[76] For an example, see the warning given to the priest of Cona in 1695, which has both "monemus te" and a reference to "paternis nostris monitionibus." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 61, fols. 439r-440r.

[77] Barbarigo ordered priests to reform in seventy-seven of 436 responses (17.6 percent), for ninety-six of 770 offenses (12.5 percent). There were sixteen cases of concubinage or relationships with women, eleven of neglecting catechism, fifteen of neglecting the parish, twelve of inappropriate dress, and eleven of failing to perform all required services.

[78] Barbarigo most commonly used the phrase "adhortatus est" in these cases. See for example the order to the priest of S. Andrea di Codiverno to expel his female companion from the parish house, ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 62, fol. 380v.

[79] ACVP, *Processo Barbarigo*, b. 9, fol. 1287v.

[80] He issued six fines for eight offenses, seven of which could be classed as various types of negligence (neglecting the parish, catechism classes, or monthly congregations), while one fine was issued for scandalous behavior. Most fines went to the seminary. For an example of a standard fine, see ACVP, *Visitationes,* b. 43, fol. 240r. Many Italian bishops, at least, also favored the use of fines and writs over stronger penalties. Mancino and Romeo, *Clero criminale*, 37.

---

[81] For an example of a fine paid to the parish, see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 37, fol. 183v.

[82] He threatened fines and banishment seven times each, criminal punishment or trial ten times, and suspension fifty-one times. Criminal trials were threatened five times for concubinage, fines for neglect of the parish or catechism (three and two times), and banishment for a variety of offenses that included inappropriate dress, excessive drinking, secular business, concubinage, gambling, violence, general bad behavior, and celebrating Mass without a license. Suspension was threatened nineteen times for concubinage, fifteen times for neglect of the parish, and thirteen times for neglect of catechism. For examples of these threats, see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 44, fol. 342 (fines); *Diversorum*, b. 9, fol. 20 (banishment, as well as galley service and prison); *Visitationes*, b. 61, fol. 262 (trial); *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 26r (suspension).

[83] Spiritual Exercises were ordered in fifteen cases for twenty-eight offenses (ten times for neglecting the parish, five times for gambling, three times for inappropriate relationships with women, and twice for neglecting catechism). Appearing before the bishop was ordered in four cases for six offenses, twice for general bad behavior and for non-residency, and once for neglecting the parish and inappropriate dress. In two cases priests were ordered to take time for spiritual reflection, for concubinage and violent behavior. For an example of an order to undergo the Exercises (for the offense of greed and neglecting the parish), see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 63, fol. 510v. For an example of an order to spend time in the episcopal palace (and, in this case, also do the Spiritual Exercises, for the offense of murder), see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 57, fol. 248r. The use of the Exercises in this way seems unusual for a bishop, but the Jesuits themselves used them in this manner at times. J. Michelle Molina, “Spirituality and Colonial Governmentality: The Jesuit Spiritual Exercises in Europe and Abroad,” in

Postcolonial Moves: Medieval through Modern, ed. Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle Warren (New York, 2003), 133-152, 145.

[84] This was ordered for ten offenses: three cases of skipping monthly congregations, two cases of demanding payment for services, two cases of inappropriate dress, one case of parochial neglect, one case of ignorance, and one case of non-residence. For an example of this order in response to inappropriate clothing, see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 36, fol. 233v. Barbarigo's diocese was divided into vicarages, and each vicar was instructed to hold monthly meetings of all priests in his territory. Their main activity was casuistry exercises, a common strategy for ensuring preparation for rural clergy. On Barbarigo's system of *vicari foranei*, see Liliana Billanovich, *Fra centro e periferia*, vol. 1, 9 vols., San Gregorio Barbarigo - Fonti e ricerche (Padua, 1993). On their use by other bishops, see Carlo Borromeo, *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, vol. 4 (Brescia, 1603), 243–44; Daniele Montanari, *Disciplinamento in terra veneta: la diocesi di Brescia nella seconda metà del XVI secolo* (Bologna, 1987), 127–28; Angelo Turchini, *Clero e fedeli a Rimini in età post-tridentina* (Rome, 1978), 87.

[85] Among seventeenth-century bishops, a hesitation to utilize suspension was common, and when bishops did apply it they often found their decisions overturned. Mancino and Romeo, *Clero criminale*, 6, 30, 84, 130, 186.

[86] For an example of this type of penalty (levied for a combination of negligence, gambling, and demanding payment for sacraments), see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 62, fol. 381r.

[87] For an example of a banishment (for scandalous life), see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 63, fol. 271v.

---

[88] There were eight mentions of neglect, seven of bad behavior, five each of not saying all masses, concubinage, and excessive drinking, three instances each of non-residency and allowing unauthorized residents in the parish house, two each of neglecting catechism, secular business, not studying, and inappropriate dress, and single mentions of fighting, serving as a soldier, engaging in secular pleasures, gambling, blasphemy, celebrating Mass without a license, and procuring abortion. For an example of a suspension (for negligence), see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 64, fol. 70r-71r.

[89] Loss of license, examinations, demotion, demands to appear in Padua, requirements of spiritual reflection, Spiritual Exercises, extra surveillance by vicars, banishment, and suspension were levied in sixty-eight of 436 cases (15.6%), for 117 of 770 offenses (15.2%).

[90] Although I have limited the count here to cases for which a response was recorded, these proportions are roughly the same looking at the full range of offenses that include hundreds of cases for which Barbarigo's response was not preserved.

[91] The remaining 14 percent of offenses did not directly impact parish life; most of these cases revolved around a lack of proper paperwork, about which the laity likely neither knew nor cared.

[92] "Religiose honeste et ecclesiastice vivat." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 35, fol 233r.

[93] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 44, fol. 342r-v.

[94] "Laborandi in campis more Rusticorum." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 63r. Witnesses stated that he worked "like any other peasant" ("tanto quanto ogni altro contadino"), taking off his vestments after Mass so he could go to the fields. ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 66v.

[95] "Un altravolta incontrò una sposa… e subito cavò fuora il membro, e lo voleva dar in mano alla sposa, la quali fuggi a casa." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 64v. It is

unclear in what context he encountered this "bride," but it does not seem to be on her wedding day. The term "sposa" may indicate simply a recently married woman in this context.

[96] "Che esso prete Munari è sporchissimo, e scandaloso di parole, parlando sempre di cose infami e dishoneste, et ha sempre la bocca piena di porcane carnale tanto verso donne maritate quanto putte vergini, e puttelle." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 64.

[97] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 64v.

[98] "Qualche parole sporche come cazzo, cog[l]ioni, fi[gli]olo di puttana, o simili bagatelle." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 69v.

[99] He was asked "Se habbi mai alzato la veste ad alcuna donna a vederli la natura," to which he replied "Non ho fatto questa cosa." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 69v.

[100] "Una volta sopra l'ara alzò la vesta a sua cognate alla presenza d'altre persone dimandandola se li gocciava la mona con horror di quelli che erano presenti." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 69v.

[101] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 70r. This is, of course, a twisting of Augustine's ideas about voluntary and involuntary sin, developed in the *Acta contra Fortunatum*. For a discussion of this issue in Augustine's thought, see Malcolm E. Alflatt, "The Responsibility for Involuntary Sin in Saint Augustine," *Recherches Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 10 (1975): 171–86.

[102] "Scrisse S. Bernardo nuge in ore laicorum sunt nuge sed in ore sacerdotum sunt blasphemia." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 70v. The original quotation is from St. Bernard's "On Consideration." Saint Bernard, *Saint Bernard Abbot of Clairvaux: Selections from His Writings*, trans. Horatio Grimley (Cambridge, 1910), 226.

[103] For the decree of suspension, see ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 71r-v.

[104] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 56, fol. 73v-74r.

[105] ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 84, fols. 340v-376r.

[106] The witness said she was “sua donna di mal affare,” a colloquial phrase for prostitute. *Inquisitiones*, b. 87, Sant’Eulalia (1669), n.p.

[107] “Diano argomento d’animum dedito alle vanità.” ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 87, Sant’Eulalia (1669), n.p.

[108] ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 87, Sant’Eulalia (1669), n.p.

[109] “Sarà una santa et ottima provigione, se questo nostro Parocho sarà levato da questa Chiesa, e mandato altrove.” ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 87, Sant’Eulalia (1669), n.p.

[110] “Gravi monitione.” ACVP, *Inquisitiones*, b. 87, Sant’Eulalia (1675), n.p.

[111] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 55, fols. 312-313.

[112] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 55, fol. 313v.

[113] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 60, fols. 409r-413r.

[114] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 60, fol. 412v.

[115] “Arrogante, e superbo,” “soavità, e dolcezza.” ACVP, *Processo Barbarigo*, b. 11, fol. 58v.

[116] ACVP, *Processo Barbarigo*, b. 6, fol. 951v; b. 11, fol. 58v.

[117] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 61, fol. 160v.

[118] “Più volte ha lasciato morire delle sue anime senza volerli amministrate li S[antissi]mi sacramenti.” ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 61, fol. 162r.

[119] “Sempre li diceva adesso non posso, vegnerò, vegnerò.” ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 61, fol. 162v.

[120] “L’ultima volta lo pregai per l’amor di dio che andasse, mi rispose che all’hora non poteva per un certo interesse che doveva fare.” ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 61, fol. 162v.

[121] "Con qualche scandalo." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 61, fol. 163r.

[122] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 61, fol. 163v.

[123] ACVP, *Visitationes* b. 61, fol. 336r.

[124] "Scandalum redolentes," "non audeas in futurum eamdem Domenica Bartolomiellam in Dome Paroli admittere, vel in quocumque loco familiariter." ACVP, *Disciplina del Clero*, 31 Ianuaris 1697.

[125] "Maximum detrimentum boni nominis ac fame earum." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 66, fol. 32r.

[126] "Fetus animati." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 66, fol. 32r.

[127] "Ingensi totius Ville scandalo." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 66, fol. 32v.

[128] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 43, fols. 365r-371v. This was not an uncommon type of miracle in the era, though soon the church would declare these claims false. See Silvano Cavazza, "La doppia morte: resurrezione e battesimo in un rito del Seicento," *Quaderni storici* 50 (1982): 551–82.

[129] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 43, fols. 399v-400r.

[130] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 54, fol. 465v.

[131] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 55, fol. 383r.

[132] ACVP, *Processo Barbarigo*, b. 9, fol. 1058r; ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 54, fol. 465r.

[133] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 55, fols. 386r-388v. Venice's cooperation was required because Zanone had declared the convent lay space.

[134] "Io lo so perché scendeva vestendosi et agiustandosi le drezze." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 60, fol. 280v.

[135] "Sono state gia nel seraglio o convento fatto dal detto Parocho." ACVP, *Visitationes,* b. 60, fol. 282r. "La gente si meraviglia che S[ua] E[minenza] che è un homo cosí santo non vi remedi a tanti scandali." ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 60, fol. 283v.

[136] ACVP, *Visitationes*, b. 60, fol. 299.

[137] ACVP, *Processo Barbarigo*, b. 9, fol. 1075r.

[138] Giovanni Bertazzi, *Stato della diocesi*, 1698. Biblioteca del Seminario di Padova, MS. 832, fol. 300v.

[139] Mancino and Romeo, *Clero criminale*, 6, 79–80, 186–87.

[140] His deathbed story was recorded by his auditor and friend, who was present. Giuseppe Musocco, "Delle azioni e virtù di Gregorio Barbarigo cardinale e vescovo di Padova" (1698). Biblioteca Civica di Padova, MS BP 609.

[141] McNamara, "Molding the Model Bishop," 68–69.

[142] As McShea notes, *Christus Dominus*, the Vatican II decree on bishops increased episcopal power to previously unseen levels. Bronwen McShea, "Bishops Unbound," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* 289 (2019): 33-39, 36–37.