

# Here's to the "youth revolution"

June 13, 2002

During the 1960s, the older generation was shocked and appalled at the "youth revolution." Young people rebelled against authority, conformity and other standards of the day. I was not a part of that revolution — at least not in the same way — but I approved of it. If children are expected to behave and follow rules, then the rules should be fair and adults should have to follow them too.

What we've found out in these last decades is that, behind closed doors, men and women have been abusive to each other and their children. I'm sorry to say, particularly men have been unacceptably abusive. We now know that men who molest their children and/or beat their wives can come from any economic class, not just the poor, who have so many disappointments and frustrations.

We regularly read and hear stories of wealthy and powerful men — and sometimes women — who cheat, lie and defraud their families, clients and the government. I don't need to remind readers of the condition of civil rights of minorities and women which still prevailed in the 1960s. The rebellious young had a lot of good reasons to question and protest the norms of the day.

We have learned we have a right to use our common sense and question our doctors, lawyers, teachers, legislators, policemen and religious leaders. Authority is important in our lives, but it must be deserved. There's no question the pendulum has gone too far the other way sometimes, when parents don't support their children's teachers, for example, and protect their children when they should be punished.

The tragic problems in the Catholic Church are rooted in their teaching unquestioning acceptance of authority. The attitude of the church hierarchy has infuriated me — as I'm sure it does members of the church. The cover up and handling of the issues of priests' abuse of children is a typical male misuse of power and authority; it makes government



political scandals look pale by comparison.

Another issue coming to light is the demeaning and unequal treatment of nuns, who have often been those who reported abuse to a priest or a bishop, only to be ignored. As it turns out, nuns have little status in the Catholic Church and are, in typical fashion, controlled by the men of the church.

So children who have been taught to revere their church leaders and their authority at all costs, have in fact, along with their families, borne those costs. What are children to learn from the daily revelations of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church? And from the coverup? What are they to learn from the unequal and secondary positions of women in the church? (And that includes a number of denominations.) What they hopefully learn is that those in authority are to be viewed with respect but also with a healthy dose of skepticism. We are all human. Priests have been assumed to be on a higher ground because of their vows of celibacy, but they are still human, and as vulnerable as anyone else to the sins of the world.

What some Christian churches seem to have lost in the typical human fight for

power and glory are the teachings of Christ. The burning issue before the upcoming Southern Baptist convention is that of whether women should be allowed to be ministers and whether or not they should be ordered to be "submissive" to their husbands. These are the same people who hate government interference in our private lives but want to dictate how every family should function.

This has become a trite question, but what would Jesus think about that? If all these sanctimonious church fathers really read the Bible they might notice the important roles women played in the life of Jesus. They yank handy little phrases from the Old Testament to keep their power, and again, exert a total misuse of

authority.

With regards to the current situation in the Catholic Church, I can only say that one day, years ago, I opened up the Peoria Journal-Star to see a photo on the front page of a high school classmate of mine, a Catholic priest, who had been charged with the exual abuse of a minor. My reaction? I wept. At our last class reunion he was asked to give the prayer before dinner and began, "It has been a long time since I've led prayer..." He is our friend; he paid for his crime and we stood by him. May his victim recover. May all Christians remember that our final authority is not a human being.

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