

# THE CANONIST



**CANON LAW SOCIETY**  
**AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND**

**Volume 8 Number 1**  
**2017**

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# **Listening to Male Survivors of Church Sexual Abuse: Voices from Survivors of Sodalicio Abuses in Peru**

## **EDITORIAL NOTE**

This research report was published by the Centre for Theology and Public Issues, University of Otago, New Zealand. The format of the report has been adapted for publication in *The Canonist*.

The research was funded by a University of Otago Research Grant 2016, and received Ethical Approval from the University of Otago Research Ethics Committee.

*The Canonist* Vol.5 No.1 (2014) 58-92 published an article "The Effects of Child Abuse/Neglect on Marital Consent" by Augustine Mendonça. The author noted the importance for judges to be aware of the serious damage caused by such abuse/neglect to the victim's personality. The report provides the opportunity to consider further such serious damage.

The researchers were Dr Rocío Figueroa Alvear and Professor David Tombs.

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## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, disclosures of sexual abuse committed by priests, pastors or religious leaders against children and young adults has become a headline issue.<sup>1</sup> Clergy perpetrated sexual abuse (CPSA) has occurred throughout all the world's churches, but for the Catholic Church in the last decades this problem has been one of the

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<sup>1</sup> Sexual abuse against children has been defined as 'the involvement of immature children in sexual activities that they do not fully understand and in which they are unable to give a genuine consent and which violate social taboos of family roles' (Helfer & Kempe, 1976, p.60).

biggest crises in its history.<sup>2</sup> Although the problem of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church is not new; the difference between the present and the past is that victims are now coming forward. With their disclosures, the victims are revealing the magnitude of a crime hidden for decades from society.

Sexual abuse crimes, and the institutional cover-ups that accompanied them, have been widely reported in Canada, the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Australia and elsewhere. Until recently the Catholic Church in Latin America has received relatively little international publicity, but this is now changing. A number of lay movements and Catholic communities have faced allegations and their leaders have been publicly denounced. Three cases have received particular attention: the Legionaries of Christ in Mexico (J. Berry & Renner, 2004), the Karadima group in Chile (Monkeberg, 2010), and Sodalicio (the common name for Sodalitium Christianae Vitae) in Peru (Salinas, 2015). These three communities are part of the birth and growth of new movements that occurred in Latin America following Vatican II. Each of these three new movements was heralded for their success and growth in attracting new members, and yet the founder of each has subsequently been accused of serious sexual abuses. While all the members of the Legionaries of Christ and Karadima community are priests, the members of Sodalicio are mostly lay Catholics and the founder is a layperson.

### 1.1. Background

The Sodalitium Christianae Vitae (henceforth known as Sodalicio) is a society of Apostolic Life within the Catholic Church. A small number of members are priests, but most are lay consecrated.<sup>3</sup> A layman Luis Fernando Figari founded it in 1971. All lay consecrated members follow the promises of obedience, celibacy and a spirit of poverty. Sodalicio has a presence in schools and churches and runs retreat facilities and Youth Centres with communities in Peru, Argentina, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Italy and the United States. Although their members are mostly lay Catholics it also includes clergy. Sodalicio now faces accusations of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse of minors.<sup>4</sup> These accusations against Sodalicio have

<sup>2</sup> There is now an extensive body of academic, media, and social policy literature, documenting sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. Of course, CPSA abuse existed in the past: sexual abuse within the Catholic Church has always been a problem (Farrel & Taylor, 2000, p.55-56). They noted, following Sipe (1995) that in the *Didaché*, the oldest book of the Catholic tradition, the priests were commanded not to seduce young boys. Specifically, the *Didaché* noted: 'Thou don't seduce young boys' (Anonymous, s.I, n. 2). According to Doyle (2012, p. 4) the difference between the present and the past is that victims are now coming forth: 'The difference between the present and the past is this: whereas in prior centuries the institutional church maintained control over the response to waves of revelation, in our era it is not the pope and bishops who are shaping the continuing history of clergy sexual abuse and hierarchical cover-up, but the victims'.

<sup>3</sup> There is no straightforward English translation for Sodalitium Christianae Vitae, but it roughly translates as Fellowship of Christian Life. It is usually referred to as just Sodalicio.

<sup>4</sup> There is a complex relationship between physical, psychological and sexual abuse. Physical abuse does not necessarily imply sexual abuse. Likewise, psychological abuse can exist without

had a high public profile in Peru during the research project, and have been covered by other local and international media (Collins, 2016, *Guardian*).

In 2010, Pedro Salinas, a former Sodalicio member, accused Figari of physical, psychological and sexual abuse. In late 2010, Figari had resigned as superior of Sodalicio 'for health reasons' and was sent to Rome. This was the same year that the cause of beatification of Germán Doig, vicar general and number two within the organization, was suspended. Doig himself had died in 2001. In February 2011, the Peruvian newspaper *Diario 16* published some testimonies of sexual abuse accusing Germán Doig (Pighi, 2016). Despite these allegations, Sodalicio took years before they offered reasonable support to the victims. Although they did eventually offer support, this was long over-due, and only initiated after strong criticism of Sodalicio in the press.

In October 2015, Salinas published the book *Mitad monjes, mitad soldados. Lo que el Sodalicio no quiere que sepas* (ET *Half Soldiers, Half Monks: What the Fellowship Does not Want You to Know*), which he had written with the journalist Paola Ugaz. The book gathers thirty testimonies of abuse committed by the founder, Luis Fernando Figari, and other leaders of the organization, over an almost thirty year period. Of these testimonies, five narrate episodes of sexual abuse and three accuse the founder Figari as the perpetrator (Pighi, 2016). According to his book, three men lodged complaints in 2011 with the Peruvian church tribunal alleging Figari sexually abused them when they were minors (Bajak, 2015). The three presented their cases to the Vatican and the Court of Lima in 2011 but were still waiting for a response. Publication of this book in 2015 prompted further media coverage on the issues it raised that remained unresolved.<sup>5</sup>

In April 2015, before the publication of the book *Half Monks, Half Soldiers*, the Catholic Church appointed Peruvian priest Fortunato Pablo Urcey as 'visitor' to the houses of Sodalicio (Pighi, 2016). Sodalicio admitted that the sexual abuse allegations against its founder and other senior members were 'plausible', just as it became public that the Vatican had ordered an investigation into the group. Then, in April, it went a step further. In an online video, Sodalicio's current leader, Alessandro Moroni, apologized to victims, acknowledging that they had 'received no satisfactory reply' from the group for years: 'After the testimonies received, we consider Luis Fernando Figari guilty of the allegations of abuse against him and declare him *persona non grata* in our organization as we deplore and wholly condemn his

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physical or sexual abuse. Sexual abuse can involve physical abuse or psychological abuse, and often involves both. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, physical punishment was considered normal within Catholic institutions in Lima. It is interesting that Sodalicio was formed in 1971 when physical discipline was no longer a common practice within the Catholic institutions of Lima. The physical and psychological abuse behaviours that became normalized in Sodalicio were therefore atypical of the time period.

<sup>5</sup> A brief chronology of key developments in the breaking of the scandal is included in Appendix 2.

behaviour,' he said. (Pighi, 2016).

Sodalicio has now hired experts to offer psychological assistance to victims and initiate a review. Dr. Kathleen McChesney and Dr. Ian Elliot have been prominent in this regard. Yet, for many former members the underlying situation has not changed. Figari remains protected by the group, which still pays for his room and board. In an emailed response to the Guardian, Sodalicio's spokesman, Fernando Vidal, said: 'Faced with the allegations of sexual abuse, our institution responds with the greatest possible rigour' (Collins, 2016).

To this end, Sodalicio appointed a special commission that included lawyers, a psychiatrist and a Peruvian bishop. They interviewed more than fifty former members of Sodalicio who denounced physical, psychological and sexual abuse. On the 16th April 2016, the Commission published a ten-page report in which they explained the abuses and the factors that enabled the sexual abuse within Sodalicio (Comisión de Ética para la Justicia y la Reconciliación, 2016).

According to the final report, the Commission affirms that 'in the years of foundation, Sodalicio established an internal culture, alien and contrary to the principles laid down in their constitutions (...) in which discipline and obedience to the superior [Figari] were forged on the basis of extreme physical demands and punishments, setting abuses that violate the fundamental rights of people'.

To be part of Sodalicio signified being 'cut off from their families and detached.' It also meant that 'paternal figures had to be devalued'. The report continues affirming that 'in the communities of formation, many former members were victims of physical assaults, harassment and even abuses of a sexual nature. These abuses have damaged them psychologically and in some cases signified that a return to civilian life was very difficult'.

The Commission affirms that 'the damage was perpetrated in a situation in which the superiors assumed a "dominant position" asking for perfect and absolute obedience achieved by the practice of extreme discipline. (...) This way of exercising power was an attempt to destroy their individual will'. Although there were complaints and denunciations, says the report, the leaders failed to act, covering up the abuses in a 'complicit silence' over many years. Because the abuse was perpetrated over 25 years ago, the statute of limitations makes it impossible for Figari to be prosecuted by civil authorities today.

The report explains that only an elite group close to Figari knew about his activities in which there were physical, psychological and sexual abuses. Racial and class discrimination was used as a means for bullying and humiliating members. The report's conclusions request the Vatican to:

- establish a whole new leadership structure within Sodalicio,
- ban former leaders from positions of authority,
- sentence Figari with the severest possible sanction - presumably a life of

exclusion and penance.

The Vatican investigation of Figari is ongoing at the time of this report.

Bajak, a journalist from *Associated Press*, notes that the Sodalicio case shares many characteristics with the sexual abuse scandal in Mexico involving the Legionaries and also with Karadima in Chile (Bajak, 2015). After years of allegations against Karadima the story exploded globally in 2010. In response, the Catholic Church sentenced Karadima in 2011 to a lifetime of penance and prayer for sexually abusing young people. Marcial Maciel, the Legion of Christ founder has faced various allegations and accusations for at least five decades. These were ignored, despite the testimony of his victims. It was only in 2006 that the Vatican sentenced Maciel in the same way as Karadima (Bajak, 2015).

Figari and other accused perpetrators in Sodalicio were consecrated lay people and not priests. A consecrated layperson is a new form of religious life within the Catholic Church.

Although they don't perform the rites of the mass, they have a pastoral mission and religious power within their organizations. This is why we have typified the sexual abuse in the Sodalicio case under the broad term Church Related Sexual Abuse (CRSA). CRSA includes Clergy Perpetrated Sexual Abuse (CPSA) but also allows recognition of other perpetrators of sexual abuse who hold significant church roles but are not clergy. Most of the findings in the literature review which follows relate in the first instance to clergy. It therefore cannot simply be assumed that this literature automatically holds true or applies to lay figures. Nonetheless, our contention is that it is likely that the literature related to clergy sexual abuse is relevant to sexual abuse committed by consecrated laypersons, since the character and workings of power, trust and authority are similar in both contexts.

Austen Ivereigh, an expert on the church in South America, said other right wing movements born around the same time as Sodalicio have experienced similar abuse issues. These movements were characterized by their discipline centred on a cult of leadership, which stressed the idea of authority:

Admired by many in the Vatican, including St. John Paul II, for their orthodoxy, obedience and evangelizing zeal, Mexico's Legionaries of Christ, Chile's El Bosque, and Peru's Sodalitium of the Christian Life had certain traits in common. All three mixed dynamic evangelization and recruitment programs with energetic money- raising and charismatic leadership that demanded absolute obedience. And, in all three cases, their founders - Marcial Maciel, Fernando Karadima, and Luis Fernando Figari, were later shown to be sexual abusers. Their behavior was for years concealed by their hallowed status within the movement, reinforced by the applause from Rome. (...) Peru's 20,000-strong "Sodalitium of Christian Life" is the latest to undergo the trauma of discovering painful truths about their founder, the only layman of the three (Ivereigh, 2016).

According to Ivereigh, those structures allowed abuses to take place and allowed them to be covered up for a long period (Ivereigh, 2016). Martin Scheuch, a former member of Sodalicio, has studied the Sodalicio phenomenon, and was an important source for Salinas' book (Salinas, 2015, p. 117). Scheuch's articles in the media offer insight into how Sodalicio operated. He has compared the analysis made by the American psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton of the methods applied at the universities during Mao's totalitarianism in China with the brainwashing applied to Sodalicio. He concluded that Lifton's eight principles were present within the Sodalicio system: social control, spiritual manipulation, use of a unique language and vocabulary, a doctrine more important than the person themselves, an unquestionable foundational philosophy, a cult of confession including group confession, the demand of perfection from the members and the idea that a person had no value outside of the community.

## 1.2. Literature Review

There has been a longstanding recognition in the literature on violence against women that sexual violence should be understood with attention to power and control (Kelly 1988). Recent work by Ganzevoort and Sremac has highlighted the prevalence of sexual violence against males during conflicts, which often accompanies the more widely recognised issue of violence against girls and women (Ganzevoort and Sremac 2015). Their work is focussed on sexual violence in the situation of armed conflict, but their analysis of gender identities and conceptions of masculinity is also helpful for understanding sexual violence against males in other contexts. The need for attention to power and control, and not just sex, is a central feature that CRSA shares with sexual violence during conflicts. At the same time, whilst sexual abuses are frequently not primarily about erotic attraction or sex *per se*, violence and power also need to be understood as readily eroticised and sexualised. The sense of power and control enacted through abuse can serve as its own erotic turn-on or sexual satisfaction, even when no physical sexual contact is involved.

A proper understanding of CRSA requires due recognition of elements that it shares with sexual violence in other contexts, as well as attention to religious elements that may not be so influential in other contexts. These religious elements can serve to enable the abuse, or shape it in some way, or protect perpetrators from the consequences of their actions. For this reason, some authors argue that it should be addressed separately from some other types of sexual abuse (Fogler, Shiperd, Clarke, Jensen, Rowe, 2008b). For example, hierarchical status and authority structures within church institutions can enable emotional and spiritual control over younger members. In addition, the same structures can inhibit the reporting of abuse by victims and frustrate any attempt to hold perpetrators accountable.

Farrell and Taylor (2000, p. 54) identify different elements that are commonly involved in CPSA of children and young adults:

[CPSA involves] the physical and psychological betrayal of a child by any person in a position of power and trust who is formally authorized to



perform the rites of an organized religion. The abuse involves the traumatic sexualisation of the child via the use of force or the threat of force, or even coercion, for the self-gratification of the perpetrating cleric. Implicit within the abuse is the child's inability to give informed consent due to the inequality that exists within this relationship. The perpetrator propels the child to "keep the secret" and to remain silent. The long-term implications for the abused is a legacy of erosion and stigmatization of the child's well being creating theological and existential conflict, whilst challenging the victim's religious faith, spiritual identity and any concept that they have of God.

This reflects the longstanding recognition that an imbalance of power is a key element in a wide range of abusive relationships. The abuse of spiritual power by the perpetrator is often a key feature of sexual abuse committed by clergy or consecrated people. In the case of CPSA the sexual abuse usually involves the use of spiritual power to seduce a minor. The priest or the pastor represent the voice and the love of God for the community. As Fogler affirms: 'the community understands that his decisions stem from the depth of his spiritual connection' (Fogler et al 2008b, p. 307). At the same time the priest or the consecrated person is called 'father' or 'spiritual father'. According to Fogler 'this has a symbolic meaning which describes the priest's role in the community and within this context a survivor may believe that to deny a clergyman's advances is to deny the moral authority of God' (Fogler et al 2008b, p. 307).

CPSA shares many of the same long-term implications as any other sexual abuse, including psychological, sexual, and behavioural problems in adults (Fater and Mullaney, 2000, p. 290). These long-term effects can produce various disorders, such as: anxiety, low self-esteem, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Garnefsky & Arends, 1998, p. 105).

The commonly used post-traumatic stress disorder model (PTSD) frames sexual abuse as a traumatic event.<sup>6</sup> Finkelhor & Brown (1985) on the other hand, propose a model that conceptualizes childhood sexual abuse as a process. The authors suggest four 'traumagenic dynamics' as a model for understanding the various trauma conjunctions that can occur together in this type of abuse: traumatic sexualisation; betrayal; powerlessness; and stigmatization (Finkelhor & Brown 1985, p. 1).

Besides the psychological consequences we can find spiritual consequences of sexual abuse that differ from victim to victim. Murray-Swank and Pargament (2005) have studied spiritual aspects of sexual abuse. They conclude that some victims turn to spiritual practices to aid their recovery, while others experience intense spiritual struggles (Murray-Swank and Pargament, 2005, p. 201). But, what happens to

<sup>6</sup> Compared to DSM-IV, the diagnostic criteria for DSM-5 draw a clearer line when detailing what constitutes a traumatic event. Sexual assault is specifically included as a traumatic event that may cause PTSD. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

victims when members of the church have committed the abuse? After the abuse, many survivors begin to view the institution as a desecrated place. Finkelhor states that victims have a feeling of alienation in social institutions (Finkelhor & Brown, 1985, p. 6). McLaughlin demonstrated with data that 'victims see priests as connected to the church, and victims were taught as children that the church is the place where you go to find God. The priest works in the church, and because the priest who abused them represents the church, the church has hurt them. Since they feel hurt by the church and they do not want to be re-victimized, they stay away from the church' (McLaughlin 1995, 157). Another study confirms that the victim's decline in trust is not only directed towards the perpetrator, but also towards the priesthood in general, and on to the wider church (Rossetti 1995, p. 1480).

The reaction of the wider church community can also profoundly affect the victims. A lack of community support combined with the trauma of the sexual abuse itself can lead to a situation where the recovery and spiritual growth of the victim is very difficult. Even worse, the victim may become the scapegoat of the community (Ganzevoort 2003, p. 3). The survivor may feel re-victimized by the experience of rumour and scandal (Mertes 2010). As Finkelhor's model highlights, one of the psychological traumas of sexual abuse is stigmatization. The revictimization by the community makes the survivors feel lonely. Mertes explains it:

Loneliness is the experience of the victim because no one wants to hear the story of the victim or even believe in it. Here comes the second aspect of being a victim: the victims are "sacrificed". There may be no interest in the story of the victim because the story of the victim threatens the marriage of the parents, the reputation of the institution and the peace of the community. The victim is in danger, because his experience puts the system in which he lives in danger' (Mertes, 2010, n. 2).

Different studies have found that sexual abuse also damages the survivor's faith in God. The first impact can be that 'a survivor may question God's benevolence' (Fogler et al 2008a, p. 340). Some victims not only have a crisis of faith, but even question the existence of God (McLaughlin 1994, p. 157). Rossetti (1995) found that Catholic victims of clergy-child sexual abuse experience a profound loss of spirituality. Many survivors transfer their negative feelings towards the perpetrator onto God. Such feelings include anger, mistrust, and alienation (Ganje-Fling & McCarthy 1996, p. 254).

Pargament affirms that the spiritual consequences can take three different forms: 'struggles with the divine (e.g., feelings of anger, abandonment, or fear in relation to God), interpersonal struggles (e.g. religious tension and conflict with family, church members and leaders, denomination), and intrapsychic struggles (e.g. religious doubts, questions about dogma, conflicts between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours)' (Pargament 2008, p. 404). Survivors of CPSA may find themselves struggling with all three—the divine, the religious community, and internal conflicts and confusion'. (Pargament 2008, p. 404).

Institutional mistrust, social alienation from the church community and spiritual conflicts are the main effects on survivors of CPSA. To this list we can add the traumatic sense of betrayal (Durà Vilà G., Littlewood R. & Leavey G., 2013, p. 38). Rossetti considers that more than the sexual contact itself, the victims are most traumatized by the betrayal of trust (Rossetti, 1995,

p. 1470). Wells also affirms that 'clergy sexual abuse is a trauma that denudes the soul of the basic sense of trust that is so needed in the quest for spirituality. Contamination of the sacred rituals is the result of the one who pledges his faith to God, only to be betrayed by his representative through sexual abuse' (Wells 2003, p. 211)

### 1.3. Research Method

After receiving approval from the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee, we developed and conducted semi-structured personal interviews with each participant.<sup>7</sup> The interviews involved an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning was on both the short and long-term impact of sexual abuse. At the same time we asked about how sexual abuse might have consequences or not for a sense of faith, religious identity and sense of self. The precise nature of the questions that we asked was not determined in advance, they varied depending on how the interview developed. The first part of the interview asked about the psychological consequences of the abuse on their sense of self-esteem, relationships and professional life. The second part explored how sexual abuse might have consequences for their sense of faith and religious identity and if it changed their perception of God and the Catholic Church.

Each individual interview was conducted in Spanish and generally lasted for about one hour. The interview was recorded on a digital audio system and all information was transcribed *verbatim* into Spanish and then translated into English and analysed. To analyse the interviews, we used the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method (Smith, 2004). This method tries to evaluate the participant's life and world and how they give meaning to experiences and events. The approach is phenomenological because it tries to explore the perceptions or accounts of an event or situation. At the same time, it considers the active role of the researchers during the process in which they interpret and make sense of another's personal world (Smith and Osborne, 2003). It is a qualitative study in which we will try to give voice to the concerns of the participants while interpreting and making sense of their claims. This method involves a 'double interpretation', interpreting the viewpoint of the victim through the perspective of the researcher.

<sup>7</sup> The Impact of Church Sexual Abuse on the Faith and Religious Identity of Male Survivors: A Case Study of the Sodalitium Christianae Vitae Abuse in Lima', Ethics Committee reference number 15/170. Ethics Committee reference number 15/170. We are very grateful to Dr. Tess Patterson, Department of Psychological Medicine, University of Otago, for help and guidance on creating the questionnaire and analyzing the responses.

Different studies identify psychological and spiritual consequences that may occur for victims of CPSA (Benkert – Doyle, 2009, p. 235). Nevertheless, there is often a great deal of variation among former victims in relation to the subsequent difficulties that they experience. Canton considers that the consequences of CPSA are quite varied and it is better to study the influences that contribute to differences in individual's adjustment following victimization (Canton – Canton, 2010, p. 497). Due to these varied consequences, we chose to do a qualitative study in which, rather than analysing statistical data or deriving conclusions in an inductive way, the method offered the possibility of deepening the understanding of each participant's individual experience of abuse and how each person tried to cope with that event.

Due to relatively small scale of the project, and the qualitative nature of the research, we cannot claim that the findings are representative of survivors more generally. Much further work would be needed to provide evidence of this. The report is not intended to support wide-ranging claims about how all victims are likely to feel, but to offer a focussed insight into the experiences of a small group of interviewees in a specific context. In addition, the research background of both researchers is in theology. This shared background is a strength in as much as it promotes attention to issues of faith and religious experience that are often missed in investigations into the consequences of sexual abuse. At the same time, however, neither of us can claim professional expertise or training in social science, psychology, or the health sciences. We are grateful to colleagues in these areas, and on the University's Research Ethics Committee, who have generously helped and guided us in how we can undertake the investigation with rigour and concern for ethical integrity. Our primary purpose has been to understand the impact that the experiences had on the interviewees, and to make this more widely available for discussion and reflection within both wider society and in the church. In undertaking this task, we have been moved by the dignity and courage of the interviewees in speaking of their experiences and allowing it to be shared.

There are eight male victims of sexual abuse in the study: all of them victims of sexual abuse within the Catholic Community 'Sodalitium Christianae Vitae'. The sexual abuse took place when the participants were minors or young adults (13-18 years old). The abuse incidents disclosed ranged from psychological abuse with sexual content ( $n = 8$ ), to sexual touching ( $n = 3$ ), to penetrative sexual abuse ( $n = 3$ ). The participants now range in age from 35 to 55 years old.

This group of victims subsequently pressed Catholic Church authorities to investigate the abuse and hold perpetrators accountable. Six of the participants in this study have submitted testimony to the Peruvian journalist Pedro Salinas, which resulted in the publication in Peru in October 2015 of *Mitad monjes, mitad soldados. Lo que el Sodalicio no quiere que sepas*.

Dr. Figueroa, one of the researchers of this study was previously a member of the Marian Community of Reconciliation (MCR), a Catholic Association of lay consecrated women, which is the female branch of Sodalicio. Dr. Figueroa served as

the MCR General Superior for 9 years (1991-1998). Since 2006 various male victims from Sodalicio have contacted her to denounce sexual abuse perpetrated by members of SCV. In 2006 she began an investigation that continued over a six-year period, and during which time she found more victims. She helped these victims to present accusations against the founder, Luis Fernando Figari, to the ecclesiastical court in Lima, and also to the Vatican in 2011. During this time, Dr. Figueroa has developed a relationship of trust with the victims.

The transcription of the interviews has been anonymized to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. The participants gave their permission to the researchers to reuse anonymized published testimony and other material from *Half Soldiers, Half Monks*, and to present it under the same pseudonym as used in the book. We are grateful to both the participants and to Pedro Salinas for their agreement to this. The participant's names that were also used in Pedro Salinas' book are: Santiago, Tomás, Juan, Nicolás, Matías and José Enrique. Two of the participants gave no information to the Pedro Salinas book but wanted to participate in this research. We have added them with the pseudonyms of: Roberto and Xavier.

The participants in this research refer to four accused perpetrators of sexual abuse: Luis Fernando Figari, founder of Sodalicio; Germán Doig, General Vicar, second of the Institution (now deceased); a former superior of Sodalicio and member of its General Council (not able to be named); and Jeffery Daniels, former member of Sodalicio and close friend of Germán Doig.

#### **1.4. Findings: Listening to Male Survivors of Church Sexual Abuse**

This study is notable for the very wide range of emotional and psychological impact on each individual. In this study our desire to use the qualitative method has been supported by the complexity of human beings and their experiences. The pre-history before the abuse and the individual personality differences are factors that have to be considered when we talk about the impact of sexual abuse in each individual.

The IPA method suggests highlighting the recurrent themes that emerged during the interviews. We analysed and categorized the main themes. The categorization reflects the different types of psychological and spiritual consequences of sexual abuse. These themes confirm the findings found in other literature concerning CPSA.

### **2. Psychological consequences**

#### **2.1. Damage to self-esteem**

One of the most documented consequences of sexual abuse is low self-esteem and problems of self-identity. This decline in self-esteem experienced by many victims is well documented (Rossetti, 1995, p. 1470). In a qualitative study Fater and Mullaney affirm that 'The abuse invades all areas of survivors' lives, resulting in self-sabotage, negative self-perceptions, altered relationships, and estrangement from support systems. The pervasive effects of abuse include feelings of unworthiness and low self-esteem, undermining job performance, home life, and intimate relationships'

(Fater and Mullaney, 2000 p. 289).

Two of the questions that we made to the participants were related to their sense of self-esteem and their personal identity:

*Did the abuse cause you to think differently about yourself and your personal identity, for example, how you saw yourself?*

*What impact, if any, did the abuse have on your own sense of self-esteem? Did it influence how you considered yourself?*

Answering these questions Roberto, one of the participants answered:

*I have carried a very damaged self-esteem for years, and I am a very dependent person and this has not changed. I think the abuse made me very dependent on authority. If my superior approved me, I felt good. If he censured me, I felt like the worst shit in the universe. That didn't change, it deepened. (...)*

*I began to understand that I had experienced sexual abuse and an abusive culture when I was older. There was always a guru that knew everything and you didn't. I was 40 years old and I continued depending on the will of the superior. I feel now that I am a childish person. I think that would be the best description of the personality damage that I have suffered. I have remained childlike, but not in a good way. I am still dependent on people. And at 40 years old it is not normal that you depend on your father or your mother for approval in anything.*

*My self-esteem was damaged because of the abuse. I have felt like a piece of shit, crap for many years. I was looking for someone to help me to understand that stuff. The understanding of myself, even my religious interpretation is damaged. I have no problem with the Church; I have no problem with Jesus; I have a problem with myself. What happens in Sodalicio's education is that it created huge tension in the individual. You had to be perfect; you had to be a saint, without being. And if you were not perfect you had to pretend that you were. That perfectionism caused great distress and anguish for everybody.*

Roberto has a very clear idea that the abuse damaged his self-esteem and negatively affected his maturity, specifically his ability to integrate with the mores of the adult world. The negative adjectives that Roberto uses to describe himself express the profound violation of the self that abuse can cause: *'I felt like a piece of shit, crap for many years'*. One of Roberto's concerns is that he continues feeling like a *'childish person'*. He adds: *'I am still dependent on people. And at 40 years old it is not normal that you depend on your father or your mother for approval in anything'*. He considers that *'it is not normal'*. He is conscious that there has been a gap in his psychological development, such that he continued depending on the approval of others. The abusive relationship with the perpetrator and the authoritarian experience

with his superiors established a dependent and dysfunctional relationship that didn't allow him to grow and develop in a mature and healthy way: *'I have remained childlike but not in a good way'*.

*José Enrique:*

*I began developing another personality, an armor. In some moments I became confused with my own identity.*

*When I became submissive I lived in perfect obedience: I loved to accomplish their orders as if they were orders given by myself. I removed any sense of self but they made you believe the opposite: that you were actually awakening to yourself and that you were discovering who you really were. Many people have told me that I am like a "candy": hard outside and soft inside. If you overcome the armor that I designed so as not to be hurt, you will find a very fragile person. I am more fragile than I want to accept, even in the most private moments'. (...)*

*I've created an armor, a self-defense armor. If a thief came he would not be able to steal from me because I manifest fear in others. And that is how I have managed to defend myself from a world that has assaulted me.*

*After many years I am conscious that I developed a strong and frightening image to defend myself from my own frustration, my own pain.*

As the Commission for Ethics and Reconciliation has concluded, the obedience required of the Sodalicio members destroyed their individual will. As Jose affirms: *'I removed any sense of self'*. The extreme obedience required of José did not allow him to develop his own personality. At the same time, the abuse made him build an armor to protect himself from his own sadness and pain.

## **2.2. Damage to identity**

One of the results of male victimization may be that a young man has been conditioned to believe that it is his own weakness, his failure as a male, or perhaps his behaviour or appearance that caused his victimization (Hussey Strom and Singer, 1992). Coxell and King affirm that *'a confusion about sexual orientation is often seen among men who have been sexually assaulted by other males. Feelings of ambiguity about sexual orientation post- assault can affect men regardless of their sexual orientation before the assault'* (Coxell-King 2010, p. 385).

In this regard the experience of the participants is very interesting.

*Nicolas explains:*

*I think that the atmosphere of the community weakened your sexual orientation and ended up confusing you. It was a very closed community and very aware of the sins of lust. It was a community of men who had no relations with women - not even friendly relations, because we were consecrated and we were not allowed to contact women or be near them. I*

won't say that all of the men were confused about their identity, but it was strange.

*One part of my brain tried to believe the superior who told me that the abuse was nothing, but the other part of my brain was not stupid. There is still something left of yourself, some form of critical thinking, moral judgment or common sense. This part is what SCV tries to eliminate by slogans and behaviours, and at that level it generated some suspicion about my identity. It is strange that another man liked me. Why did he approach me? Am I slightly effeminate? It's something that happens at an unconscious level. But I believe it has left its mark. In psychoanalysis it has come out several times. More than having distrust in others, I feel suspicious of myself. This event, in particular, made me distrust my own manhood and myself.*

*On the other hand, you have broken with half of humanity, with the female world. Usually any heterosexual person cements his manhood in contact with the opposite gender, but as we didn't have this, because it was seen as something negative and demonic, it created a kind of masturbatory mirror: you just saw men, you only watched yourself, you were too aware of yourself. You lived in a world created by a non-heterosexual person like Figari. That system did not help people to discern their sexual identity or their human identity in general.*

Nicolas considers that it was not just the event of sexual abuse that generated confusion about his own identity. He thinks that the culture, behaviours and thoughts within Sodalicio also had an important role in this problem. Nicolas affirms that one idea that was repeated to the members of Sodalicio was that women were something 'negative and demonic'. Another idea was the constant awareness of the sins of lust. Nicolas observes: 'it was a very closed community and very aware of the sins of lust'. The second element that Nicolas underlines is the extreme power that the superiors exercised over him, eliminating his personality and generating suspicion about his own identity. He recognized that the Sodalicio power base made him give up his own critical thinking, his moral judgment or common sense: he just believed and trusted in his superiors. He added:

*The experience in SCV made me construct a new personality over my original personality, which tended invariably to be in favour of SCV. I suffered a major depression just before leaving SCV trying to detach myself from that newly formed enclosed personality. This generated a brutal anxiety within me, and I still have it.*

The third element that Nicolas considers critical is the unhealthy environment of the community in which he lived. Nicolas was recruited when he was just 13 years old, so he was in the process of finding his own sexual identity: 'It was a community of men only who had no relations with women'. According to Nicolas, the Sodalicio



environment was extremely sexually repressed. Young people were not allowed to have contact with women. So, as Nicolas noted: *'The same system does not help people to discern their sexual identity or their human identity in general'*.

The unhealthy way of thinking about sex within Sodalicio plus the sexual abuse itself created a real disorientation for Nicolas about his own identity. After the sexual abuse, Nicolas thought: *'It is strange that another man liked me. Why did he approach me? Am I slightly effeminate?'*

### *Santiago*

Santiago asserts that one of the most difficult impacts to overcome after the sexual abuse was the idea that he was homosexual:

*That was for me the most difficult thing. For such a long time Figari put the idea of men, but no women - no women in my mind. So to go away from that was very hard. (...) "it is not good to have a girlfriend". Figari said. Santiago remembered that he had to split up with her. (...) In addition, his sexuality (Figari's sexuality) was not very clear. He always told me stories about Africa, in my spiritual direction. He said that there was a group in Africa where men had sex with other men. He played down the gender of sex. He had problems with women. Once he said that sex was just a cultural thing, that sex between men was not good, but it happens, while having sex with women was not good at all. He obliged me to split up with my girlfriend. I did it. He did it with all of us. He tried to mould us.*

*For a long time I had to learn again to be a man. When I was 16 years old I liked to go on the bus and look people in the eyes until they looked away. Then suddenly I just couldn't do it anymore. I thought perhaps they will think I am gay, or I am flirting with them. Well, first I thought I was gay but I realized that I didn't like men. So my focus was: ok, I must not seem gay in anything I do. When you are old it doesn't matter, but when you're a young boy it is terrible. I had to study again how to be natural.*

The experience of abuse left him confused him about his identity and uncertain of his sexuality. This was compounded by the perpetrator who spoke to him about the unsuitability of having sex with women, and said that sex with men was preferred. The perpetrator's ideas about sex, and the abuse itself, impacted negatively on his sense of self.

### **2.3. Guilt**

*Roberto* telling us his story affirms:

*I erased the abuse; I overcame it, but I think there is still a very strong undercurrent of guilt. What I mean is, because I was already a guilty guy the abuse increased this feeling a lot. I felt I had to be pure, exemplary and I never talked to anybody (except my superior) about my inner things, my miseries.*

Roberto manifests two things that made him felt guilty. First of all he felt responsible for the abuse. He felt like a sinner: *'I felt I had to be pure, exemplary'*. As often happens, the victim is not able to blame the person that they trust (in this case his spiritual director). Roberto took all the responsibility on his shoulders; he felt far away from his ideal of purity and sainthood. Another source of guilt for him was maintaining a secret about something that was wrong: *'I never talked to anybody (except my superior) about my inner things, my miseries'*. Trying to *'erase the abuse'* without facing the event could be another reason why the sense of guilt increased. It is very hard for the victim to understand that the perpetrator has manipulated them to such an extent that they feel complicit in the secret. To break the silence meant to lose the approval, or the love, of the person in which they have deposited their life and confidence.

Xavier

*First of all I want to apologize. Sorry for my failure to speak out. How many children and adolescents since my experience have passed through the hands of Jeffery Daniels. At that time I was very innocent, and only wanted to be loved by someone. (...) I feel angry, furious, feeling that I have could stopped him at the time. And I did not. And it's something that I blame myself for. I know I should not blame myself for it but it is inside me. (...) I know it was not in my power. I thought that Jeffery Daniels was just doing those things to me; really it is not my fault. I know I am not guilty but still I feel that. I could have stopped the abuse of 10 or 15 children, who came later. I do not know how many...*

Rationally, Xavier feels that he was not guilty. He comprehends that he was just a young boy who just wanted to be loved and was sexually abused by a trusted adult. Yet, he is still partly blaming himself for the event, and his emotional side still asserts his guilt: *'First of all I want to apologize'*. This may be because of the manipulation and abuse of power and trust that he suffered. He now recognizes that his unconscious has suffered emotional damage: *'I know that I am not responsible for the abuse but it is something unconscious and I have to go to therapy. It is something that is within me. I know it's not true; he was the abuser and psychopath...'* Xavier is just processing all that happened when he was a young boy. Xavier blames himself and believes that he could perhaps have even stopped the perpetrator: *'I could have stopped the abuse of 10 or 15 children'*. It is very common for victims to prefer blaming themselves than to recognize the powerlessness of the original situation. Blaming themselves is often less painful than recognizing the absolute powerlessness of the abuse.

#### 2.4. Sexualization

The victims may present 'experiences with inappropriate repertoires of sexual behaviour, confusions and misconceptions about their sexual self-concepts and with unusual emotional associations to sexual activities' (Finkelhor & Brown 1985, p. 2).

In a quantitative study Finkelhor states that sexual abuse is associated with long-term difficulties in intimate sexual relationships (Finkelhor et al., 1989). According to Senn the more severe sexual abuse is associated with riskier adult sexual behaviour (Senn et al 2007).

### Tomás

*I have always had problems being constant in my relationships. I have never let anyone split with me. I always split first. I attribute that to my sense of abandonment. It is a kind of reproach to life. I always break relationships. None of the women I have been with, have ever left me, I have always left them. Do you understand? And I did it without regret. I came from a relationship with Doig where he left me without explanation. Then I went to the formation centre in San Bartolo. He never even said a word: he never explained anything to me.*

Tomás feels that the problem in all his intimate relationships with women after the abuse has been due to his sense of 'abandonment'. Doig never gave him an explanation, never said a word to Tomás and he had to carry this loss without understanding and with a profound sense of abandonment and solitude. This feeling was so strong that Tomás never wanted to feel it again so he blocked any possibility of a profound bond in relationship. Tomás never lowered his defences, blocking all type of emotions and feelings in his relationships: *I have always left them. Do you realize? And I did it without regret.* He himself considers it strange that he never had any feelings after leaving his girlfriends.

### Xavier

*I have serious sexual problems. I have the same disease that Jeffery Daniels had. The only thing is that I have not abused any children. I live with horrible consequences. And I have giant problems. I am a person that has been abused and I have sexual desires for teenagers and adolescents. But of course I don't do anything because first of all I have lived it and second I am a moral person, I am conscious and I would never do anything like that. But f\*\*\*! You tell me if it is not horrible and brings you a lot of consequences in your sexual life. I have a very high sexuality, as a continuous and strong desire.*

*Obviously I did not have sex with my bosses, but the problem in my life is that sex is always there following the abuse. For example working in a company with 300 girls, I was always chasing girls rather than working hard and trying to develop professionally. The abuse affected me and continues to affect me. I have serious problems in my sexuality. This is the sexuality that I have now. I know I have to go to a psychologist and try to fix everything.*

*My sexual desire is huge and this creates many problems with my girlfriends. And when I talk to them about my desires, wishes and phobias it also affects them a lot. They are shocked.*

Xavier feels that his sexual life has been severely affected by the sexual abuse: 'sex is always there'. He has to deal with an excessive eroticisation: 'a very high sexuality' and a continuous 'strong desire'. This eroticisation has been a real obstacle to the formation of intimate relationships with women, but it has also stopped him from concentrating on his professional life: 'I was always chasing girls rather than working'. But what hurts him most is feeling that he is similar to his perpetrator: 'I have the same disease as Jeffrey Daniels'. He stresses that it is a 'horrible consequence' and a 'giant problem', that he has a desire for teenagers. The perpetrators didn't have limits and this also created a lack of sexual boundaries for the victims. Xavier did not act upon his desires for young people because he considers himself a moral person with values, but he suffered a great deal of guilt because of those desires: 'you tell me if it is not horrible'. For Xavier, having such desires was almost as bad as actually acting out them out and that is why he states he has the same disease as the perpetrator.

## 2.5. Powerlessness

According to Finkelhor the dynamic of powerlessness consists of the repeated overruling and frustration of desires and wishes, along with a reduced sense of efficacy and a sense of disempowerment. There are a number of aspects of childhood sexual abuse that play a central role in the dynamic of powerlessness, not least of which is the repeated and undesired invasion of the body through threat and deceit (Finkelhor & Brown 1985).

*Santiago:*

*I have been letting my rage out, I have had many nightmares. I remember that before '86 I had a constant dream for two or three years in which I tried to hit Figari and in the dream he always went away and I was not able to hit him. But I remember that in April '86 I had a dream in which I punched him badly. It took me 10 years. 10 years to punch him. It took me 10 years to change the situation in my dreams; 10 years to be conscious and change the situation. (...) until now I have had different problems because of that horrific time and this is something that has to be known. I thought I was going to grow as a businessman, a scientist (...) but Figari became so big that if I opened my mouth he would have destroyed me.*

Santiago refers to how for ten years he could not even punch Figari in his dreams. His unconscious would not allow him. His pain and powerlessness was so deep that he had the same dream for ten years: 'It took me 10 years to change the situation in my dreams'. Santiago asserts that he couldn't develop and grow as a person because of this sense of powerlessness: 'I thought I was going to grow as a businessman, a

*scientist*'. He felt helpless because he couldn't speak out about the abuse: *'if I opened my mouth he would have destroyed me'*.

Santiago continues talking about the feeling of helplessness that continues in his adult life:

*These days I have realized another consequence. I allow others to abuse me, just so that I will never give the impression that I could be an abuser. I have so much terror about abuse that I am not capable of doing anything wrong against anybody. Trying to not hurt somebody is good: the problem is that sometimes just because of the fear that I am taking advantage of someone I damage myself senselessly. It happens all the time in my life. For example: I had a business partner and he was cheating on me. I should have denounced him, but I felt that people would think that I was also cheating, so I didn't do anything about his lies. He took all the equipment and he ruined me but I acted as a gentleman. I usually let myself be abused continuously. It is more important for me to feel that I do not abuse anyone.*

Santiago feels deeply helpless; he is aware, but it is very difficult for him to take healthy and tolerable decisions: *'I should have denounced him, but I felt that people would think that I was also cheating, so I didn't do anything about his lies'*. The feeling of being a victim is so devastating that just the thought that he could harm anyone makes him repeat destructive relationship patterns in which he has no power: *'I usually let myself be abused continuously'*.

### 3. Spiritual Consequences

Pargament affirms that the spiritual consequences can take three different forms: 'struggles with the divine (e.g. feelings of anger, abandonment, or fear in relation to God), interpersonal struggles (e.g. religious tension and conflict with family, church members and leaders, denomination), and intrapsychic struggles (e.g. religious doubts, questions about dogma, conflicts between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors)' (Pargament 2008, p. 404). Survivors of CPSA may find themselves struggling with all three—the divine, the religious community and internal conflicts and confusion'. (Pargament 2008, p. 404).

#### 3.1. Feelings of betrayal and lack of trust

Betrayal trauma is defined as 'a situation in which the individual suffers a violation from a person or institution in which he depends on' (Durà Vilà G., Littlewood R. & Leavey G., 2013, p. 38).

*Santiago*

*Figari made him sit on his knees just in his underwear saying to him that it helped him for his equilibrium. (...) Santiago has other stories. In San Bartolo, Figari ordered him and one of his friends to sit in the lotus flower position, undressed and with a candle between them. After some minutes of meditation, Figari asked them to touch each other. We touched our faces,*

*our chests but Figari shouted: "you have to touch your penis, testicles, everything" (Salinas, 2015, p. 165).*

*When Figari tried to sodomize Santiago he had difficulties with the penetration. In that moment, with the coolness of a surgeon, he went to his night table, opened the drawer and took out a Vaseline jar to continue the ritual. "The most strange thing is that when he was penetrating me he asked me to masturbate. And the weirdest thing: after that he asked me to go to mass". (Salinas, 2015, p. 165)*

*It was not the only time that it happened. (...) It was always in the same room. I remember the night table, the lights, how the bedroom was organized, the pictures, I remember his mother walking in there". (Figari's mother lived with him)*

About his feelings after the abuse Santiago explained in the interview:

*Consciousness came little by little. I felt like a storm. Everything was moving around me. I was isolated. I didn't want to talk. I knew that something was wrong. I didn't improve, I didn't acquire any ability or power, I realized that I had been cheated.*

*Sexual abuse destroys the most inner part of yourself. (...) If someone rapes you it is totally different. (...) I think that our case is the worst thing that they can do. I think I am at my most traumatic central point: I don't trust people.*

Santiago explained that Figari promised him that he would gain paranormal powers if he obeyed him. He was a young boy and he was curious about paranormal powers: 'I wanted to levitate', he recounts. At the same time, Figari was his spiritual director, Santiago trusted him. He states with certainty that sexual abuse is totally different from a rape, because 'sexual abuse destroys the most inner part of yourself'. What was this destroyed inner part? Santiago says that the most traumatic point was he ceased to trust people: 'I don't trust people'. This is betrayal trauma: the fact that someone who is trusted as a spiritual guide betrays you. For

Santiago the sexual abuse itself was not the most traumatic point. The most traumatic point was being wounded in his 'most inner part', the most vulnerable dimension.

*Tomás*

*During the sessions of spiritual direction Germán asked him to remove my clothes for yoga and perform exercises of yoga in which we transmitted energy one to another. Once he asked me to stay absolutely naked, he hugged me and he began kissing me and he said 'don't worry, I love you in Christ, as a friend, this is absolutely natural'. This continued for three months. In another occasion he asked me to penetrate him. Other times he asked me to masturbate myself till he ejaculated and he said: 'it is not a sin, I am your superior and you have to trust in me. 'This is a spiritual*

*path. It is just for some who are elected, it is not for all'. (Salinas, 2015, p. 197).*

*Germán Doig ended the relationship before I went to S. Bartolo, he never gave me an explanation. (...) I had loss after loss. Germán Doig was a loss for me; he split with me without explanation. As when you have a boyfriend, with someone that you are in love. But I blocked everything. I had a sense of loss.*

*Now I feel sorry, sadness. I asked myself, Germán Doig died, where is he now? I don't have anger. Absolutely. I've never had anger. I have anger against Figari but not against Doig, I think that I have Stockholm syndrome. I think that it is so painful to think that the people you trusted betrayed you and that that is why I cannot feel anything against him.*

Tomás feels sadness and a sense of loss. Germán Doig was his friend, his spiritual father, his superior and then he split from the relationship without giving Tomás any explanation: '*Germán Doig was a loss for me; he split with me without explanation*'. At the same time Tomás realizes that he cannot feel anger against his perpetrator: '*I think that I have Stockholm syndrome*'. Tomás has blocked any negative feelings against Doig because it is too "*painful to think that the people you trusted betrayed you*":

*"I cried when Germán Doig died. It is a denial. I denied what Germán Doig had done to me. (...) With my psychiatrist I am only now starting to see the negative aspect of abuse. As you read in different articles, some people take till they are 50 years old to realize what happened to them. Also, it is very different when someone rapes you in a violent way; here it was not like that".*

Juan

*It was very common in Sodalicio to caress each other hand to hand, and hug each other and remain hugged. With one sodalite I didn't have anything sexual but I caressed him and hugged. We didn't touch each other, we just hugged. When Figari found out, he came out of his room and he took a stick 15cm long. He put it upright on the sofa and he said: "sit on the stick". I freaked out. I said to myself: he knows what is better, he is my spiritual director and I sat and I remained sat. Then he said: "look at the Cross, look how you make God suffer because of the way you are". To be honest I forgot this incident for many years. It broke my trust.<sup>8</sup>*

*I realized in my late 40's what he had done with the stick up my ass. I understood that I was a victim. Sodalicio destroyed my faith in humanity.*

<sup>8</sup> Although Figari was privately abusing young members of Sodalicio at the same time publicly expressed a strong condemnation against any homosexual behaviour, and Juan's punishment appears to reflect this.

*Even until now, I always expect the worst from everybody. It is horrible to have a relationship with me.*

After the abuse, Juan immediately felt that his trust had been broken. A sense of trust is necessary for relationships with others and also for spirituality. Juan had lost this connection: *'Sodalicio destroyed my faith in humanity'*.

### 3.2. Damage to faith

According to Pargament, sexual violation by clergy represents 'an even greater desecration than violation by a biological parent, for clergy take formal vows to protect and nurture the spiritual well-being of all of their followers; they are legitimated to enact the role of God. Thus, when a clerical figure violates his or her ordination, responsibility, and privilege as a representative of God in a human relationship, it is as if God himself has committed the violation' (Pargament 2008, p. 403). We wanted to explore and examine if the same dynamics occurred for consecrated religious members.

In the interview we asked: *Did the abuse have any impact on your religious faith and your sense of God?*

Tomás answered:

*Catastrophic. When I understood that I was cheated, I lost my faith. Now I have left God on stand-by. It is too much for me to handle. (...) At the beginning, I abandoned the faith. (...) Now when I pass near a church and I see the Blessed Sacrament I feel God. He has not left me. But now my relationship with God is on an orange light, on stand-by. It gives me too much pain and sadness to feel that he abandoned me and just to ponder the possibility that he failed me is unbearable''.*

Before the abuse Tomás recalls his spiritual experience: *'As a child I had two drivers on my faith: my home and my parish life. I had a very intense experience. I felt God very close to me. I felt like I was protected'*. The experience of abuse made Tomás lose his childhood innocence and his strong faith and at the same time left him with a profound spiritual struggle that he was not able to handle: *'my relationship with God is on an orange light, on stand-by'*. Today, he prefers not having a relationship with God and he wishes to leave this relationship on stand-by, because the thought that God could have failed him is too painful. He still feels God, but the thought that God could have abandoned him makes him sad. His relationship with God was close and intense and it influenced all the dimensions of his life as a child and young adult - his former source of joy and protection has now become a source of *'pain and sadness'*.

José Enrique affirms:

*They have snatched our faith with a clerical penis. They have robbed my life's project, my essence and that is the greatest violence that can exist.*

The image used by Jose Enrique is strong: a *clerical penis*. He appears to be speaking



metaphorically here but is interesting that the word clerical is associated here with an act of violence that robbed José Enrique's faith. He considers that the most damaging violence perpetrated against him was the stealing of the meaning of his life, '*his life's project*'.

Xavier states:

*Yes. I'm not religious because of the abuse. And not only because of the abuse, but also because of the cover-up and the corruption of the Church. It has had a huge impact on my religious life.*

*If God exists, why did he send this trial to a little kid? What kind of psychopath is God that would put a child in a sexual trial at 14 years with a person that doubled his age? It does not make any sense. It has no sense.*

*Yes. The abuse has had an impact on my religiousness, or on my lack of religiousness.*

The sexual abuse has caused fundamental theological problems for Xavier. How can a good God allow such terrible evil and suffering in his name? *It doesn't make sense*, argues Xavier. Xavier has been abused by a representative of God, and makes the association between God and the one who committed the abuse in the name of God: '*what kind of psychopath is God?*' He also expresses profound anger against the people who covered up the perpetrators. This generated a deep disbelief in the Church and a general mistrust of religious institutions.

Santiago

Santiago considered that he was never a religious person so he feels that '*the abuse didn't have an impact on my religious faith*'. After stating that, he added:

*Perhaps I would have been more religious, but after the experience I now have an aversion to religious faith, the Church, the Virgin Mary and praying the rosary. Aversion. (...) When Figari did all those things to me he always told me afterwards to go to mass with him. So I associate everything with the abuse: the mass, the songs.*

Santiago is sincere about his religious feelings. He was not a religious person before the abuse and now he feels there is no possibility that he can ever have a religious experience. Figari has desecrated all the sacred places: *the Church, the Virgin Mary, the rosary, the mass*. Instead of finding God in these spaces Santiago has been cheated. All these religious symbols are now empty for him and they are associated with pain, evil and abuse.

Roberto also explains the consequences that the abuse had in his relationship with God:

*Yes, it had an impact on my interpretation and view of God. I am still living with this impact. Right now, I am reconsidering my understanding of God's love. I had a sense of a punishing- God, and like, an efficient, and concrete*

*God: if you didn't have concrete results you were not accomplishing God's plan. This interpretation of God's plan was a kind of institutional plan. And everybody repeated that: "you are ruining God's plan". For example, one day I met Figari at the Pastoral Centre and he asked me: "How are you?" As I was a guilty person I answered: "Well, not so bad". He said: "how can you be not so bad - you have to be good." And he said: "idiot, this cannot be, you cannot ruin God's plan". He insulted me and he left. So the interpretation that came from Figari was the idea that you couldn't trust in God's grace; you had to respond to grace as if it were a check account and that you were using the money that had been left for you in a bad way. It is difficult for me to distance myself from this bad theology of grace. I would like to have a more serene and free view about my own errors. (...)*

*For me this is very clear: my consciousness, my capacity for love, the tenderness that I have always experienced with people, the love that I have given and that I have received, everything has a personal meaning which is a person, not an idea: this is Jesus. Jesus is my life. (...) And I don't think that Sodalicio made this. They didn't get there. This was not Sodalicio's Christ. This fundamental theology for me is very clear.*

*But I have a correlative situation in my psychological and moral experience. I understand that any person is a sinner; we are all sinners. But I think I have an extra difficulty. I am not able to give up certain habits and I have a lack of freedom because of Sodalicio's form of spirituality. Sodalicio was useless and incapable of giving you a real spiritual life. Spiritual life in Sodalicio was completing a check list. Spiritual development in Sodalicio was very poor: do good things, avoid evil, attend to the possibility of a "disorder of affection" and love and obey the superior. If you didn't obey the superior all the other things had no value. So in that sense, I think that I'm in a searching period, sometimes with more anxiety, sometimes more serene. I am searching for what I felt in my first communion.*

Roberto affirms: 'I am reconsidering my understanding of God's love'. Roberto has discovered that Figari's image of God was a punishing and demanding God. He feels the spiritual struggle to change his vision and image of God: 'it is difficult for me to distance myself from this bad theology of grace'. Roberto has not abandoned his faith at all, but he now lives in a searching period, sometimes 'with more anxiety, sometimes more serene'.

One of the surprising aspects of the interviews is that only two of the participants reported a real relationship with God during their time at Sodalicio. Both of these participants had a connection with God before entering Sodalicio and the abuse caused them serious spiritual damage.

None of the other participants felt a personal relationship with God before or during

their time at Sodalicio. They were members of Sodalicio for other reasons. Juan affirmed: 'The only reason I accepted the faith was because of the moral authority who told me that it was true. That was an intellectual reason. I never had a religious experience, a mystical experience'. José stated: 'I didn't have a particular interest in religion; it was rather for the intellectual side, it was more an intellectual path than a practical commitment'. Santiago also affirmed: 'I have never been a very religious person'. Their motives for continuing in Sodalicio were the strong sense of community that they found and the charisma of the leaders. They didn't mention any real religious motivations. In analysing the religious impact of sexual abuse, we have to understand that Sodalicio didn't offer any real spiritual experience of God for the participants of this research. It was more about loyalty to the institution and the overall ideological principals of Sodalicio. Those initiates who were not religious before joining Sodalicio did not report feelings of abandonment by God or feelings of anger towards God after the events. However, it is important to note that this did not mean that the event did not impact their lives. In fact, all of those participants now report that an institutional religious life is no longer possible for them.

#### 4. Conclusions

The damage caused by institutional sexual abuse is often traumatic and profound. This is frequently heightened when perpetrators have a religious standing and authority. Many of the long-term consequences identified in the literature on CPSA are also mentioned by the interviewees. Even though Figari and other consecrated lay leaders were not technically clergy, they shared a similar institutional role. As the report of the Commission affirms: 'in the communities of formation, many former members were victims of physical assaults, harassment and even abuses of a sexual nature. These abuses have damaged them psychologically and in some cases negated the possibility of any return to civilian life'. The damage has been caused not only by the sexual abuse itself, but also by the years of manipulation and general lack of freedom endured by the members of Sodalicio. Furthermore, the participants indicate that sexual abuse committed by perpetrators perceived as representatives of God had a profound effect on them. It undermined their sense of confidence and self-esteem, and left them to cope with negative feelings, including their sense of institutional betrayal. For participants who did not consider themselves religious, the abuse reinforced their sense of aversion to religion. For participants who previously considered themselves religious, the abuse challenged their understanding of God. One described the impact as 'catastrophic' and felt abandoned by God as well as abandoned by the church. Another spoke of his faith being snatched away by a clerical penis.

Despite the clear need for a deeper understanding of the impact of sexual abuse on religious faith, and the obvious relevance that this has for a fuller understanding of the impact of church-related sexual abuse, very little work has been done in this area so far. This project indicates that such work is challenging to undertake, but also shows its importance for a better understanding of the destructive consequence and

long-term legacies of these abuses. Recognition of different spiritual consequences should be included alongside attention to physical and psychological consequences. Understanding how the physical, psychological and spiritual often occur together, and can magnify each other, needs to be part of a holistic pastoral response to these traumatic experiences.

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### Appendix 1: Questionnaire

This was the semi-structured interview that changed depending on the development of each personal interview.

#### 1. *Context*

Say a little bit about your home background and growing up (for example, the place, your family, your religious commitment and how this compared or contrasted with others in the family)

#### 2. *Background prior to the abuse*

2.1. How and when did you first come into contact with the community, and how closely did you become involved? (your age, your involvement, the duration)

2.2. What positive feelings and experiences did you have with the community?

2.3. How would you describe yourself at that time? For example, confident, shy, trusting, fearful, authentic, depressed.

2.4. How would you describe your religious faith and your sense of God at that time?

#### 3. *Experience of abuse*

Tell me about your experience of abuse.

#### 4. *Emotional consequences of sexual abuse*

4.1. How would you describe the feelings/emotions that the abuse caused within you?

a. What were your feelings/emotions at the time?

b. Have these changed over time or are they still largely the same?

4.2. In what different ways did this experience affect you? For example, your relationship with other people, your ability to experience trust, your decisions.

4.3. Did the abuse cause you to think differently about yourself and your personal identity, for example, who you saw yourself as being?

4.4. Have you ever linked the experience of abuse with shortcomings in your professional, economic or emotional life?

#### 5. *Impact of sexual abuse on faith and religious identity*

5.1. What impact, if any, did the abuse have on your religious faith and sense of God?

[Follow up] Were there any specific thoughts or images of God that you had that changed because of the sexual abuse?

5.2. If your faith and sense of God have changed in response to the abuse, how



did you feel about this at the time and how do you feel about it now (positive, negative or indifferent)?

5.3 Did your attitude to the church change in any way as a result of what you experienced? [How? Why? When?]

5.4 Did you feel the support of the Church or any support from one of its members after your disclosure?

6. *Impact of sexual abuse on male identity*

6.1. What impact, if any, did the abuse have on your own sense of your self esteem? Did it influence how you considered yourself?

6.2. Did the abuse have any impact on your sense of your own male identity? Did you experience any changes or different feelings about your identity?

7. *Conclusion*

Is there any advice or anything else you might want to say to someone else who has suffered sexual abuse?

## Appendix 2: Chronology of the Scandal in Sodalicio

**2000:** Jose Enrique Escardó Steck a former sodalite publishes a series of columns in the Peruvian magazine "People", in which he denounces the psychological and physical abuse that he has suffered during the years he lived in Sodalicio's communities (Pighi, 2016).

**2007:** In October, the police find the sodalite Daniel Murguía Ward in a hotel taking photos of a naked 11 year old boy. Murguía Ward was very close to Figari, the founder of the organization. Two days after the arrest, Sodalicio announces that Daniel Murguía is expelled. Sodalicio affirmed: 'this situation was unknown to us. We consider it completely unacceptable, and it has surprised and painfully hurt our entire community'. After the hotel episode, Murguía is jailed in Peru for a year and a half (Pighi, 2016).

**2011:** Three former members accuse Figari of sexual abuse against them, when they were young. They present their accusations to the Peruvian Church tribunal and the Vatican.

A former candidate for sainthood within Sodalicio, Germán Doig, the number two in the organization who died in 2001, is accused of the rape and sexual abuse of minors. A decade later, in 2010, after the allegations against him became public, Sodalicio authorities state that his candidacy for beatification is cancelled.

**October 2015:** Pedro Salinas, a journalist and a former sodalite, in collaboration with another journalist Paola Ugaz, publishes the book "*Mitad monjes, mitad soldados*" (Half monks, half soldiers). It contains thirty cases of psychological, physical and sexual abuse attributed to Figari dating back to the 1970s-80s.

**19th October 2015:** Sodalicio publish a statement in response to Salinas' book "Half monks, half soldiers". Sodalicio regret "the actions and omissions committed by members of the community." "To them (the victims) we ask forgiveness and we offer our willingness to listen and help". After two days Sodalicio emit a second statement in response to the book "Half monks, half soldiers." In this document, signed by Superior General Alessandro Moroni, they recognize that the first statement was "insufficient". Sodalicio reiterate its condemnation of the facts and admits that Salinas' book has "credible" evidence. The statement also notes that although Figari has denied the allegations, he is not responding to the moral obligation of providing public statements. According to Sodalicio, since 2010, Figari lives a life of retirement in Italy. However, according to immigration data Figari travels regularly to Peru ('Sodalicio: Cronologia del caso', 2015).

**23rd October 2015:** The Ecclesiastical Court of Lima, release a statement affirming that they have no competence or jurisdiction to resolve complaints against Sodalicio and Figari, as this institution depends directly on the Vatican. Regarding the complaint of "inaction" Lima's Cardinal Cipriani answers that he had sent the allegations to Rome ('Sodalicio: Cronologia del caso', 2015).

**27th October 2015:** Radio RPP releases a letter, which reveals that the Vatican has been investigating Sodalicio since April 2015 regarding allegations of rape against Luis Fernando Figari. The Vatican appoints Bishop Fortunato Pablo Urcey, bishop of Chota, as an apostolic visitor who conducts dialogues with some of the Sodalicio communities and reports back to the Vatican ('Sodalicio: Cronologia del caso', 2015).

**26 November 2015:** The authorities of Sodalicio confirm the creation of a Commission to investigate the allegations of sexual abuse against the founder of their organization, Luis Fernando Figari, and other members. The aim of this working group is to "provide the maximum possible assistance to victims" and then proceed to determine whether civil or canonical justice is needed.

**14th January 2016:** Luis Fernando Figari Rodrigo breaks his silence through a private letter distributed to some members of Sodalicio in which he declares himself innocent of the charges. In it, he states that there were 'accusations, misinformation and mistreatment'. However, he recognizes that in the 40 years he led Sodalicio, he made what he called "serious errors, failures and indiscretions".

**5th April 2016:** The movement publicly states that their founder Luis Fernando Figari is now a *persona non grata*. Through a video posted on YouTube, Alessandro Moroni, the General superior of Sodalicio, apologizes to the victims and announces a reform of the movement.

He also announces the desire to totally separate from Figari, who has lived a life of retirement in Italy since 2010. In this regard, he asks the Vatican to end 'his unsustainable retreat at our facilities'. As Iveigh accounts:

In the video, he also called for Pope Francis to expel Figari from the Sodalitium - a step only Rome can take, because of Figari's founder status. However, the Vatican has told Moroni to wait on the outcome of an inquiry into the abuse ordered last year [Editor: 2015] by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Moroni says that Figari is still in his Rome apartment "at the specific request of the Holy See", pending the visitor's report. (...) Cases presented to an ecclesiastical tribunal here were sent to Rome in 2011 and 2013 but have still not received a response beyond the visitation. Because Figari is a layman, he is not the responsibility of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which is only competent to punish clergy.

Figari himself has denied the accusations, and communicates with Moroni via his attorney (Iveigh, 2016).