Fall 2013

"The Clergy Grief Project: Investigating How Catholic Priests Grieve Losses"

Jocelyn Gregoire C.S.Sp.

Christin Jungers

Follow this and additional works at: https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-horizons

Part of the Catholic Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

Gregoire, J., & Jungers, C. (2013). "The Clergy Grief Project: Investigating How Catholic Priests Grieve Losses". *Spiritan Horizons, 8* (8). Retrieved from https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-horizons/vol8/iss8/15

Jocelyn Gregoire, C.S.Sp.
and Dr. Christin Jungers

Jocelyn Gregoire, C.S.Sp.

Fr. Jocelyn Gregoire, C.S.Sp., Ed.D, LPC, NCC, ACS, a Spiritan priest from Mauritius and former missionary in Papua New Guinea, has been involved in the counseling field for many years. He is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling, Psychology, and Special Education at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Through his expertise as a professional counselor, Fr. Gregoire has helped thousands of people across the world in their journeys toward personal growth and healing. He is a National Certified Counselor (NCC), Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), an Approved Clinical Supervisor (ACS), and a member of numerous counseling associations. He has co-authored several articles in refereed journals in the area of sexual addiction, racial and cultural identity development, and spirituality. He is also the co-author of *The Counselor's Companion: What Every Beginning Counselor Needs to Know.*

THE CLERGY GRIEF PROJECT: INVESTIGATING HOW CATHOLIC PRIESTS GRIEVE LOSSES

One of the most challenging human experiences to endure is the loss of a significant relationship through death. During the grieving process, many people turn to priests in search of comfort and compassion and with the hope that the clergy person will be able to offer a sense of meaning to the loss they have experienced (Proffitt, Cann, Calhoun, & Tedeschi, 2007). That priests are expected to provide empathy, be present to a grieving person or family, and propose theological explanations to suffering and death is a well-recognized component of their work and religious role. However, what is less well understood is how clergy experience their own grief process. The lack of attention paid in the grief literature to how priests grieve their own losses raises questions about how aspects of the priestly role intersect with their individual grieving processes. What is it like, for example, for a priest to lose a parent, friend, sibling, or confrere? To whom do priests tend to turn to satisfy their own human need for comfort when a loss is sustained? Do priests acknowledge their own grief and loss or is it considered as an unacceptable part of human experience whose recognition would only get in the way of their spiritual or religious mission? In what ways might the faith of the priest affect the grieving process, especially when viewed against the backdrop of St. Paul's remark in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 "…that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope"? These are but a few of the questions that deserve exploration in order to better understand how one of the most difficult human experiences—dealing with the death of a loved one—is lived by priests. Because so little attention has been paid to priests and their responses to loss, we have taken it to task to initiate this clergy grief project in order to understand how this challenging human experience is concretely lived by a very particular cultural group, namely, the Catholic clergy.

The clergy grief project is a three-stage endeavor, with Stage I being this article whose primary purpose is to pose questions for investigation rather than make conclusive statements about the Catholic clergy's personal grief journeys. Specifically, in this article we will explore literature about grief and the grieving process as well as the characteristics of the priestly role in order to begin to understand how a priest's religious identity has the potential to affect grief experiences. In Stage II of the project, we will use a quantitative approach to investigate the intensity

Dr. Christin Jungers

Dr. Christin Jungers is an associate professor in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program at Franciscan University of Steubenville. She received her doctoral degree in Counselor Education and Supervision from Duquesne University and has worked in the field as a counselor since 2000. Christin is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, as well as a National Certified Counselor. Her clinical work spans a variety of issues, including counseling with individuals, couples, and families. She is the co-editor of two books and the author of numerous articles.

Do priests acknowledge their own grief and loss or is it considered as an unacceptable part of human experience whose recognition would only get in the way of their spiritual or religious mission?

of grief and the level of psychological reactions associated with grief among Catholic clergy following the death of a parent, sibling, or other loved one. And, lastly, in Stage III we will take a more phenomenological approach to Catholic clergy's grieving processes by surveying their lived experiences after the death of their loved ones. Research findings will be explored in subsequent articles.

Understanding Grief: Some Basics

In order to understand grief, it is helpful to appreciate the central role that human relationships play in our lives. At their best, interpersonal relationships provide people with a sense of safety, security, and love, and they offer an environment in which people can flourish and grow. John Bowlby's (1969) noteworthy work on human attachment set the stage for scores of subsequent studies that all point towards the central role of healthy, responsive, and trustworthy relationships in normal human growth and development. Cicchetti, Rogosch, & Toth (2006) found, for example, that a warm and secure attachment between parents and their children not only aids in long-term healthy human development, but significantly decreases the chances for a person to develop a mental illness. Deci and Ryan (2008) discovered that having connections with others is a basic psychological need without which the human person cannot grow and mature as expected. Hodges, Boivin, Vitaro, and Bukowski's (1999) work revealed that children who possess many risk factors for unhealthy development, including peer victimization, but who also have a best friend are protected from the negative outcomes of these risks more than children who do not have a close friend. Waite & Joyner (2001) found that middle-aged people who are married or who have a significant relationship in their lives tend to report higher levels of happiness than those who do not. In childhood and adulthood alike, a healthy relationship is like a greenhouse that insulates one from the harsh realities of life, and thus it is not surprising that to lose an important relationship to death often leaves people feeling exposed, raw, and alone—without a buffer against the stresses and trials of daily life.

With human relationships playing such a central role in psychological well-being, it is not surprising that there is a wide body of literature that explores human responses to the loss of significant relationships through death (e.g., Aiken, 2001; Altmaier, 2011; Rando, 1984, 1993, 1995; Servaty-Seib, 2004). Martin and Doka (2000, p. 12) suggested that loss is the experience of "being deprived of or ceasing to have something that one formerly possessed or to which one was attached." They used the terms *grief* and *grieving*, meanwhile, as a way to refer to

Jocelyn Gregoire, C.S.Sp.
and Dr. Christin Jungers

the various reactions that people have when they go through any type of loss, including (but not limited to) the death of a loved one. Others (e.g., Rando, 1995) have used the term *mourning* similarly to refer to the process of coping with a loss. Grief responses, Doka and Martin (2000) explained, are a mix of ways that people try to hold onto their assumptions or beliefs about the world, while also trying to assimilate and accommodate to the reality of the loss. After losing a loved one, people enter into a world that they have never known before—a world without the physical presence or emotional support of the person whom they loved. It takes time, effort, and a great deal of energy to survey the new land of loss, let alone get used to a world in which a loved one no longer physically exists.

The journey into a world where a significant loss has happened includes some universally recognized reactions, such as shock, denial, anger, sadness, and despair (Martin & Doka, 2000; Rando, 1984). It is not uncommon for people who are grieving not to be able to comprehend the fact that their loved one has actually died, as the death may be so unexpected that it seems unreal. Others who are mourning may expect their loved one to show up suddenly at daily events at which they were always present, such as at dinner, bedtime, or a child's school play. Still others might be overcome with heartache to the extent that they question their own interest and investment in continuing to care for themselves and their other relationships and responsibilities. The death of a loved one can prompt people to question their identity, to feel as if they have lost a part of themselves, and to perceive the world as unfamiliar, unsafe, and devoid of goodness. These responses are well-known because they tend to cut across social, cultural, gender, economic, racial, and ethnic differences, even if the ways that people live out or express these reactions are affected by culture. Finally, while most theories of grief and mourning (e.g., Rando, 1995; Worden, 2002) account for reactions such as shock, anger, and disbelief, they also tend to point out that people eventually must come to terms with the reality of death, face the pain of the loss, and reinvest in their lives if they are to achieve a sense of well-being after a significant loss.

The literature on grief and theories of mourning clearly identify typical or universal responses to loss as noted above, but they also recognize that the grieving process unfolds at other levels of our human experience, such as the individual level and the group level. At the personal or individual level, grief responses are as intimate and unique as each person and each relationship (Aiken, 2001). Individual responses are affected

The death of a loved one can prompt people to question their identity, to feel as if they have lost a part of themselves...

Personality traits and the developmental phase of the person who sustained the loss also factor into individual grief responses...

by such factors as the type of relationship that was lost (e.g., parental, spousal, friend, sibling, etc.); the meaning one attached to the relationship; the circumstances under which the loss occurred; and the availability of social support following the loss (Rando, 1984). Personality traits and the developmental phase of the person who sustained the loss also factor into individual grief responses (DeSpelder & Strickland, 2002). In a sense, one person's grieving process is like no other person's and cannot ever be fully understood by another. Philosopher, Martin Heidegger, (as cited in Macquarie, 1968) suggested that we are all in the world in our own unique way and existing in a set of relationships that fundamentally constitute our existence as human persons. The uniqueness of one's own experience of being-in-the-world extends to personal relationships. Although two people may both have lost the same dear friend, neither will grieve the loss of that friend in exactly the same way.

In addition to the universal human reactions to loss and the uniquely individual side of grief, there is also a way in which the grief process is affected by one's group membership. Group membership, or the participation in a particular culture, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and so forth, has the potential to affect all aspects of human experience, including the grieving process. Sue and Sue (2008) pointed out that people interact in the world not just in universally shared ways (e.g., most people use the symbol of language to communicate) or uniquely personal ways, but that they also respond to the world out of their understanding of what it means to be a member of a particular social or cultural group. Though group membership is often overlooked as a significant factor in individual growth and identity development, it nevertheless shapes the human experience. Martin and Doka (2000) explored this idea when they looked at differences in how men and women tend to grieve. They proposed that there are patterns of grieving that relate to gender; some patterns are more strongly intuitive while others are more strongly instrumental. An intuitive pattern of grieving tends to involve the grieving person in using a great deal of energy to adapt to loss by expressing feelings, including crying or talking to others about their emotional and psychological reactions. Women often use intuitive means to deal with loss. The instrumental pattern involves the grieving person in taking a more cognitive or intellectual response to grief; this pattern of grieving frequently characterizes men's response to loss.

In what ways does being a priest inform *and* form *how a man lives his grieving process?*

The central interest of this article and the clergy grief project lies primarily at the group-level aspect of human experience. What we are most curious about is how a man's membership

Jocelyn Gregoire, C.S.Sp.
and Dr. Christin Jungers

in the clergy of the Catholic Church might interact with his grieving process. In what ways does being a priest *inform* and *form* how a man lives his grieving process? Are there common ways in which priests live their own grief, just as there are patterns to how men and women grieve or members of other social and cultural groups grieve? As noted already, these questions deserve further exploration. But, for now, we explore existing literature about the culture of the priesthood and ponder how that culture might influence the experience of grief.

The Priestly Role and Grief

The role of a priest is specifically defined; it involves particular activities and is characterized by certain moral standards and behavioral expectations. Understanding the features and characteristics of the priestly role is important when considered from the point of view of role identity theory. Role identity theory (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stets & Burke, 2000) was developed by social psychologists who suggested that a person's identity is strongly related to the social roles that he or she lives out. When a person identifies with a particular role and when others reinforce the individual's identification with that role, a person tends to take on the "expectations with regard to others' and one's own behaviors" that accompany the role (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). For example, a woman who gives birth to her first child is likely to begin to think of herself not just as a woman, a spouse, or an employee of a company, but also as a mother. As she feeds, holds, and cares for her child and as other people in her family or neighborhood comment on her "motherly" actions, her identification with the mother role is expected to develop. Similarly, when a man is ordained to the priesthood and begins to celebrate Mass regularly, officiate at religious ceremonies, wear the vestments of a priest, and hear people refer to him as "Father," his identity as a priest is anticipated to grow stronger.

Pooler (2011) noted that when people have continuous and ongoing interaction with a certain social role(s), they are likely to engage in behaviors consistent with the role. He also pointed out that a person's self-concept will increasingly be shaped by what he sees as a central social role in his life. In the examples above, the woman might, with time, find herself acting in mothering ways not just to her own children, but to other children who are not her own or even to adults whom she perceives as needing care. Likewise, the man who primarily identifies with his role as priest might behave in ways consistent with that role in most social circumstances, even non-religious ones. According to role theory, the more people identify with a role that they embody, the more they are expected to act in ways that are congruent with

...the more people identify with a role that they embody, the more they are expected to act in ways that are congruent with the role.

the role. Role identity theory thus has been described as one way of explaining how and why people make certain choices, adhere to particular perspectives, or behave in specific ways. When one understands the expectations of certain social roles, he or she may be able to explain the behaviors of people who take on those roles. What, then, are some of the common characteristics that tend to define the priestly role and, more importantly, how might they affect a priest's grieving process? We turn now to an exploration of some well-recognized characteristics of the priestly role as prescribed by the Church and by various other authors who have written about standards and expectations common to clergy of various denominations.

Catholic Church and the Priestly Role: A Sacred Ministry

In order to appreciate the identity and role of priests in the Catholic Church, it is helpful to know what official documents of the Church, such as Council decrees, papal encyclicals, and canon law, say about the priesthood. Given the vastness of the literature addressing the role of the priest, we will limit the discussion to a few key documents and points about the priestly identity. One of the first and important documents to address the topic of priestly identity came from the Council of Trent (1545-1563). In its 23rd Session, the Council discussed the writing known as "*The True and Catholic Doctrine Concerning the Sacrament of Order*" (Schroeder, 1941). This text described the role of the priest as relating primarily to the reality that a priest is a representative of Christ on earth. In addition, the decree underscored the very intimate unity between the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass and the priesthood. Both of these facets of the priestly role have been repeatedly upheld. For example, four hundred years later, at the Church's most recent council (Vatican II), Pope Paul VI promulgated *Presbyterorum Ordinis,* an official decree on the ministry and life of priests in the Catholic Church. Like the Council of Trent, Vatican II decrees reiterate the portrayal of priests as representatives of Christ on earth, stating that "by the anointing of the Holy Spirit [priests] are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the Priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the Head" (Flannery, 1996, p. 865). Vatican II also emphasized the uniqueness of the priestly role by stating that priests are unlike lay persons because, through the sacrament of holy orders, they are given the power to offer sacrifice at the Mass and forgive sins. Vatican Council II proceeded further in explaining the threefold function of priests as a) teachers called to proclaim and teach the Gospel, b) sanctifiers whose vocation is to perform sacred functions through the celebration of the sacraments, and c) shepherds entrusted with the mission of

...by the anointing of the Holy Spirit [priests] are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the Priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the Head...

Jocelyn Gregoire, C.S.Sp. and Dr. Christin Jungers

gathering into one flock the family of God. Finally, the New Code of Canon Law also addressed the role of the priest and ratified the intimate connection between the celebration of the Eucharist and the priestly role (Flannery, 1995). Canon 900 §1 of the New Code of Canon Law stipulates, "The minister who is able to confect the sacrament of the Eucharist in the person of Christ is a validly ordained priest alone" (The New Code of Canon Law, 1983, p.166).

While upholding Trent's view of priests as representatives of Christ on earth whose role is intimately linked to the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, both Vatican II and the New Code of Canon Law, in discussing the role and identity of priests, give more emphasis to the Body of Christ. Vatican II documents and Canon Law point out that the priest is one who, *with* the body of faithful believers, shares in the holy and royal priesthood of Jesus Christ. This most recent Council viewed the priest as being with all the *"faithful"* who in a unique way "were to hold in the community of the faithful the sacred power of Order, that of offering sacrifice and forgiving sins" (Flannery, 1996, p. 864). An echo of this view can be heard in Canon 1008 which stipulates that priests are called out *from the body of the faithful* by "divine institution" and by virtue of their ordination are set apart and appointed to "fulfill, in the person of Christ the Head, the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling, and so they nourish the people of God." (The New Code of Canon Law, 1983, p. 181).

...humanity has profound expectations of priests. These include quenching humanity's thirst for Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel, being a minister of mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, being constantly in contact with God's holiness, and being holy themselves...

At different times and in different ways, both the late Pope John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI have emphasized in no uncertain terms the importance of understanding the priesthood as a "sacred ministry" and not as a "profession" or "career." For Pope John Paul II, a candidate who aspires to the priesthood needs to be ready to accept "the priestly ideal," which involves embracing a life of celibacy, poverty and simplicity, as well as a commitment to the "care for souls" (Catholic World News, 1999). Pope John Paul II affirmed that during the celebration of the Eucharist, a priest truly acts in the person of Christ and contended that, since they act in the person of Christ, humanity has profound expectations of priests. These include quenching humanity's thirst for Christ through the proclamation of the Gospel, being a minister of mercy through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, being constantly in contact with God's holiness, and being holy themselves (Pope John Paul II, 1996). Pope Benedict XVI meanwhile asserted that God immediately avails himself of his creatures through the ministry of the priest, and consequently "a Catholic priest is no mere 'office-holder'" but a direct participant in Christ's saving action. While emphasizing

the total commitment dimension of the priesthood, he also exhorted priests to "enter like Christ into human misery and take it up, going to the people who are suffering" in order to be effective ministers (Catholic World News, 2010).

One thing that seems clear from Catholic Church documents is that priests indeed occupy a unique and sacred ministerial role. While they are recognized as being called to the priestly role from among the community of believers, they also, at their ordination, take on a unique role that sets them apart from others. They become Christ's representatives on earth. With an appreciation for the profound ministry that priests are called to fulfill, we are curious about how such an identity might influence the human experience of grief for priests. For example, does the awareness of being marked by the Holy Spirit lead priests to grieve differently from other people? Does and in what way might the identity of being Christ-on-earth have an impact on how priests grieve? Might a priest's own awareness that he is set apart from the community lead him to grieve differently than others?

High Expectations and Idealization

A prominent feature of the priestly role that is expressed both in Catholic documents and related literature is the high expectations that people have of the priest. Like clergy of other denominations, Catholic priests are expected to have personal qualities that set them apart from the community. They are looked upon to be competent, intelligent, free from personal problems, in charge of their lives, sensitive to others, and spiritually mature (Pooler, 2011). Grosch and Olsen (2000) used terms like calm, infallible, and perfect to describe how clergy are perceived. Priests are held up as models of what it means to live a humanly and spiritually healthy life, and people anticipate that priests will live in congruence with what they urge others to do. In addition to possessing these personal qualities, many people also believe priests should have answers to their most poignant philosophical questions about good and evil, suffering and pain, and life and death. Most Christians live with the deep conviction that through his incarnation among us, his death on a Cross, and his resurrection, Jesus Christ responded to these very fundamental questions. By virtue of their ordination, Catholic priests become Christ-like figures on earth (Canon 1008), and thus, it is little wonder that people turn to them to have their existential concerns addressed.

Arguably, developing healthy personal qualities and being responsive to the Church's call to be the embodiment of Christ on earth is generally helpful for clergy given the demands of their

They are looked upon to be competent, intelligent, free from personal problems, in charge of their lives, sensitive to others, and spiritually mature...

Jocelyn Gregoire, C.S.Sp. and Dr. Christin Jungers

...because priests are admired and revered by their congregants, they may feel pressured not to expose their human frailty or weakness, even in times of grief and loss...

Might they believe that to admit to their own sorrow or to express anger at God after the loss of a loved one would undermine others' expectations of them as a priest?

work. However, when priestly qualities become so idealized and the priestly role so rigid that they are lived only as unrealistic expectations rather than aspirations towards which priests continually strive, they can serve to de-humanize priests when they struggle with personal issues, including loss (Burton & Burton, 2009). For example, because priests are admired and revered by their congregants, they may feel pressured not to expose their human frailty or weakness, even in times of grief and loss (Haug, 1999). Moreover, parishioners who idealize priests may not be open to knowing about or witnessing their pastor question his own relationship to God or God's purpose in his life following a significant loss. With this in mind, Proffitt et al. (2007) looked at the relationship between post-traumatic growth, social constraint, and cognitive processing among a small group of Judeo-Christian clergy, including Protestant ministers, Catholic priests, and rabbis. Their research suggested that the perception of being socially constrained was related to a clergy person's overall well-being following a loss. Specifically, they found that the more a clergy person felt that other people did not want to know about his or her personal thoughts and feelings about a personal loss or crisis, the less satisfied the person was. The sample of participants that Proffitt et al. (2007) used, however, only included a small number of Catholic clergy, so questions still remain about to what extent priests might feel constrained by their priesthood in sharing their grief and sorrow with others after a loss. Thus, when looking at the broad question of how being a priest affects a man's grieving process, it may be helpful to better understand the impact of idealization. For instance, do priests who are grieving feel cut off, or constrained from the social networks that might otherwise serve as a social support during the grieving process? Might they believe that to admit to their own sorrow or to express anger at God after the loss of a loved one would undermine others' expectations of them as a priest?

Caregiver Identity

Catholic priests embody a social role that is strongly identified with caregiver qualities. They provide care in countless settings and for numerous kinds of difficult life circumstances. As we have already noted, it is to priests and other clergy that most people turn when they themselves are in need of solace after a significant loss or in times of crisis. Bento (1994) considered the impact of occupying a caregiver work role on the grief process. She noted that caregivers, such as priests, nurses, social workers, and physicians, are a segment of the population who may feel the need to suppress their own grief after a significant loss in order to be present to others' pain. Caregivers' own grief reactions can be

perceived to get in the way of or contaminate their ability to be helpful to others and thus they might minimize attention to their own loss responses.

Doka (1989) referred to the suppression of grief when it is seen as inappropriate to a particular individual or unacceptable within an organization or a person's work role as disenfranchised grief. Simply stated, people are disenfranchised when they are not afforded the right to grieve following a loss. Attig (2004, p. 205) called disenfranchised grief a "failure to respect suffering." Doka (1989; 2002) provided specific examples of how and under what circumstances people can be deprived of the right to grieve. Sometimes, the relationship that was lost is viewed by others as socially unacceptable (e.g., homosexual relationship). Sometimes, also, the loss itself is not seen as significant (e.g., a miscarriage) or the griever is not perceived as capable of grieving (e.g., young children or mentally handicapped persons). Corr (2002) suggested that grief reactions and the expression of grief can be disenfranchised as well, when a community indicates to a person who has sustained a loss that they ought not emotionally respond to a loss or think about themselves or the world differently after the death of a loved one. Considering the caregiver role that priests often embody, we are left wondering if and to what extent they might overlook their own grief reactions in order to perform their ministerial duties? Furthermore, we also are curious about the extent to which Catholic clergy perceive that they have the right to grieve (i.e., to show emotions related to loss or to think differently about their world following a loss)?

...we also are curious about the extent to which Catholic clergy perceive that they have the right to grieve...

Boundary Issues and Burnout

Boundaries refer to the degree of relational separation between one person and another; they can be rigid, clear, or diffuse. A rigid boundary between two people is usually characterized by a lack of felt closeness and a lack of flexibility, while a diffuse boundary may be so permeable that the distinction between one person's feelings, responsibilities, and physical needs and another's is not easily distinguished. Clear boundaries tend to be associated with healthy relationships and are characterized by known rules and habits that allow people to enhance their interactions with one another, while rigid or diffuse boundaries can lead to relational and personal struggles. Stated simply, healthy and professional boundaries are growth-enhancing for all people, while unhealthy or inappropriate boundaries can be destructive and have the potential to harm (Gregoire, Jungers, & White, 2013).

Healthy boundaries are evident when priests foster caring and supportive relationships with parishioners and also respect the need for separation from them. For people in a caregiver

Jocelyn Gregoire, C.S.Sp.
and Dr. Christin Jungers

The excessive demands on a pastor's time coupled with a sense of isolation and loneliness are contributing factors to burnout in clergy...

...how might a priest's level of emotional exhaustion or burnout affect his ability to be present to his own emotional and psychological needs at the time of a loss?

role, such as priests, maintaining healthy boundaries can be challenging. On the one hand, priests may be prone to develop diffuse boundaries, as they are expected to be available nearly all of the time to their parishioners and immediately responsive in crisis situations. Some priests even live in a rectory where the physical separation between their work and personal space is not well delineated, giving the impression that they are always "on" or available to those in need. At the same time, Proffitt et al. (2007) and Sanford (1982) suggested that clergy also are prone to live with a sense of isolation, which can experienced as a rigid boundary between themselves and others.

One of the risks of not being able to maintain healthy boundaries is burnout. Pastors are especially prone to experiencing burnout, which has been described as involving emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in one's relationships (Maslach, 1982; 1993; 2000). The excessive demands on a pastor's time coupled with a sense of isolation and loneliness are contributing factors to burnout in clergy (Chandler, 2009). Holaday, Lackey, Boucher, and Glidewell (2001) looked at the day-to-day experiences of clergy in working with trauma. They found that clergy regularly deal with a variety of emotionally draining issues and personal traumas that seem to have a notable effect on clergy. Indeed, 57% of the participants in their study reported moderate to high levels of emotional exhaustion on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Holaday et al., 2001; Maslach & Jackson, 1986). Although literature that examines the effects of burnout and poor boundaries on the grief process is scarce, we are left with a number of questions when we consider the fact that many clergy are prone to burnout and to developing either too diffuse or too rigid of boundaries. For example, how might a priest's level of emotional exhaustion or burnout affect his ability to be present to his own emotional and psychological needs at the time of a loss? What are the long and short term effects of burnout on a priest's grief process? How do the demands on a priest's time affect his attention to his own loss?

Conclusion

One goal of this article was to draw attention to the topic of grief and grief processes among the special population of Catholic clergy. Admittedly, the literature that specifically explores this topic is limited and more often than not either deals with how priests should help others to grieve or with how religious leaders and ministers from a broad spectrum of faith systems experience grief, though this area of inquiry still is not well developed. In pondering the broad question of how being a member of the Catholic clergy affects a man's grieving process, we

raised a number of more specific queries in relationship to some of the common characteristics of the priestly role, such as the sacred ministry of the priesthood, high expectations, idealization, caregiver duties, boundary issues, and burnout. Questions raised include the following:

- Does, and in what way, might the identity of being Christ-on-earth have an impact on how priests grieve?

- Might a priest's own awareness that he is set apart from the community lead him to grieve differently than others?

- Do priests who are grieving feel cut off or constrained from the social networks that might otherwise serve as a social support during the grieving process?

- Might priests believe that to admit to their own sorrow or to express anger at God after a loss would undermine others' expectations of them as a priest?

- To what extent might priests overlook their own grief reactions in order to perform their ministerial duties?

- To what extent do Catholic clergy perceive that they have the right to grieve (i.e., to show emotions related to loss or to think differently about their world following a loss)?

- How might a priest's level of emotional exhaustion or burnout affect his ability to be present to his own emotional and psychological needs at the time of a loss?

- What are the long and short term effects of burnout on a priest's grief process?

- How do the demands on a priest's time affect his attention to his own loss?

It is our hope that future stages of this clergy grief project will be able to shed light on at least some of these questions in order that priests' grieving processes can be better described, understood, and appreciated.

Jocelyn Gregoire, C.S.Sp. and Dr. Christin Jungers

Jocelyn Gregoire, C.S.Sp.
and Dr. Christin Jungers

References

Aiken, L. R. (2001). *Death, dying, and bereavement*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Altmaier, E. M. (2011). Best practices in counseling grief and loss: Finding benefit from trauma. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 33*, 33-35.

Attig, T. (2004). Disenfranchised grief revisited: Discounting hope and love. *Omega, 49,* 197-215.

Bento, R. F. (1994). When the show must go on: Disenfranchised grief in organizations. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 9*, 35-44.

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Attachment* (Vol. 1). New York: Basic Books.

Burton, J., & Burton, C. (2009). *Public people, private lives: Tackling stress in clergy families*. London: Continuum.

Catholic World News, (May 20, 1999). *Priesthood as Ministry, Not Profession.* Retrieved on June 24, 2013 from http://www.catholicculture.org/news/features/index.cfm?recnum=10328&repos=4&subrepos=1&searchid=1053240

Catholic World News, (June 11, 2010). *Scandals cannot conceal "radiance of the priesthood".* Retrieved on June 24, 2013 from http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=6618&repos=4&subrepos=2&searchid=1053240

Corr, C. (2002). Rethinking the concept of disenfranchised grief. In K. Doka (Ed.),*Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges, and strategies for practice*(pp. 39-60). Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Deci, E. L. & Ryan (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology, 49*, 182-185.

DeSpelder, L. A. & Strickland, A. L. (2002). *The last dance: Encountering death and dying* (6th Ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Doka, K. J. (1989). *Disenfranchised grief: Recognizing hidden sorrow*. Lexington, MA: Lexington.

Doka, K. (Ed.). (2002). *Disenfranchised grief: New directions, challenges, and strategies for practice.* Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Flannery, A. (1995). *Vatican II: Volume I: the conciliar and post-conciliar documents.* Northport: NY. Castello Publishing Company.

Gregoire, J., Jungers, C. M., & White, C. (2012). Standing up to boundary dilemmas in counseling. In C. M. Jungers & J. Gregoire (Eds.). *Counseling ethics: Philosophical and professional foundations* (pp. 93-115). New York: Springer Publishing Co.

Grosch, W. N., & Olsen, D. C. (2000). Clergy burnout: An integrative approach. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 56*, 619–632.

.Haug, I. E. (1999). Boundaries and the misuse of power and authority: Ethical complexities for clergy psychotherapists. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 77,* 411-417.

Hodges, E.V.E., Boivin, M., Vitaro, F., & Bukowski, W. M. (1999). The power of friendship: Protection against an escalating cycle of peer victimization. *Developmental Psychology, 35*, 94-101.

Holaday, M., Lackey, T., Boucher, M., & Glidewell, R. (2001). Secondary stress, burnout and the clergy. *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling, 4*, 53–72.

Macquarie, J. (1968). *Martin Heidegger.* Richmond, VA: John Knox Press.

Martin, T. & Doka, K. (2000). *Men don't cry…women do.* Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel.

Maslach, C. (1982). *Burnout: The cost of caring.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Maslach, C. (1993). Burnout: A multidimensional perspective. In W. B. Schaufeli, C. Maslach,

& T. Marek (Eds.), *Professional burnout: Recent developments in theory and research* (pp. 19–32). Washington: Taylor & Francis.

Maslach, C. (2000). A multidimensional theory of burnout. In C. S. Cooper (Ed.), *Theories of Organizational Stress* (pp. 68–85). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maslach, C. A., & Jackson, S. E. (1986). *Maslach burnout inventory manual.* Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists.

McCall, G. J. & Simmons, J. L. (1978). *Identities and interactions.* New York: Free Press.

Pooler, D. (2011). Pastors and congregations at risk: Insights from role identity theory. *Pastoral Psychology, 60,* 707-712.

Pope John Paul II. (1996). *Gift and mystery.* New York: NY. Doubleday.

Proffitt, D., Cann, A., Calhoun, L. G., & Tedeschi, R. G. (2007). Judeo-Christian clergy and personal crisis: Religion, post-traumatic growth, and well-being. *Journal of Religion & Health, 46*, 219-231.

Rando, T. A. (1984). *Grief, dying, and death: Clinical interventions for caregivers.* Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Rando, T. A. (1993). *Treatment of complicated mourning.* Champaigne, IL: Research Press.

Rando, T. A. (1995). Grief and mourning: Accommodating to loss. In H. Wass & R. A.

Neimeyer (Eds.). *Dying: Facing the facts* (p. 211-241). Washington DC: Taylor & Francis.

Sanford, J. (1982). *Ministry burnout.* London: Arthur James.

Schroeder, H. J. (1941). *Canons and decrees of the Council of Trent.* St. Louis: MO. B. Herder Book & Co.

Servaty-Seib, H. L. (2004). Connections between counseling theories and current theories of grief and mourning. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 26*, 125-145.

Stets, J. E. & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 63*, 224-237.

Sue, D.W. & Sue, D. (2008). *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory & practice.* New York: Wiley.

The New Code of Canon Law (1983). London. Collins Liturgical Publications.

Waite, L. J. & Joyner, K. (2001). Emotional satisfaction and physical pleasure in sexual unions: Time horizon, sexual behavior, and sexual exclusivity. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 63,* 247-264.

Worden, J. W. (2002). *Grief counseling and grief therapy* (3rd Ed.). New York: Springer.