



“Spotlight” on Catholic Sex Abuse Scandal: Oscar for Best Picture

Spotlight received an Oscar for “best picture” at the 88th annual Academy Awards on Sunday Night. The film is a dramatization of the reporting by the *Boston Globe* on the sex abuse scandal within the Catholic Church. In his acceptance speech, producer Michael Sugar said, “This film gave a voice to survivors, and this Oscar amplifies that voice, which we hope will become a choir that will resonate all the way to the Vatican,” adding, “Pope Francis, it’s time to protect the children and restore the faith.”



Steven Golin, who also produced *Spotlight*, called the film “very subtle and oddly entertaining.” One is left to wonder what could be “oddly entertaining” in a film about the sexual abuse of children. I guess that’s the subtle part.

Sugar said he was “thrilled to the core” that *Spotlight* received the award “not just because it’s a great personal accomplishment for us and for our companies, but it’s really an opportunity to bring this conversation to a world stage. And for that, we’re really grateful.”

Bringing the conversation to a world stage certainly has its merits. Any minister — Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or other — who abuses his position of authority in the lives of those under his care, especially children, should be stripped of his title and authority and then prosecuted to the full extent of the law. But considering that the sexual abuse of children is no respecter of boundaries — religious or otherwise — and even finds [a sympathetic voice in some liberal circles](#), what is being left out of the conversation is the question as to why the “spotlight” is on the sexual abuse within the Catholic Church.

In fact, a study of [the sexual abuse of children in America’s school systems](#) revealed that “the physical sexual abuse of students in schools is likely more than 100 times the abuse by priests.” The [study](#) — authored by Hofstra University researcher Charol Shakeshaft in 2004 as part of President Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act — indicates that “nearly 9.6 percent of students are targets of educator sexual misconduct sometime during their school career.” Nearly one out of 10. Does that mean that teachers are bad people? Of course not. It simply means that there are *some* bad teachers. Just like there are some bad Catholic priests.

So, the question remains: Why does this year’s “best picture” focus on the scandal of the relatively few Catholic priests who have sinned so grievously while the *much larger problem* within the public school system is ignored — not just by this film, but almost entirely? Until that is part of the conversation, America — as a society — is no closer to taking up the challenge Michael Sugar issued to Pope Francis to “protect the children.”

The second part of Sugar’s challenge to the pope is also worthy of note, but it leads one to wonder just what Sugar means by “restore the faith.” Would he have the Pope clarify the Catholic doctrines against abortion and homosexual behavior? Or does he have his own ideas in mind?



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on February 29, 2016

At any rate, now that *Spotlight* has been named “best picture,” there will almost certainly be renewed conversation about the sexual abuse of children. And if that conversation goes deeper and wider than only the abuse offered at the hands of Catholic priests, that will be a good thing. As MOVIEGUIDE — a website that reviews movies from a moral viewpoint — said in its review of *Spotlight*:

By the way, the sin is the problem, and it should be remembered, as we do at MOVIEGUIDE, that there are bad mothers, but motherhood is good, there are bad fathers, but fatherhood is good, there are bad people in different churches, but the Church is good and the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ and much more. So, reveal the sin and remove it, forgive the repentant, and pray for all involved.

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