



Investigating Religion & Power



rites and wrongs:

FAITH AND TRAUMA IN THE SHADOW OF THE CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS

Join the CHIRP lab for a presentation on our research into the effects of the Catholic sexual abuse crisis on the wider lay population and survivors of clerical sexual abuse. By exploring the psychological concepts of moral injury, moral distress, and PTSD, we will discuss how the sexual abuse crisis has affected the ability of the lay population and survivors of sexual assault to receive the spiritual benefits of Catholic rituals.

PRESENTED BY

Kate Seddon
Noah Lamberger
Meg Breen
and Dr. Dave
Turnbloom

THURSDAY
MARCH 31ST

7PM, FRANZ
120



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Where to Find The CHIRP Lab:

[@chirp.lab](https://www.instagram.com/chirp.lab)

www.chirp-lab.com

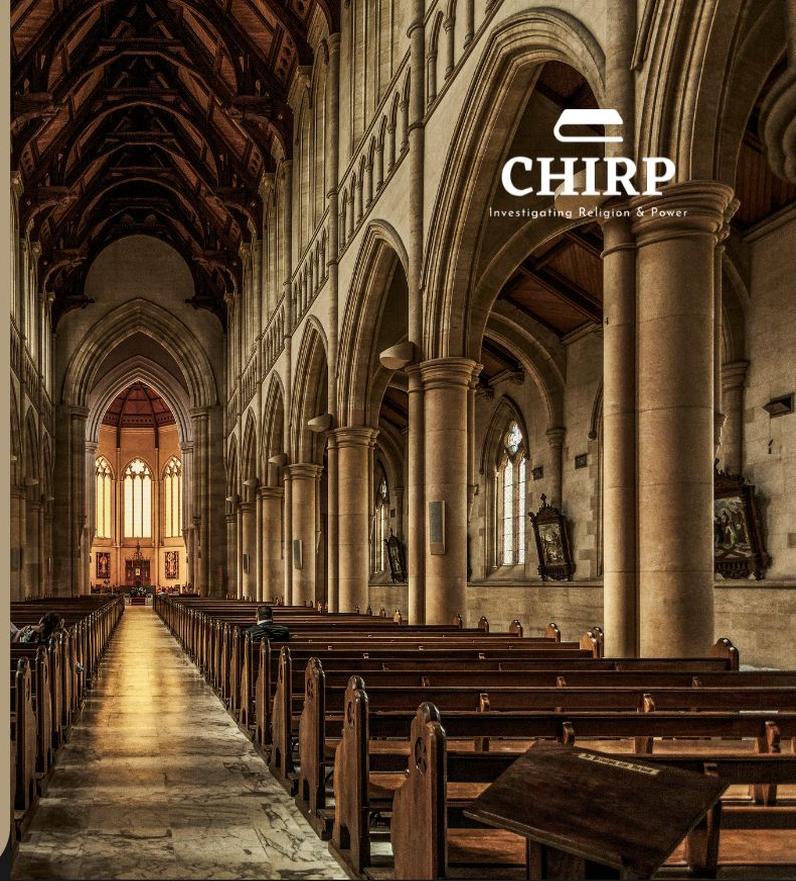
Rites and Wrongs

→ FAITH AND TRAUMA IN THE
SHADOW OF THE CLERGY SEXUAL
ABUSE CRISIS



Introduction

Paying particular attention to PTSD and Moral Injury, we will examine how Clergy Perpetuated Sexual Assault has deeply changed the lay population's relationship with the Catholic Church and has contributed to the hindrance and degradation of liturgical efficacy for survivors of the CPSA.



The Issue at Hand



“At the same time, I ask you not to lose hope. It is in the communion of the Church that we encounter the person of Jesus Christ, who was himself a victim of injustice and sin. Like you, he still bears the wounds of his own unjust suffering. He understands the depths of your pain and its enduring effect upon your lives and your relationships, including your relationship with the Church. **I know some of you find it difficult even to enter the doors of a church after all that has occurred. Yet Christ’s own wounds, transformed by his redemptive sufferings, are the very means by which the power of evil is broken and we are reborn to life and hope.** I believe deeply in the healing power of his self-sacrificing love—even in the darkest and most hopeless situations—to bring liberation and the promise of a new beginning.” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2010)

The Issue at Hand

- The Church has failed to truly recognize the weight of the problem and the extent to which a survivor is traumatized as the direct result of clergy perpetuated sexual abuse.
- The Catholic Church has not fully recognized the consequences of CPSA on the liturgical life of the Church. We will further explore this in our discussion of PTSD and Moral Injury.

Jennifer Beste's Research

Receiving and Responding to God's Grace: A Reexamination in Light of Trauma Theory

“...in situations of overwhelming violence, a person's capacity for responsive agency can be severely disabled... [She argues] that a critical re-examination of the human capacity to receive God's grace must include greater appreciation for how God's love is mediated, at least in part, through loving interpersonal relations.”



Dr. Jennifer Beste. Professor and Chair of the Theology department at the College of Saint Benedict, Saint. John's University

Jennifer Beste's Research

- Beste examines trauma theory and the relationship to God through discussion of incest survivors
- The deep effects that trauma can have on one's personal relationships has a similar effect on one's relationship with God.
- Because we receive God's grace through loving interpersonal relationships, trauma hinders one's ability to experience the grace of God.
 - This will be further discussed.



Dr. Jennifer Beste. Professor and Chair of the Theology department at the College of Saint Benedict, Saint John's University

Liturgy and Grace

The effect of liturgical rituals is grace.

“. . . the rite is a symbolic expression of an ethical duty.
Grace is always given as a task to be performed.”
(Louis Marie Chauvet)

Liturgical Causality

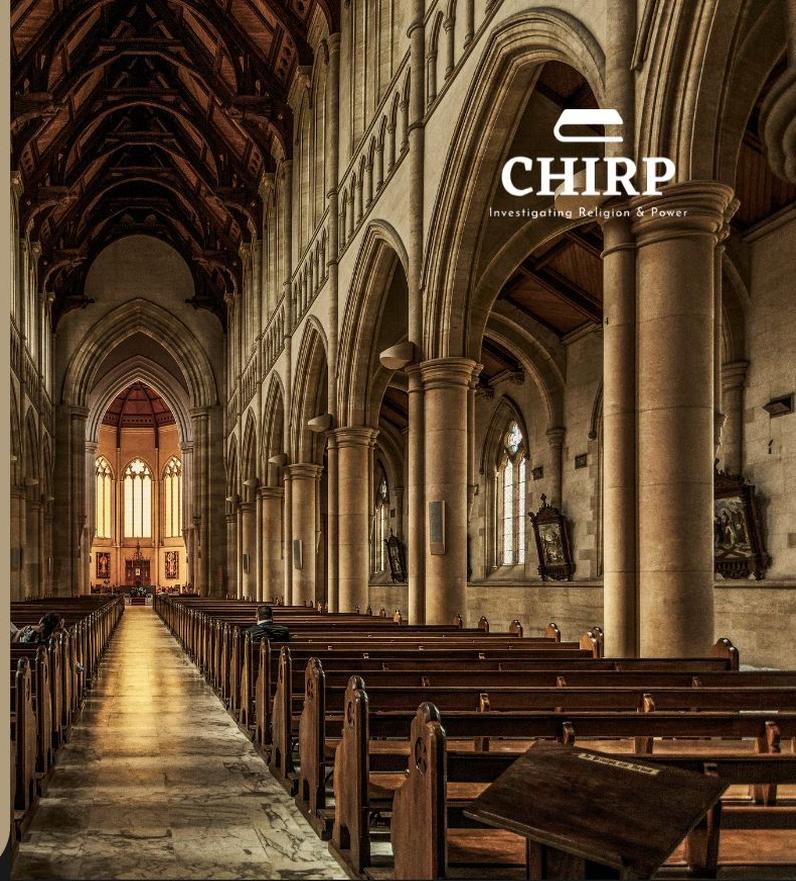
Ex opere operato: When a sacrament is validly celebrated, grace is *offered*.

“ . . . [sacramental] causation is intrinsic to the celebration of the sacramental signs, and not merely extrinsic and dependent on some other factor (such as the faith or devotion of the minister or recipient).”

(Roger W. Nutt)

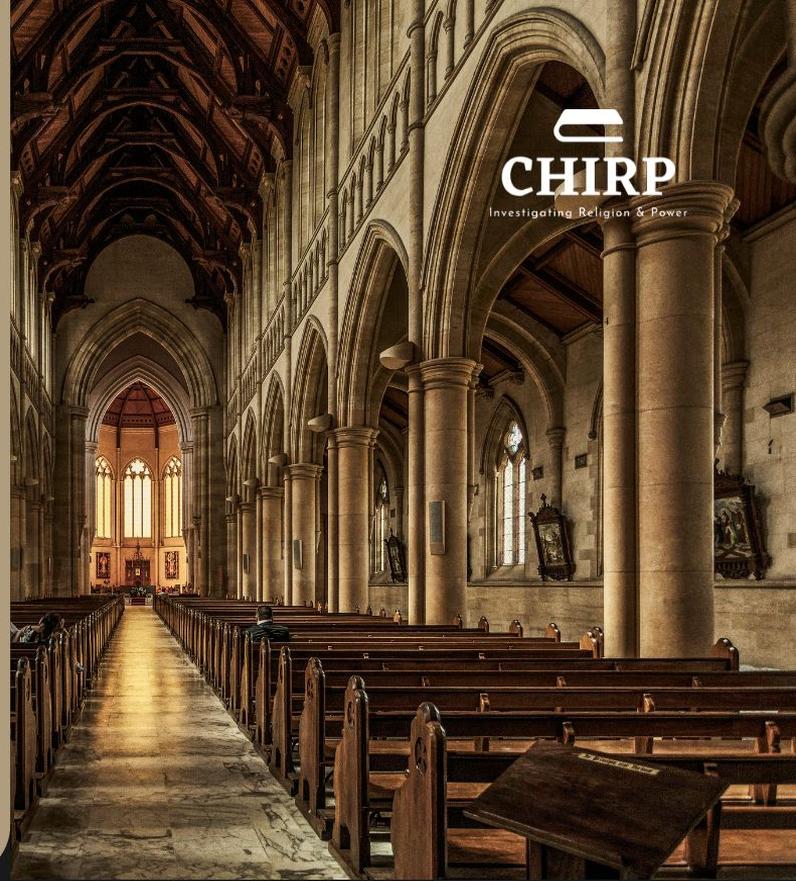
Liturgical Efficacy

“The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed [*praebetur*] to us. The visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament. (CCC 1131)



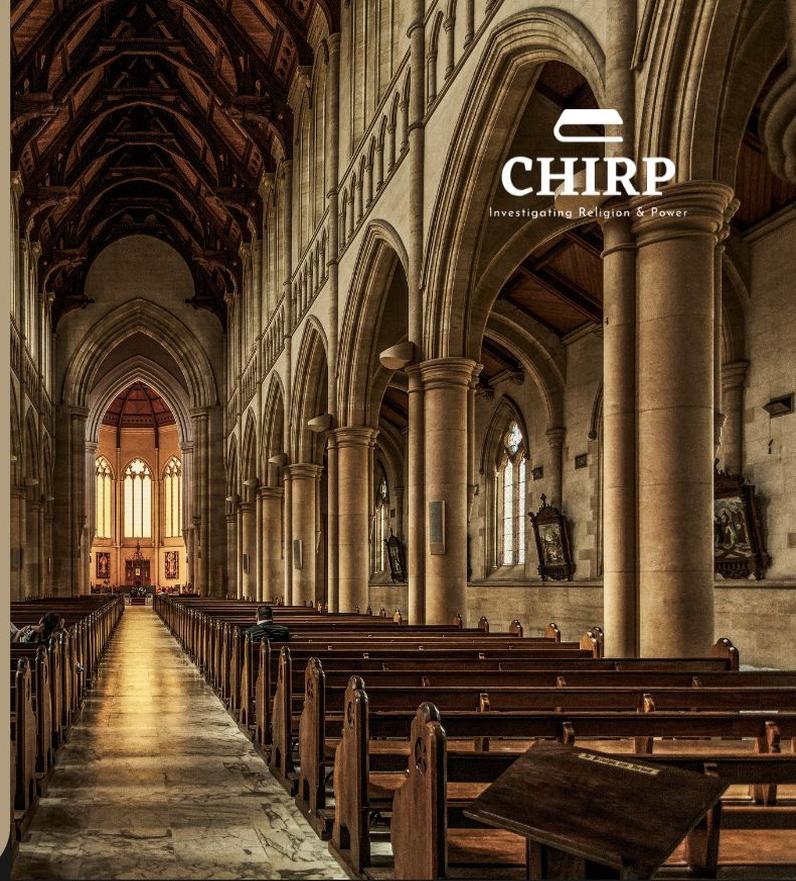
Liturgical Efficacy

The Latin word *'praebetur'* would more accurately be translated as 'offered.' Liturgical rituals *offer* the grace of divine life to those who celebrate them. Put differently, these rituals are provocative invitations into a life of faith, hope, and charity. Each liturgical ritual is celebrated through signs (e.g. words, music, gestures, art, etc.) that are intended to provoke this graceful way of living.



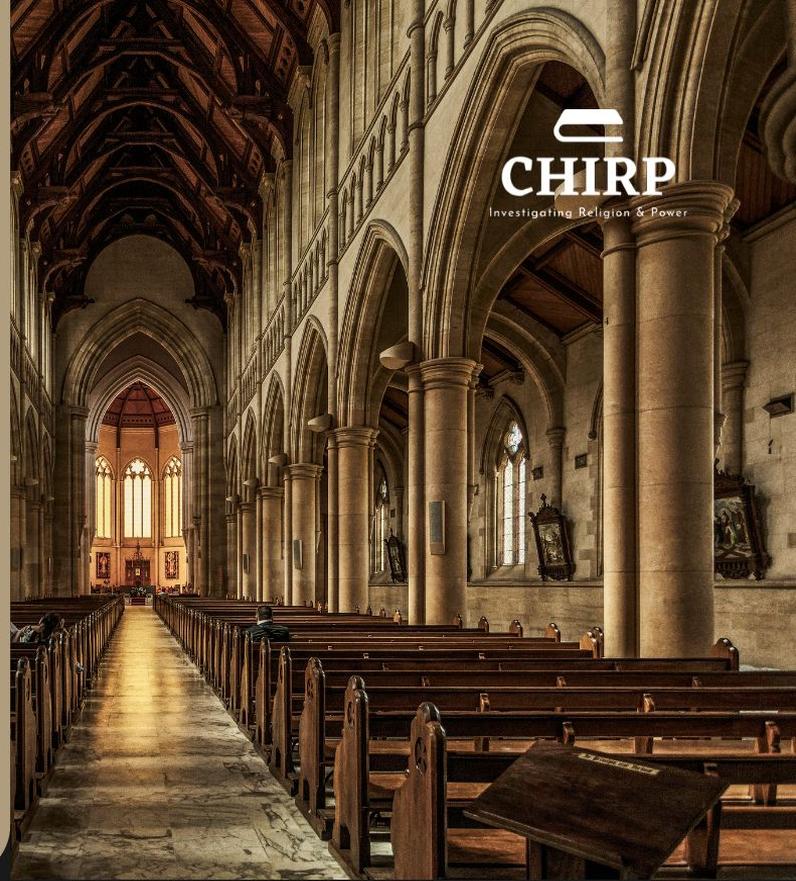
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Liturgical Efficacy

“The assembly should prepare itself to encounter its Lord and to become ‘a people well disposed.’ The preparation of hearts is the joint work of the Holy Spirit and the assembly, especially of its ministers. The grace of the Holy Spirit seeks to awaken faith, conversion of heart, and adherence to the Father's will. These dispositions are the precondition both for the reception of other graces conferred in the celebration itself and the fruits of new life which the celebration is intended to produce afterward.” (CCC 1089)



Liturgical Efficacy

The psychological state of the recipient has a profound influence on liturgical efficacy. In order for grace to be fruitfully received, the recipient must be ready *and able* to accept the task.





Definition

“... trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to function.”

(Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*)

CPSA and Liturgy

“... even in the midst of such traumas, even in situations where the reality of the trauma is known by others, churches- like the communities of which they are a part- often have a tacit “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy as if by pretending the ugly reality of trauma is not real it will go away.”

(Mindy Makant)



Definition

- “Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred ” (DSM-5)
- Avoidance of distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings associated with the event
 - Avoidance of people, places, activities, objects that arouse distressing memories associated with event

CPSA and Liturgy

- The liturgical signs trigger abreaction
- Doesn't merely hinder the benefits of liturgy; it transforms the liturgy into violence



Definition

“ . . . moral injury is the lasting psychological, biological, spiritual, behavioral, and social impact of perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about the facts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations.” (Brett Litz)

CPSA and Liturgy

- Betrayal of trust
- Destroys the faith and hope necessary to experience the liturgy as love
- Structural vs Interpersonal



Definition

“ . . . the feeling of powerlessness experienced during power games in the micro-spaces of action.” (Barlem and Ramos)

CPSA and Liturgy

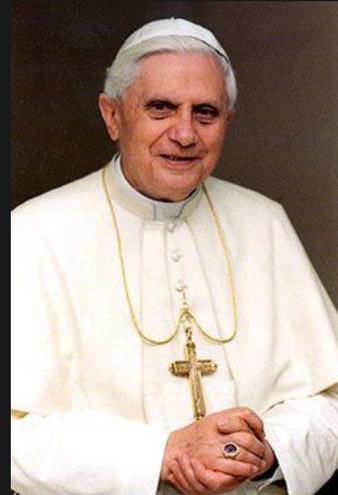
- Guilt over complicity; Transforms the liturgy into participation in violence
- Powerlessness to respond
- Power games
- Micro-spaces of action

Reexamination in Light of Trauma Theory



“At the same time, I ask you not to lose hope. It is in the communion of the Church that we encounter the person of Jesus Christ, who was himself a victim of injustice and sin. Like you, he still bears the wounds of his own unjust suffering. He understands the depths of your pain and its enduring effect upon your lives and your relationships, including your relationship with the Church. I know some of you find it difficult even to enter the doors of a church after all that has occurred. Yet Christ’s own wounds, transformed by his redemptive sufferings, are the very means by which the power of evil is broken and we are reborn to life and hope. I believe deeply in the healing power of his self-sacrificing love—even in the darkest and most hopeless situations—to bring liberation and the promise of a new beginning.”

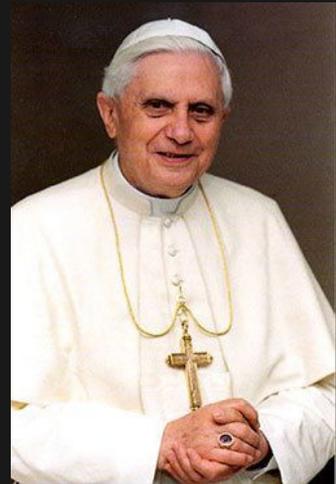
(Pope Benedict XVI, 2010)



Reexamination in Light of Trauma Theory

“A young woman who was a [former] altar server told me that the chaplain, her superior as an altar server, always introduced the sexual abuse he was committing against her with the words: ‘This is my body which will be given up for you.’ It is obvious that this woman can no longer hear the very words of consecration without experiencing again all the horrific distress of her.”

(Pope Benedict XVI, 2019)



A Crucial Caveat . . .

“Some theologians may prefer theories that maintain a concept of the liturgy *in itself* or of a liturgical *essence* that stands apart from its cultural construction and appropriation by ritual participants. This kind of theory, together with a conviction that the essence of the liturgy is good, would likely reason that when ritual participation results in harm, that harm ought to be traced to misinterpretation on the part of the participant and not to the liturgy itself. Such an approach succeeds in protecting the sanctity of religious ritual and posits an explanation for how the harm of sexual abuse is exacerbated through communion participation, but the conclusion that participants who are harmfully impacted by participation in religious ritual suffer merely due to their own misinterpretation is a sophisticated form of victim blaming.”

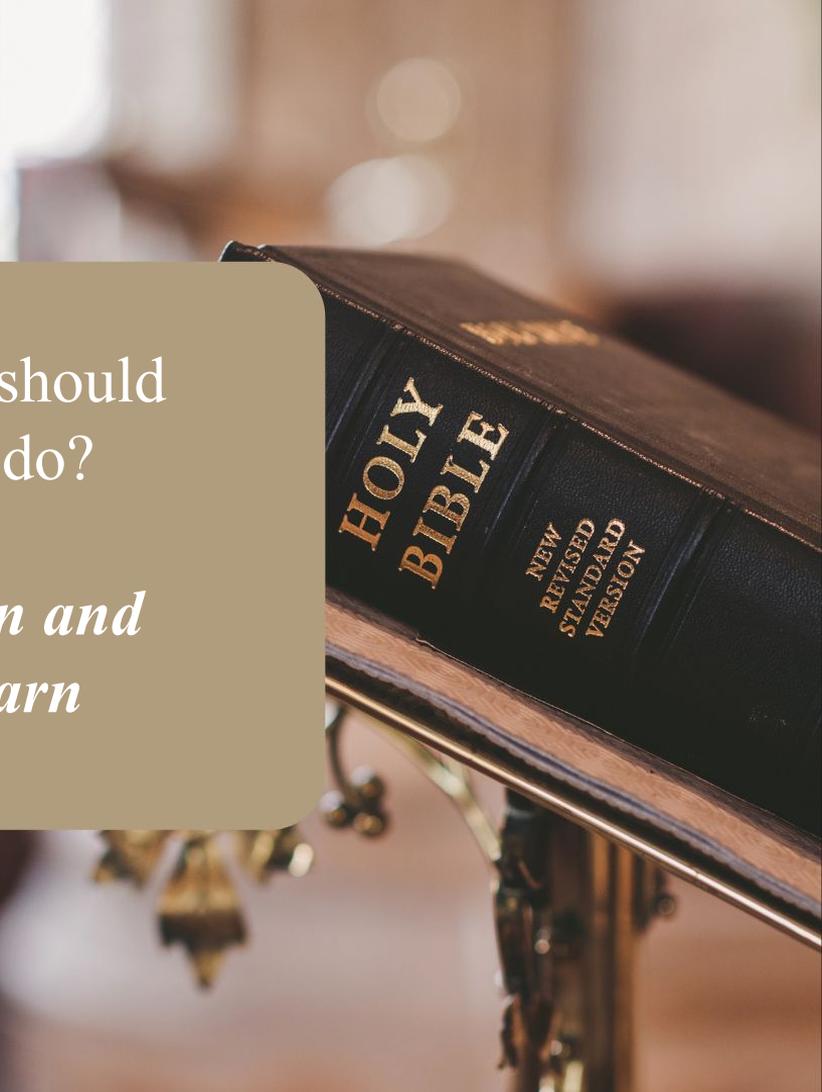


Hilary Jerome Scarsella

- Recognize and address the cultural and structural issues that facilitate CPSA.
- Clericalism perpetuates a culture of deference and silence.
- Theology of ordained ministry spreads trauma.

What should
we do?

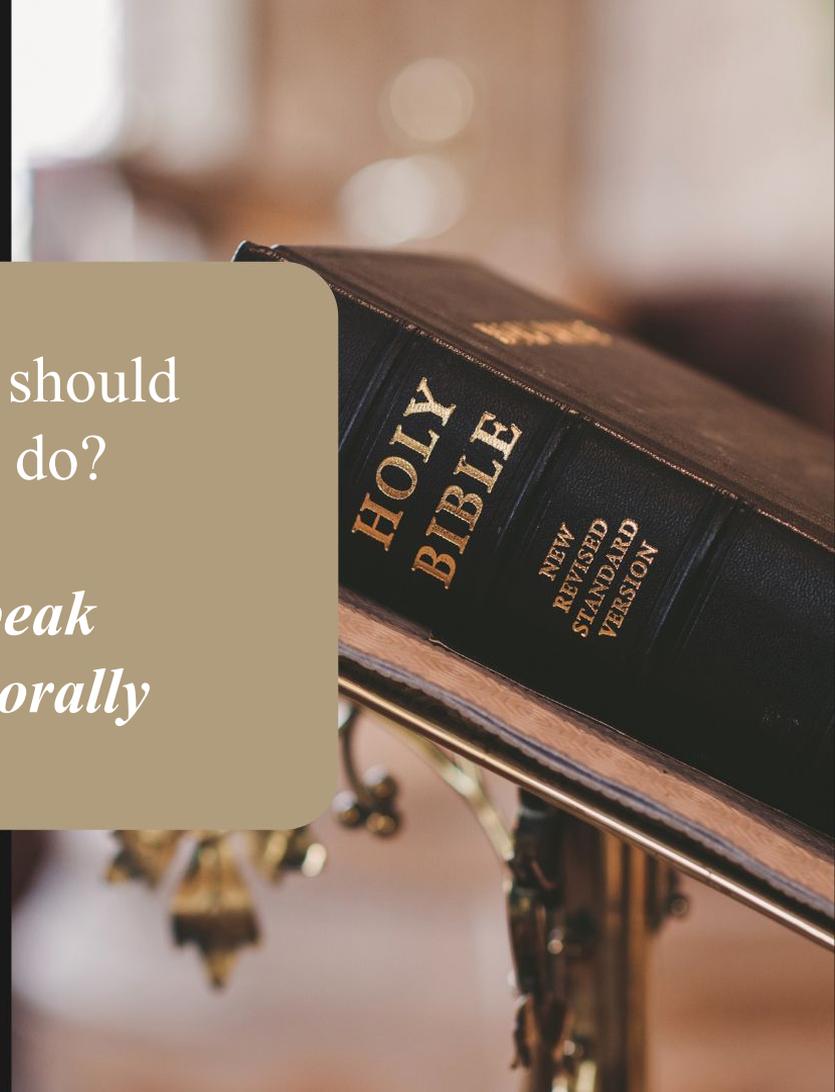
*Listen and
Learn*


HOLY
BIBLE
NEW
REVISED
STANDARD
VERSION

- Stop congratulating people for “refusing to leave.”
- References to liturgical “obligations” should disappear.
- Stop telling people the liturgy will heal them.
- Stop saying the Cross is the only sign of inclusion we need.

What should
we do?

*Speak
Pastorally*

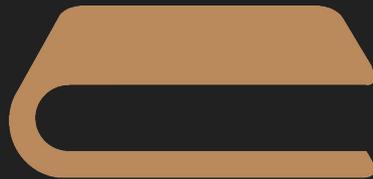


- Encourage people to find safe communities.
- Stop (erroneously) claiming that Roman Catholic liturgies have a monopoly on the presence of Christ.
- Stop prioritizing membership in the Catholic Church and start prioritizing the person's spiritual and mental health.

What should
we do?

*Affirm
Ecumenism*





CHIRP

Investigating Religion & Power

Thank You!

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