

Vatican blames lack of priests on secularism, abuse, parents

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c. 2012 Religion News Service VATICAN CITY (RNS) The sexual abuse scandal has tarnished the image of the priest and contributed to a crisis of priestly vocations in the Roman Catholic Church, the Vatican said Monday (June 25), while also faulting a widespread "secularized mentality" and parents' ambition for their children, which leaves "little space to the possibility of a call to a special vocation."

The "Pastoral Guidelines for Fostering Vocations to Priestly Ministry" were prepared over the last seven years by the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education.

The document says candidates to the priesthood shouldn't be accepted if they show "signs of being profoundly fragile personalities," and says future priests should learn the "importance" of their future commitments, "in particular with regard to celibacy."

The guidelines acknowledge that "in many places the choice of celibacy is questioned" and say that such "erroneous opinions within the church" are responsible for a "lack of appreciation" for those who make the choice to remain celibate.

In fact, Western culture, with its "indifference to the Christian faith," is "unable to understand the value of vocations to a special consecration."

Data presented by the congregation's undersecretary, the Rev. Angelo Vincenzo Zani, show that priestly vocations over the last 10 years fell sharply in Europe. They remained stable in North and South America and rose significantly in Asia and Africa, though still not enough to offset the rapid growth in Catholics' numbers worldwide.