

SNAP Newsletter



From The Editor



Dear Friends,
 It's hard to believe summer is almost over; kids are back in school and Halloween decorations are everywhere. I've even seen turkeys and Christmas trees in stores. There have been settlements in California, where survivors found the strength to come forward and the wisdom to get legal help. Because of their courage, many perpetrators have been exposed and removed. This is what can happen when legislation allows survivors to pursue legal remedies. With a similar law passing in Delaware, we hope this is the start of a trend.

SNAP continues to grow in size and strength. New survivors are continuing to reach out for help and "old" survivors are working harder than ever to find better ways to protect kids. We have something money cannot buy, we have members committed to making the world a safer place. Thanks for all you do help!

Barbara Dorris

Sex Abuse By Nuns: The Unknown Story

By Christopher Landau
 BBC News
 October 2, 2007

The crisis over child sex abuse in the Roman Catholic Church has cost the organization both in terms of levels of public trust and compensation payouts.

When American bishops decided in 2002 to conduct an audit of the scale of the problem, their initiative was given a cautious welcome

by survivors of sexual abuse.

But one part of the church was not part of the audit.

Nuns, officially known as "women religious", do not always fall under the authority of their local bishop.

This meant they stood outside the remit of the study, even though there are documented cases where Catholic nuns have committed child sexual abuse.

'Resistance'

In Portland, Oregon, there are six new lawsuits against the Catholic Church. Two are in relation to accusations made against nuns.

Kelly Clark is a lawyer who specializes in sexual abuse cases in the state.

He said: "I have more resistance these days from religious orders involving nuns, more denial, than I have from any archdiocese or . . .

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Shining the light on church misbehavior

By Steven Greenhut
 Orange County Register
 September 23, 2007

If you can't understand why journalists are so cynical, consider how I've spent some of the past week: reading transcripts and viewing videotapes of testimony by Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange officials explaining why they did so little to protect kids who were sexually abused by church leaders. If that won't make you at least skeptical about people in authority and human nature in general, nothing will. On the bright side, that

exercise reminded me of one thing about which I am not cynical, something that does more than most other reforms to keep in check humanity's basest instincts: sunshine. I refer to the sunshine of open records and open court proceedings. I've been heartened to see the way public information about the church-abuse scandal has blown away years of secrecy and covering up. Over the past week, diocese officials have been reamed

by critical news accounts. The impetus was a lawsuit by a woman who was sexually molested over a two-year period, beginning when she was a 15-year-old student, by an assistant coach at Mater Dei High School. The diocese tried to keep the depositions, including one by Bishop Tod Brown, secret. Had it succeeded, the media firestorm would not have ensued, and disturbing truths would not have been revealed.

Fortunately, a Superior Court Judge rebuked the diocese . . .

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2008 SNAP National Conference

July 11- 13, 2008 - Chicago, IL
Hyatt Regency McCormick Place

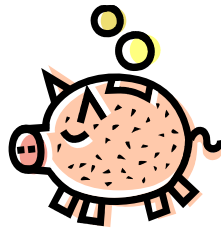


The 2008 national conference in Chicago, IL promises to be an exciting and memorable SNAP conference! Please join us in this great opportunity to network with survivors and supporters, learn, heal, and visit the sites of beautiful Chicago!

For anyone who registers by January 31, 2008 we are happy to offer a special, early bird rate of only \$100 for the entire conference or \$65 for a one-day pass.

Support SNAP

An article on running not for profits said the number one mistake most groups make in their fund raising is their failure to ask people for money. SNAP has the best members in the world. They literally stand on street corners in the pouring rain and freezing cold to protect children, write letters to the editor, answer the hotline so survivors can find resources, they open their homes to visiting SNAP members – we could go on and on.

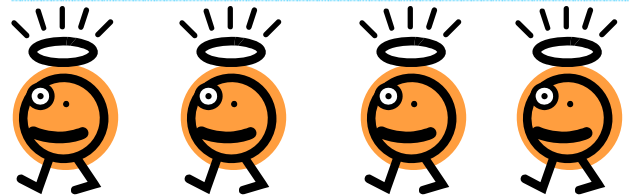


Our members are so generous it is hard to ask them for one more donation, but like everyone else we have bills to pay. Please consider making a donation to SNAP. This will not only help us offer support and encouragement to survivors, it will help us protect children. SNAP is a 501C3 so all donations are tax deductible.

GoodSearch

How many times do you “Google” in a day? By making Goodsearch your search engine of choice you can support SNAP. In order to sign up go to GoodSearch.com. Put the name “Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests” in the section regarding “who do you GoodSearch for.” Then type in your query as you do for Google or any other search engine. Once you establish SNAP as your charity it will come up each time you visit the site.

GoodSearch makes a donation to SNAP every time you use their services. Use it for shopping, searching the web and research all the while helping SNAP.



Abused as an adult?

We are currently working to expand our support for survivors abused as adults. We are working to help those survivors join with other survivors to work toward educating people about abuse of power and people who are vulnerable.

If you were abused as an adult, please contact Barbara Dorris at snapdorris@gmail.com

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Shining (Continued)

... and allowed the testimony to be unveiled.

The former coach, Jeff Andrade, admits to sexually abusing the girl when he was in his mid-30s, and various interviews make clear that this "affair" was an almost open secret at the school. No official at Mater Dei asked the coach about it, even after teachers intercepted a student note discussing it. The school principal, at the direction of diocese officials, let Andrade stay on after they were convinced of his illegal behavior. Mater Dei's head of security, a friend of Andrade's, allegedly intervened on behalf of Andrade with law enforcement officials. Because charges were not pressed, the diocese let Andrade quietly resign. He went on to work at other schools, and even was allowed back on the Mater Dei campus in following years. Andrade actually sued the diocese and received a \$100,000 payment.

There was a telling scene from Andrade's deposition in the woman's lawsuit, when John Manly, the plaintiff's attorney, asked Andrade whether he ever wondered if his behavior could have long-term psychological effects on the girl. Andrade gave a "what are you kidding?" look and said no. I'm not surprised at that response from a predator, but why didn't diocese officials – they are pastors, after all – seem to care? That's the pattern I've found repeated in my coverage of the many sex-abuse allegations, as officials gave the utmost consideration to the perps and were uncaring, and even cruel, to the victims.

I emphasize this again: Only because of court-ordered open

records and the willingness of victims to speak out about what happened has anyone learned the truth. Only the embarrassment of public disclosure and the fear of lawsuit-induced bankruptcy has caused this diocese and others to change their policies.

The public even learned from the recently unsealed deposition that the bishop himself was accused of molesting a boy many years earlier in the Bakersfield area – an allegation the diocese says was not deemed credible by law enforcement, although news reports now suggest that Bakersfield police may never have even investigated the matter. I was shocked by this statement from the bishop, as he justified why he allowed a priest accused of raping a girl to work at a parish with an elementary school: "I think earlier on with regard to molestation cases, that a lot of bishops, including myself, were not fully aware of the seriousness of the problem in terms of putting other people at risk."

They didn't understand the seriousness of child rape? The cynic in me believes instead that these leaders wanted to make the problem go away, being far more concerned about potential embarrassment than about the kids. Just as Mater Dei officials allowed Andrade to quietly resign, they issued orders to staff threatening immediate firing if any of them talked to reporters.

A Los Angeles Times article from 2005 captured the essence of the scandal: "For more than two decades, officials in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange covered up for priests who molested children, shuffling predators from parish to parish and diocese to diocese, protecting them from prosecution and failing to warn parishioners of the danger, according to church documents."

During his deposition earlier this month in the lawsuit involving Andrade, Monsignor John Urell, the St. Norbert's priest who was the point man for the diocese on sex-abuse matters, broke down in tears and the next day fled to Canada for treatment of an undisclosed medical reason. The diocese claimed not to know why he went to the Southdown Institute outside Toronto, a facility where troubled priests are sent by their superiors to deal with a variety of issues.

These circumstances led to speculation, which Monsignor Urell's attorney addressed the day after Urell left the country. The attorney said Urell was sent to Southdown to deal with acute anxiety. Urell's defenders complained about the awfulness of those who might have implied that Urell went to Southdown for sex-related problems. But they missed the main point: Why is one of the key people in the diocese abuse scandal able to evade a court order to give sworn testimony by seeking treatment in another country? Let's hope the courts eventually force him to testify, and the record of it is made public.

Urell was no bit player here. "Documents described how Urell and [then-Auxiliary Bishop Michael P.] Driscoll devised a plan in 1994 to pay [Andrew Christian] Anderson between \$9,000 and \$19,000 to quietly leave the priesthood, according to correspondence between church officials," the Times reported in the above-referenced 2005 article, noting that Anderson

eventually was convicted of 26 felony child-molestation counts. In a Times article from last July 21, former religion writer William Lobdell wrote about Monsignor Michael Harris, the former Santa Margarita High School principal accused of molesting students. Although he never admitted guilt, Harris left the priesthood, and the diocese paid victims \$5.2 million.

"While reporting the Harris story, I learned – from court records and interviews – the lengths to which the church went to protect the priest," Lobdell wrote. "When Harris took an abrupt leave of absence as principal at Santa Margarita in January 1994, he issued a statement saying it was because of 'stress.' ... His superiors didn't tell parents or students the real reason for his absence: ... In September 1994, a second former student stepped forward, this time publicly, and filed a lawsuit. In response, parents and students held a rally for Harris at the school, singing, 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow.' ... By this time, church leaders possessed a psychological report in which Catholic psychiatrists diagnosed Harris as having an attraction to adolescents and concluded that he likely had molested multiple boys. ... Some of the diocese's top priests – including the cleric in charge of investigating the accusations – threw a going-away party for Harris."

That cleric, by the way, was John Urell.

This continuing church effort at secrecy is enough to make one cynical, although the fact that this information has been released to the public still gives me some shred of hope.

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Simply send your email to snapadmin@gmail.com to be included in our secure database. Don't have a computer? Most public libraries have free internet access.

The Catholic Church's sex abuse damages are emotional and financial

Judith Bethel
La Jolla Village News
August 17, 2007

There is a facet of the Catholic Church sexual abuse cases that has gotten lots of discussion in private conversations but has gotten lost in all the public concern about money and property holdings. We need to talk more openly about the damage done to the victims by people who were supposed to be mentoring their spiritual growth.

I have never thought of the crisis as being a financial accounting problem, rather a moral one.

This appalling situation concerns the power and secrecy of the perpetrators; beyond that it cries out for healing of the victims, penitence by the Church and the acknowledgment of the victims' pain in ways that are sincere and meaningful. It is well known in therapeutic circles that predation is not now and never has been about sex. It is about power. To ensure the maintenance of power there must be secrecy. The two are inextricably linked in this situation.

Unfortunately, power and secrecy have long been the dominant administrative style of the Church hierarchy.

In sexual abuse cases, they serve to

protect the perpetrator and to keep the sin from reaching daylight.

Predators are spiritually weak and damaged people, some victims themselves. They are attracted to powerful roles where there is an abundance of those who are trusting and innocent.

As cradle Catholics we are taught to think of God as a divine Father, that obedience to God's plan is essential to our salvation and that acquiescence to spiritual leaders is right and just. When these religious authorities speak on matters of faith and morals, they are acting within their realm of expertise and so deserve our respect and consideration.

However, this attitude of deference has led them to expect slavish and unquestioned obedience in all matters, even where it is not logical. Therefore, when we allow the designation, Father, to be used for those leaders, we empower them significantly. That so very many men are worthy of that trust is beyond doubt.

Except what about the not so honorable? We must try to imagine what happens to the heart and soul of an innocent when a trusted, revered and ordained man called "Father" behaves immorally toward them. What does that teach about

God? What does it teach when Church authorities must be forced by law to remedy the situation?

The wicked act may damage so badly that it may be lost to conscious thought. The survivor may not want anything to do with God, may not ever enter the Church again and not even be sure why. In most cases, these memories, forgotten or not, eventually do surface and express the need for healing.

At that point, the time is right to reach out compassionately to acknowledge the pain and the sinfulness of the transgression. It can be a powerful moment that brings faith and healing.

A positive outcome of this type may be the exception rather than the rule. More often the victim is disbelieved everywhere, and sometimes severely punished for their involvement, by parents and relatives, certainly by the perpetrator and now by an unyielding Church.

Besides the lack of compassion, a teaching window has been lost. It might have been used to show the healing touch of God the seriousness of the sin, and to teach by example the need for confession and repentance.

At the very least, I would have. . .

(Continued on next page)

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Damages are emotional and financial (continued)

... expected the call for a liturgy led by Bishop Brom and focused on healing of the spiritual life of the individuals as well as the Church as a whole.

However, money remains the issue. Money may help with therapeutic choices to allow the victim the healing that must be done on several levels.

Given the circumstances, civil suits are about the only way to establish accountability for the crime. Now, in San Diego, survivors continue to be victimized by the very process that tries to offer

redress. That the hierarchy of my beloved Church, with its profound theology and rich liturgical tradition, is party to this serious failure of justice is heartbreaking.

At this point, good solutions are few. The lack of openness and willingness by powerful churchmen to adequately consider the human side of this matter is a big obstacle. There is concern that not all bishops are complying with the new policies set down by the group as a whole. It is commonly held that one is

unable to speak about power to the powerful, because they can't hear the defects in their own

Given the circumstances, civil suits are about the only way to establish accountability for the crime.

policies.

While it is too late for any credible moral support from the diocese, there is still time for the hundreds of disappointed, disgusted and angry Catholics to make

their opinions known.

Catholics will always vote with the only avenue open to them, money. Due to the inherent power and secrecy existing within the closed society that is the Catholic hierarchy, it is a reasonable solution.

If participating Catholics throughout the diocese withheld their regular contribution until a settlement was reached, it would take place swiftly.

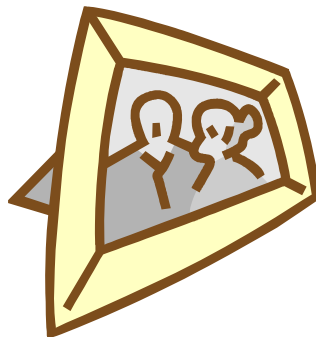
As things stand, I expect Bishop Brom will thwart mediation and allow settlement hours before the first case goes to trial. Established patterns are hard to change.

Picture this!

You have heard the old saying that a "picture is worth a thousand words." We often use photos of survivors at the age they were when they were abused. The goal is to get people to identify with survivors. Ohio has led the way collecting photos, and California has taken childhood photos and used them in quilts. Now we are hoping to duplicate their efforts across the nation. Please send your photos to Barbara Dorris at snapedorris@gmail.com or by mail to 6245 Westminster Place, Saint Louis, MO 63130 (photos cannot be returned.)

The photos will be used for brochures, on letters, for signs and on websites.

Help us put a face on these crimes.



Prisoner Outreach

We are hearing from many survivors who are currently in prison. Prisoners do not have access to the internet and have few resources for finding healing or justice. Consider becoming a pen pal: correspond with a prisoner, send information and help them find resources. We ask that all correspondence go through the SNAP post office box to protect volunteers' privacy. Most volunteers use a pseudonym.

This is a simple way to help. You can remain anonymous, work on your own time schedule and help a survivor. If interested please contact Sarah in the SNAP office at snapadmin@gmail.com

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Survivors Network of those Abused by
Priests

PO Box 6416

Chicago, IL 60680

312 409 2720

SNAPnetwork.org

Questions? Suggestions?

Contact: gymsoul@hotmail.com

Sex Abuse by Nuns: The Unknown Story (continued)

... more resistance these days from religious orders involving nuns, more denial, than I have from any archdiocese or any religious order involving priests."

He says that nuns are 10 to 15 years behind the rest of the church in their attitude to dealing with accusations of abuse.

One campaigner who agrees is Steve Theisen. He was abused over a three-year period by a nun who was a teacher at his school.

His view is: "I don't think they've even taken a first step on this."

Mr Theisen now runs a network for those who have been abused by Catholic leaders.

His research has uncovered more than 60 cases of abuse committed by nuns.

No audit

The Leadership Conference for Women Religious is the umbrella group for women's religious orders in the US.

Its executive director, Sister Carole Shinnick, says that her members have worked hard to make sure there are proper policies in place to ensure the protection of children.

But she admits that, unlike the steps taken by bishops to establish the scale of the abuse problem among priests, no audit has been carried out to determine how many nuns have abused children.

"We haven't done an audit... but the fact of the matter is it isn't something we've been asked to do," she said.

And knowing the scale of the problem does not necessarily lead to a solution.

Transparency

The bishops in the US have now adopted a "zero tolerance" strategy to sexual abuse, which means that priests found to have acted inappropriately must leave the church.

In Silver Spring, Maryland, the St Luke Institute exists to help priests

and nuns with psychological problems, including sexual disorders.

The institute was once a major centre for the treatment of priests who had been found guilty of sexually abusing children.

But as a result of the zero tolerance policy, such priests no longer tend to receive treatment within the church - they are simply expelled from the priesthood.

As the director of the centre, the Rev Stephen Rossetti, explains: "Once we throw them out of the priesthood we no longer have a supervisory role - they're gone from our structure.

"They can still be members of the church but they're unsupervised... but where do they go?"

Few would suggest that the scale of the sex abuse problem among nuns will ever reach the rate seen among abusive priests.

But the lessons for the church - about the value of transparency - are the same, and victims of abuse by nuns believe the church has a long way to go to reassure them.