

MACSAS

Minister & Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors

MACSAS STATEMENT

20TH March 2010

MACSAS calls upon the Pope to accept responsibility and acknowledgement of harm caused to all survivors by the cover up of child abuse by priests.

MACSAS acknowledges the apology from Pope Benedict XVI to the victims of child sexual abuse by priests in the Catholic Church in Ireland and welcomes the call for systems to be put in place to allow victims to tell what has happened in openness and transparency. However MACSAS believes that the apology must go further and must acknowledge and take responsibility for the harm caused to both the victims and to Catholic Church communities around the world by the secrecy and cover up of child sexual abuse over many decades.

MACSAS therefore calls upon Pope Benedict XVI to accept responsibility for the cover up of child sexual abuse by priests over many decades and the subsequent harm caused to victims and communities throughout the world. The Pope is called upon to apologise for the culture of secrecy and collusion that allowed Priest child abusers to continue abusing children for decades. The Pope is called upon to order Cardinals and Bishops around the world to provide support and services to victims and survivors of clergy sexual abuse, to provide forums for survivors to tell what has happened to them and to provide redress for the terrible harm caused as a result not only of the original sexual abuse but also by the secrecy and collusion perpetrated by Bishops and Cardinals.

MACSAS informed both the Nolan and Cumberlege commissions in England of the dangerous culture of secrecy that sits at the heart of the Catholic Church, not only in this country but in countries around the world. MACSAS has repeatedly warned that this culture of secrecy undermines all attempts to create transparent policies and to offer appropriate support and redress for victims and survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Bishops and Cardinals in England over the past two decades have repeatedly denied any moral responsibility for the harm caused by this culture of secrecy not only to past and future victims but also to the reputation of the Catholic Church.

In the past two decades numerous cases of child abuse by Priests and religious within the Catholic Church have come to light in the UK, in all cases a culture of secrecy and cover up was identified:

(i) Samuel Penny, the prolific paedophile priest in the Diocese of Birmingham and the collusion of the Archbishop in silencing victims who reported abuse and moving the priest around parishes and diocese after repeated allegations were made, thereby colluding in the ongoing sexual abuse of children;

(ii) Michael Hill, repeated child abuser in the Diocese of Arundle and Brighton and the actions of the then Bishop, and future Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor in moving a known child abuser from parish to parish and finally to a chaplaincy at Gatwick airport where Hill abused disabled children.

(iii) The actions of Archbishop Ward in general and in particular in the ordination of John Lloyd and the placing of him in a parish ministry where he abused children despite the early warning of the Bishop of Plymouth concerning his unsuitability for ordination.

(iv) The many cases of child abuse within schools and children's homes run by Catholic religious orders over many decades including: Ampleforth, Ealing and Buckfast schools, Worth Abbey, the St William's Children, Home in Middlesborough and St Joseph's School for the deaf.

(v) The wide spread and infamous practice of Bishops and Cardinals who moved paedophile priests from parish to parish, across dioceses and around the world in order to cover up the true extent of child abuse; Brendan Smyth is the most famous of many cases.

MACSAS calls upon the UK government to hold an Inquiry into child abuse perpetrated in this country by the priests and religious in the Catholic Church and the dynamics of secrecy that allowed the abuse to continue.

MACSAS supports the survivors and victims in Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, Austria, America and Australia as well as the many in the United Kingdom who have had the courage to come forward and call the Catholic Church to account for the decades of secrecy.

MACSAS
20th March 2010

Press enquiries:

Anne Lawrence - T:07939 574368 (UK mobile)

Margaret Kennedy - T:07740 945385 (UK mobile) and (00 353) 86 878 6937 (Ireland)