



MACSAS

Minister & Clergy Sexual Abuse Survivors

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Press Release

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Roman Catholic Bishops Held to be Responsible for Actions of Priests

MACSAS welcomes the High Court ruling that Diocesan Bishops are responsible for the actions of the priests they appoint to work in the Diocese, in a claim for damages arising from child abuse perpetrated by a priest within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth.

MACSAS has repeatedly called upon the Catholic Church in England and Wales to accept responsibility for the abuse perpetrated by many hundreds of Diocesan priest and members of religious orders against thousands of children over decades. Hundreds of victims are now seeking justice within our Criminal Justice system and the Civil courts; justice which has long been delayed by the refusal of Bishops and Religious leaders to respond appropriately or at all when cases were first reported.

Many cases pending or already issued in the civil courts in England and Wales await the outcome of the appeal now to be brought by lawyers employed by the Catholic church seeking to have this latest ruling overturned, and we share the frustrations expressed by the victim in the Portsmouth case that these lengthy court proceedings look set to continue well in 2012 and probably beyond, even further delaying justice.

The cost to the Catholic Church in England and Wales of seeking to avoid liability in this case, the St William's Children home case against the Diocese of Middlesbrough now before the Supreme Court, and the many other cases now before the courts, will range into the millions of pounds. Meanwhile the victims receive no support and their suffering continues as they are re-traumatised by having to go through such adversarial and hostile legal processes to achieve justice.

MACSAS contends that the rhetoric coming from the Catholic Church about wanting to meet the needs of victims of child abuse perpetrated within the Church is entirely contradicted by the refusal to talk to victims or to acknowledge the harm caused to them by clergy abuse, as they continue to fight to avoid liability within the Courts.

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