

SNAP
Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests

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Sometimes, crimes and trauma and pain can be prevented. But virtually never when crimes and trauma and pain aren't even understood or acknowledged.

That's the situation with sex crimes by nuns. The hierarchy of the US Catholic church is essentially ignoring these devastating acts against innocent children and vulnerable adults. There is no effort to aggressively reach out to those who've been wounded, or even ascertain how many have been hurt by predatory nuns.

It's heart-breaking that so little is being done to comfort the hurting and protect the vulnerable. It's heart-breaking that our efforts to work with officials with American religious women's groups have essentially been ignored or rebuffed. It's heart-breaking that years of scandal and outrage and prosecutions and lawsuits surrounding pedophile priests have apparently taught officials who oversee women religious nothing.

Our requests are clear, simple, inexpensive and non-controversial. We ask, again, that you let one of us speak to your national assembly this week in New Orleans. (We know you will claim there's no time to arrange such a talk. We also know, however, that where there's a will, there's a way.)

We ask, again, that you at least launch a self-survey, to help determine the extent of the abuse. (We know such a self-survey will be flawed. We also know, however, that it would at least represent a small step forward.)

We ask, again, that you use your considerable resources to aggressively reach out and offer help to victim-survivors of nun sexual abuse. (We know it's tempting to passively sit back and hope victims won't call. We also know, however, that this is a cold-hearted and irresponsible approach, and that some victims do overcome their fears and report child sex crimes, often only after being invited to do so by authority figures.)

For 14 years, your colleagues – America's Catholic bishops – basically ignored our organization and our repeated pleas for cooperation and action. In 2002, when thousands of predator priests and hundreds of complicit bishops began to be publicly exposed, bishops were finally forced to take a few small steps towards reform and healing. Will it take a similar scandal to prod America's nuns to do what's right? We hope not.

We hope to hear from you immediately. If we don't, consider this our request to speak to your 2010 national assembly. We aren't giving up. We aren't going away. We will keep offering hope and consolation to those who have been wounded by predatory nuns and exposing those who protect these criminals, so that kids are safe. Our work will be easier and more productive with your help. But it will continue with or without your involvement.

Sincerely,

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