



Presiding Bishop's Response to the Pennsylvania Report on Sexual Abuse

As presiding Bishop, I feel I must respond to yet another round of horrific discoveries regarding the abuse of children in the Roman church. The Catholic Apostolic Church in North America abhors the abuse and suffers with the victims.

There have been many people, knowledgeable and not, responding to why this abuse has gone on so long. Some see it as power issues in the church, some see celibacy as the cause, some see it as the lack of women in Catholic ministry. I can speak for the Catholic Apostolic Church when I say that we have made every attempt to see that we have no clergy that would abuse. All of our clergy undergo psychological testing before ordination or admittance. From the beginning almost seventy years ago, St. Charles of Brazil, our founder, saw the need for a married clergy and put that into practice. Since 2000 we have invited women to share in the priesthood. Our Bishops are few and deal primarily with the religious growth of the Church, leaving the laity to most of the daily running of the Church. The "power" is also shared by all. We are presently putting into place a committee that will advise us on how to ensure the safety of children in the care of anyone in our church, clergy or lay.

One of the positive things about an independent Catholic Church is that we are able to make changes that the Roman church would take years to undertake. We are already doing what so many Roman theologians are suggesting for our brothers and sisters in the Roman church. Finally, we also pray for those who have been abused, and pray that the leaders of the Roman church take the steps to ensure that nothing like this can ever happen again. It is never the intention of an independent church to steal members away from the Roman church. We exist as an alternative to those who cannot wait for change that may never happen in their lifetimes. We exist for those who have been shut out by the traditions of the Roman church or who have felt disenfranchised by them. We, too, are not perfect, but we strive to find perfection in the modeling of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Yours in Christ,

Ronald Stephens
Presiding Bishop of CACINA
and the College of Bishops
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