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AUGUST 30, 2011

## Gabriela calls on Butuan Bishop to stop coddling priest charged with rape of minor

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**By INA ALLECO R. SILVERIO**

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MANILA — Stop protecting the priest who allegedly raped 17-year old Leah.

This was the demand issued by activist women's group Gabriela to Butuan Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos after the latter admitted that Fr. Fraul Cabonce was under his custody. Cabonce is the parish priest of St. Anne Parish in Tubay, Agusan del Norte. He is being accused by a 17-year old high school graduate for sexually abusing and raping her while she was under his supposed care as a scholar of St. Anne Parish.

The victim, "Leah" came out earlier last week to expose Cabonce, saying that from September 2010 to April 2011, the priest subjected her to various forms of sexual abuse including forced oral sex and rape. Leah and her parents sought the help of Gabriela to help secure justice for the minor. The victim herself said she is determined to see the alleged perpetrator punished not only because of what he did to her, but because she wants him stopped from repeating the abuse to other children and women.

With the help of Gabriela, Leah filed charges of rape, acts of lasciviousness and child abuse against the priest last August 25.

According to Gabriela spokesperson for Caraga Atel Hijos, Cabonce has been temporarily relieved of his duties as parish priest and reassigned to the Bishop's Palace in Caraga by Bishop Pueblos. The move has been met by protests from Leah's supporters.

Gabriela secretary-general Lana Linaban said by taking Cabonce into his custody and deciding to merely transfer him to another parish, Bishop Pueblos is condoning the abusive act committed against Leah. "What the Bishop is doing is in violation of criminal laws and the law of the Church," she said.

Linaban said Bishop Pueblos should surrender the alleged rapist to state authorities and let him face the criminal charges filed against him.

"Church authorities should also begin the process of trial against Cabonce under the Church Tribunal," she added.

Members of the media in Butuan attempted to interview Pueblos but the bishop refused to comment on the issue.

Same bishop in PCSO investigations

"I am not the person you have to ask. We have a couple of speakers, not me. Bye," he said to a reporter from the Philippine Star.

Pueblos is the same bishop who admitted that in 2009, he asked former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for a brand new vehicle for his 66th birthday. It was subsequently exposed that the car – a Mitsubishi 4x4 Montero – was bought using funds from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office. He admitted that he wrote a letter to Arroyo about his birthday gift and said it was unfortunate that his "shortcoming" was his "zeal."

"My actions have been misconstrued . . . cast a shadow of uncertainty on my dignity and moral

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ascendancy as a bishop,” said Pueblos who stressed that it was “service to the public” that motivated him.

During the July senate blue ribbon committee investigations, a letter from the bishop addressed to the former president was read, and in it, Pueblos requested that he be given a “brand new 4x4” for his 66th birthday. He explained in the same letter that he needed the vehicle to help him go to the far-flung areas in his province.

Pueblos also said that he was using a seven year-old car that was no longer in good running condition.

In the same hearing, PCSO Chairperson Margarita Juico confirmed that the check issued for the purchase of the vehicle was paid to the diocese of Butuan and not to Pueblos.

Six other prelates besides Pueblos were discovered to have acquired vehicles during the Arroyo administration using P8.258 million from the PCSO. The vehicles have since been turned over to the charity agency last month.

The other prelates are Bishop Pueblos of Butuan, Archbishop Romulo G. Valles (Zamboanga), Archbishop Orlando B. Quevedo (Cotabato), Bishop Leopoldo C. Jaucian (Bangued, Abra), Bishop Martin Jumoad (Isabela, Basilan), Bishop Rodolfo F. Beltran (Bontoc) and Archbishop Ernesto Antolin Salgado (Caritas Nueva Segovia).

Case should be immediately taken to the Vatican

Gabriela reiterated its call for the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy and specifically the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) to take necessary steps to ensure that Leah gets the justice she deserves. The group said the CBCP should issue specific directives to Bishop Pueblos to stop coddling the accused priest. It also welcomed the statement earlier made by Archbishop Emeritus Oscar Cruz, head of the Catholic Bishops National Tribunal of Appeals, that it is the duty of the Diocese of Butuan to commence Cabonce’s trial under canon law.

Cruz declared last weekend that under canon law, cases which involve the welfare of minors are considered grave and serious and should be sent for trial and judgment to the Vatican in Rome.

The Vatican is the seat of the Roman Catholic Church.

Cruz told the media that the bishop supervising the accused priest should gather criminal evidence, specifically testimonies and documentary regarding the case. If the bishop discovers that the case has preliminary merit, then the case should be sent to Rome.

“If the bishop concerned doesn’t want to gather the preliminary evidence himself, then he should assign one of his priests or his tribunal personnel to do it,” he said.

Cruz said in reports that this latest controversy is “a very big scandal” that causes the Church great shame and that the diocese cannot afford not to act on it. He also said that the priest being accused in this case should be tried before a criminal court and that if found guilty, he should be made to serve a life sentence. In the meantime, the priest, Cruz said, should also be made to stand trial in front of the Church and if found guilty, should be dismissed from all clerical duties.

“In the diocese fails to act, the National Tribunal of Appeals could not interfere unless directed to do so by the papal nuncio,” he said.

Cruz explained that under ordinary circumstances, a case is presented for resolution to the Tribunal of First Instance. This tribunal has an office in all all dioceses and archdioceses all over the country. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the tribunal’s decision, then he or she can appeal it and the case will be elevated to the National Tribunal of Appeals. If the complaint remains unsatisfied, then the case will go to Rome.

The special circumstances of the victim and complainant in this case being minor, however, makes the case sensitive. “The Holy See has automatic jurisdiction over the case,” Cruz said.

Gabriela’s Linaban said not only does Leah’s case negatively impact on the Church, but it is also a serious offense both against the Church and the law. “No cover-up should be allowed to take place and deny the victim justice. Justice should be blind to age, stature or religion and it should be given to Leah and all the victims of rape in this country and every where else in the world,” Linaban said. [BULATLAT.COM](http://BULATLAT.COM)

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**9 thoughts on "Gabriela calls on Butuan Bishop to stop coddling priest charged with rape of minor"**



1. Papapau on May 30, 2013 at 5:45 pm said:

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Their church is higher than the people of the Philippines' law??  
 Ilmbestigahan muna kung dapat na ba dalhin sa vatican muna o hindi?  
 Then Vatican magde-decide kung guilty ba o hindi?  
 Then if guilty tska pa lang ihaharap sa criminal court?  
 Yan ang mga taong nakatira sa ginto at luho dahil sa mga pera na binibigay ng mga katoliko kapalit ng children's fairy tales nila..  
 Wake up and grow up guys! Age of Science an Reason na tayo. Kalimutan na completely ang Dark Ages..  
 Late na tayo ng 2000 years in terms of Medicine, Geography, Cosmology, at sa lahat dahil sa Religions..  
 We can be good without gods.. Morality is not based on a book. Pagkabasa mo naman ng bible na sacred word of god eh hindi mo naman sinusunod agad, itinutugma mo muna sa sarili mong moral, just like any other books even those that pre-dates the bible.  
 Those are just books that we used in absence of proper knowledge. It has served its purpose.  
 Wake up.

2. Pingback: PadreDemonyo Dot Com – Independyenteng Padre Demonyo?

3. Pingback: Child Sexual Abuse in the Roman Catholic Church | thefirstplumline

4. Pingback: Pedophilia in Philadelphia « elcidharth



5. Rita Milla on October 13, 2011 at 9:05 am said:

[Reply ↓](#)

I admire Leah for having the courage to stand up to this criminal priest. She is helping to protect other girls by exposing his crime. I applaud Gabriela and all those who support Leah, together I believe justice can be done. Please fight to keep the Church from trying to cover this up, which will only make matters worse for other potential victims.  
 I too was raped by priests from the Philippines but in Los Angeles and when the Church in Los Angeles learned of the abuse they sent some of the priests back to the Philippines. It sickens me to think what those priests may have done in the Philippines since they knew that they were not going to be punished and so in essence had the Church's blessing to continue their crimes.  
 The only way to stop rapist priests is to put them in jail. The Church can not be trusted to bring justice to victims. The Church cannot be trusted to even try to protect the most vulnerable Catholics. I hope all Catholics demand that the Church be made a safe place for their children and not a haven for perverted priests.



6. Danny Haszard on September 2, 2011 at 5:42 am said:

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Not to diminish the high crimes of the RCC but Please examine the Jehovah's Witnesses who go door to door and come on our property.

Jehovah's Witnesses pedophiles.

Many court documents and news events prove that Jehovah's Witnesses require two witnesses when a child comes forward with allegations of molestation within the congregation. Such allegations have customarily been treated as sins instead of crimes and are only reported to authorities when it is required to do so by law, (which varies by state). It has also been shown that child molesters within the organization usually have not been identified to the congregation members or the public at large. These people engage in a door to door ministry, possibly exposing children to pedophiles.

The Watchtower corporation has paid out millions in settlement money already.

- Danny Haszard abuse victim

dannyhaszard(dot)com



7. jo on September 1, 2011 at 5:07 pm said:

[Reply ↓](#)

naiinsulto na ba sya...?ang galing sumagot...matalino at mabait ang taong tinanong nyo... dapat didiretsohin nyo ang tao,,hindi sa ibang tao ,,kuha nyo?



8. eli on September 1, 2011 at 10:36 am said:

[Reply ↓](#)

about time that a priest be escorted to the hot chair by a fellow priest, about time to stop donating cash money to the church,might just be used for their defense counselors.God forgive me but I think this a honest comment.



9. Judy Jones on August 30, 2011 at 10:49 pm said:

[Reply ↓](#)

This is an intense situation, but this brave girl is to be commended for speaking up and taking action to expose the truth. This is an extremely hard thing to do, but keep in mind your silence only hurts, and by speaking up there is a chance for healing, exposing the truth, and therefore protecting others.

Let's hope that others, who have witnessed, suspected or may have been harmed by Father Raul Cabonce will find the courage and strength to speak up, contact law enforcement, not church officials. Sex crimes against children, however old, should be investigated by the independent professionals in law enforcement, not the biased amateurs in church offices.

Judy Jones, SNAP Midwest Associate Director, USA

snajudy@gmail.com

"Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests" and all clergy.

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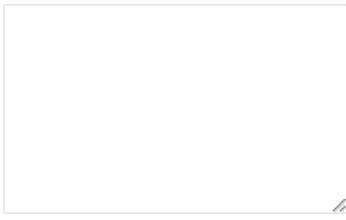
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