

[https://www.postguam.com/news/local/deacon-speaks-out-on-flawed-sexual-misconduct-policy/article\\_b0feb718-27b7-11e6-9c87-23368ac407ac.html](https://www.postguam.com/news/local/deacon-speaks-out-on-flawed-sexual-misconduct-policy/article_b0feb718-27b7-11e6-9c87-23368ac407ac.html)

## Deacon speaks out on 'flawed' sexual misconduct policy

John O'Connor | Post News Staff Jun 2, 2016



**FLAWED:** Deacon Steve Martinez, former sexual abuse response coordinator of the Archdiocese of Agana, talks to Guam media about the archdiocesan sexual misconduct policy, which he said is "flawed," during a press conference at the Guam Law Library in Hagåtña, yesterday, June 1. John O'Connor/Post

For the first time since Roy Quintanilla publicly accused Archbishop Anthony Apuron of molesting him as a child 40 years ago, a member of the Catholic clergy has criticized the archbishop for purposely implementing weak sexual misconduct policies in order to protect himself and his inner circle. Moreover, these policies may have allowed additional cases of sexual abuse by different perpetrators, according to Deacon Steve Martinez.

"His effort of self-preservation has blinded his command to protect," Martinez said. "I'm sad to say that today, my worst dreams have come true."

Martinez served as sexual abuse response coordinator for the archdiocese from 2011 to 2014. During that time, Martinez wrote several letters to Apuron expressing his concern about the sexual misconduct policy, which he shared with Guam media during a press conference yesterday, June 1.

On July 28, 2014, Martinez wrote to Apuron about sexual abuse accusations against Rev. John Wadeson, whose name appeared on a list of publicly accused priests. Martinez questioned Apuron about why, as sexual abuse response coordinator, he was not notified about Wadeson, as is required by the policy.

Martinez suggested looking into whether a thorough background check was conducted on Wadeson, also as required by policy, and if further investigation was needed.

A month had passed and no response had been received from Apuron.

Martinez wrote another letter on Aug. 27, 2014 expressing his concerns about the liability of the archdiocese. Martinez noted that since the archbishop was solely responsible for determining if any action should be taken on accusations, that there was a weakness in the policy and a potential conflict of interest, as Apuron himself could be accused. Martinez suggested that an independent investigation should be conducted on whether the policy was properly implemented in Wadeson's case and urged Apuron to discuss these issues further.

In his response on Oct. 24, 2014, Apuron informed Martinez that he would no longer serve as coordinator and he would be replaced by Deacon Rizal "Larry" Claros.

"None of the policies were modified or strengthened," Martinez said. "No action was taken other than to start off with a new sex abuse coordinator."

Wadeson was eventually reinstated to minister on April 13, 2015.

### **Fatally flawed**

The church's sexual misconduct policy was implemented in 2002, according to Martinez. The archdiocese adopted an existing policy from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and made adjustments to fit Guam law. Between 2010 and 2011, the Vatican suggested policy modifications

to all archdioceses but the amendments were not adopted by the Archdiocese of Agana.

This inaction is exacerbated by recent allegations against Apuron. Quintanilla came forward on May 17 while Doris Concepcion, the mother of a man who was allegedly abused by Apuron when he was 11, spoke out with her accusations earlier this week. The archdiocese has denied all allegations and even stated that the individuals were induced to give "false testimony."

"When (Apuron) is the accused, the system is fatally flawed," Martinez said. "We see that with the review board."

The Archdiocesan Review Board makes a recommendation to the archbishop based on the results of an investigation. But as archbishop, Apuron has ultimate discretion on whether an independent investigation can even take place, and he can overturn a recommendation by the review board, Martinez said. Of the five members, only one remains on the board.

Since Quintanilla came forward, board members Vincent Pereda, Sister Trini Pangelinan and Juan Rapadas have resigned, Martinez said. Mariles Benavente has recused herself, he added, and George Kallingal remains the sole member of the board.

NO PAYMENT FOR 90 DAYS

DREAM DEAL SALES EVENT

0% DOWN 1.9% FINANCING

2017 HONDA CIVIC

STARTING AT \$19,993

STARTING AT \$161 PER PAYMENT

2017 BLUE BOOK BEST BUY AWARDS

TO LEARN MORE VISIT: [WWW.TRIPLEJGUAM.COM](http://WWW.TRIPLEJGUAM.COM)

TRIPLE J HONDA

127 South Marine Corps Drive

OPEN Mon-Fri, 8:00-5PM - Sat, 8:00-5PM - Sun, 12PM-5PM

(571) 548-9338 (571) 549-2043 [sales@triplejguam.com](mailto:sales@triplejguam.com) [WWW.TRIPLEJGUAM.COM](http://WWW.TRIPLEJGUAM.COM)

"What information could that one remaining member hear from the kangaroo investigation that was conducted?" Martinez said.

A proper investigation would have required hiring someone with professional investigative experience, he said. With responses proclaiming Apuron's innocence coming from the archdiocese shortly after each allegation, Martinez said it would seem there was not enough time to follow the prescribed procedures.

"In other words, there will be no investigation," he said. "That's the reality."

### **Other perpetrators**

Martinez said he wants anyone who has been a victim of sexual abuse by members of the church to come forward, make themselves heard and seek help if needed. While allegations so far have focused on Apuron, failures in the policy may have allowed more cases.

"There are indications that there are more victims," Martinez said during the press conference. "Are there other perpetrators? That's a possibility, sadly."

Inquiries were sent to Claros, the current sexual abuse response coordinator, on his views on the sexual misconduct policy and whether he had suggested any changes. The inquiries were directed to the Archdiocesan Media Group and no response was received as of press time.

When asked if he was fearful of retaliation, Martinez said, "When you tell the truth you should have nothing to fear. And that's the message I want to give to anybody out there who is a victim."





Deacon: Archbishop maintained, now 'protected' by broken sex abuse policy  
Jun 1, 2016

## MORE INFORMATION



July 28, 2014 SARC Letter to Archbishop Apuron

Aug. 27, 2014 SARC Letter to Archbishop Apuron

 Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis

 Letter to Deacon Martinez from Archbishop Anthony Apuron

---

## **John O'Connor**

Reporting on utilities, education and other topics.