

Near consensus on need for national policy

What next in abuse crisis?

By **BARB ARLAND-FYE**

Catholic clergy and lay leaders in the Davenport diocese have differing ideas about how a national crisis over sins of the past may shape the Church's future.

One area of consensus is the need for a national policy dealing with clergy sex abuse, the tragedy that precipitated the current crisis. A national policy, leaders in the diocese say, likely will involve lay people.

There is a need to develop review boards in dioceses "that might encompass the laity and maybe even those who have been abused," said Msgr. John Hyland, pastor of SS. John & Paul parish in Burlington.

His recommendation comes after listening to the stories of two men who reported being sexually abused by two priests in the 1960s at the former St. John the Baptist parish in Burlington.

One of the priests is deceased.

The other, Father Donald Redmond, OSB, has been removed from active ministry in Kansas as a result of the substantiated accusation. Additional allegations have been made against Redmond concerning his conduct in a Kansas parish in which

he served in the 1960s, officials with the Davenport diocese said.

Msgr. Hyland said he listened last week to Bishop Wilton Gregory, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops speak on CNN about how he didn't think people could truly understand the anger and the pain of an individual who had been abused by a priest until they sat across the table from that person and listened. "I've done that, and I can truly understand

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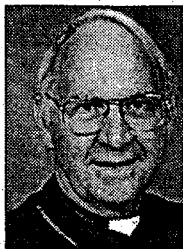
Crisis solutions must be weighed carefully

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what he's saying," Msgr. Hyland said.

While he believes there will be a zero-tolerance policy for clergy who sexually abuse minors, he also worries that innocent priests may be harmed. He is not alone.

THE ATMOSPHERE of resentment and anger seems to make every priest suspect, and to create an opportunity for people to push other agendas they think the Church ought to address, Bishop William Franklin of the Davenport diocese believes. He urges caution. Quick fixes and simplistic solutions won't solve problems.



Bp. Franklin

"I think it is very important to have a national policy that has been given time to truly be helpful, and workable in a variety of situations," he said.



Msgr. Shafer

A national policy, he added, "has to have the ability to be fair and just to all victims, the accused and society. We have people who are suffering who are not the direct victims," he said, referring to families, friends and parishes.

It can't come quickly enough for U.S. Catholics and non-Catholics alike, simmering over the Church's slowness to deal with the minority of priests who decades ago betrayed the trust of children by sexually abusing them.

LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS believe the U.S. bishops, gathering in June for their annual meeting, will begin shaping a national policy.

"Whatever policy comes out of this will have broader involvement of people in general," said Msgr. Drake Shafer, the diocese's vicar general.

That is essential to the Church's well-being, said Sister Roberta Brich, CHM, vice president of the Congregation of Humility of Mary in Davenport.

"The Church hierarchy needs to realize that the Church is greater than they are ... the Church is the people, and the people should have greater decision-making roles, she said.

Her plan for reforming the Church would include removing the "secrecy" that envelops it. "That has been such an albatross around the Church's neck," she added.

If the Church leadership doesn't open up, she said, "I think they will pay for it. I think the churches will empty and the pocketbooks will empty on the part of the lay people. I think they'll use their money to talk," Sr. Brich said.

"Healing requires openness. You don't heal in secret," said Dorothy Whiston, the pastoral minister at St. Thomas More parish in Iowa City. She believes the current crisis will bring about "openness in the face of suffering.

FOR HEALING TO HAPPEN when trauma is inflicted on someone, that person has to feel openly embraced," she said. "I think as the Church comes to grapple with these issues we'll find healing and new life," she added.

Sister Marilyn Huegerich, president of the Clinton Franciscans, said the meeting between the cardinals and the Pope last week gives her a sense of encouragement.

"I do think as a result of this meeting, there will be more involvement of the laity in this and future issues," she said.

Catholics around the nation as well as at home are demanding a role in guiding Church policy, and being rebuked in some cases.

The Boston Globe reported April 27 that Cardinal Bernard Law is cracking down on efforts by lay Catholics to organize in Greater Boston.

The Globe also reported that U.S. cardinals, in a communique responding to the clergy sexual abuse crisis, ordered pastors "publicly to reprimand individuals who spread dissent."

Among the groups advocating more involvement of the laity is Voices of the Faithful, which has been meeting regularly in Boston in reaction to the sexual abuse scandal. The group's goals are to support survivors of abuse; support priests of integrity and shape structural change within the Church.

"I think we need to support the priests," agrees Sister Brich. "I would just encourage them to speak their conscience and realize they have a leadership role to play."

She also believes the Church must do a better job of screening seminarians, and expand the notion of priesthood.

BISHOP FRANKLIN said each diocese must study the ramifications of every question and answer being raised in the midst of the crisis today. He firmly believes the integrity of the priesthood will be sustained as long as priests continue to be themselves, continue to work and serve the people and ultimately, "to continue to build and work on their relationship with God."