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SNAP's Isely meets with Austria's Cardinal Schoenborn

Tom Roberts | Jun. 25, 2010 NCR Today

SNAP Midwest Director Peter Isely was part of a delegation of SNAP activists that spent time in Europe recently meeting with survivors there. An email he sent out recently about the trip included the following paragraph:

?The survivors and advocates we met with and joined in Europe were unforgettable. They form with us a single voice of struggle and justice. All of these ancient European capitals are beautiful and majestic. What difference does it make? It is the same pain and anguish, the same sorrow, whether in Berlin or Boise, the same continuous and unbroken chain of trauma, memory and witness. One can only conclude from so many brave souls what Camus did in the final line of his post war epic, The Plague, a book many of us read college (I hope still do) ?that what one learns in times of plague is ??that there is more to admire in men than to despise.?

During the trip, Isely had an opportunity to meet with Austrian Cardinal Christof Schoenborn of Vienna. In a recent interview for a story I?m working on, Isely said the conversation was extensive and that Schoenborn appeared to listen to Isely?s explanation of victims? experience in the United States and to his criticism that Austria had no policy for automatically removing abuser priests.

Isely said he was encouraged by earlier remarks Schoenborn had made to a leading Catholic paper in Austria in which he went after Cardinal Angelo Sodano, dean of the College of Cardinals, for dismissing media reports of clerical sex abuse as ?petty gossip.? Schoenborn said Sodano had ?deeply wronged? victims of abuse. He also said that the Roman Curia was ?urgently in need of reform."

Isely said he left Schoenborn with an unanswered question: ?How did pedophilia for decades find such a comfortable and welcoming home within the Catholic priesthood? Answer that,? said Isely, ?and a lot of other answers will flow from that.?

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