

Whistleblowers suggest names for papal sex abuse commission

Tom Roberts | Dec. 10, 2013

A Catholic group dedicated to reporting sexual abuse within the church has proposed that three prominent activists from the United States be appointed to the new Vatican commission being formed to deal with the crisis.

[Catholic Whistleblowers](#) [1], a network of clergy and sisters committed to reporting and monitoring abuse cases in the church, made the recommendations in a letter to Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston, a member of the Council of Cardinals appointed by Pope Francis to help him in the worldwide governance of the church and in reform of the Curia.

O'Malley [announced Dec. 5](#) [2] during the most recent meeting of the council that Pope Francis had ordered the creation of a new commission to be part of the church's central bureaucracy to deal with the issue of sex abuse in the church. The cardinal said few specifics had been established, but the commission would deal with protection of children and pastoral care of victims and would be made up of experts from around the world, including priests, sisters and laypeople.

The group proposed Notre Dame de Namur Sr. Maureen Turlish, Dominican Fr. Thomas Doyle and Dr. Robert M. Hoatson for membership on the commission. They were all among co-founders of the group with seven other priests and sisters from New Jersey, Michigan, New York, Minnesota and Massachusetts.

Turlish has been an advocate of victims through her writing, support of lay efforts to advance the cause of victim/survivors and in working to reform laws in the interest of protecting children. She is a member of Delaware's Child Victims Voice.

Doyle took up the cause of defending victims of clergy sexual abuse in the 1980s and was one of three who produced a "handbook" for the U.S. bishops to aid in dealing with allegations of sexual abuse. In recent years, as a frequent expert for plaintiffs' attorneys, he has been recognized internationally as an expert on the abuse scandal and has acted as a canonical and pastoral consultant for numerous groups.

Hoatson, a victim/survivor of multiple Catholic church abusers, began reporting cases of sexual abuse in the 1970s, when he was a teacher in a Catholic high school. In 2003, he founded a charity that has helped more than 2,000 victim/survivors internationally with advocacy, financial assistance, psychological services and other assistance, according to Catholic Whistleblowers.

In its letter to O'Malley, the group makes three recommendations:

- That the commission "not ignore the juridical (canon and civil law), psychological and sociological factors that impact cases of sexual abuse in the church. Justice for the victims and their families must be the paramount aim of the commission."
- The selection "of a broad-based group of experts, including highly qualified and independent criminal, civil and canonical attorneys; psychiatrists and psychotherapists, advocates and supporters;

victim/survivors and their families."

- That although the commission seeks to look to the future, it treat cases from the past, which will continue to surface, "compassionately and justly." The group also urged the commission "to discipline members of the hierarchy of the church who have displayed reckless negligence in their handling of cases of clergy sexual abuse."

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