
UK: independent abuse inquiry. Catholic Bishops, “where there have been failings, we acknowledge these and commit to actions which will bring about improvement”.

The findings of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse committed in the Catholic Church of England and Wales are harsh. “The Catholic Church has prioritised its reputation over the welfare of vulnerable children for decades”, the inquiry found. “The moral purpose of the Church was betrayed” not only by the perpetrators, but also by those who turned a blind eye and did not report the abusers. The Church failed “to support victims and survivors”. A statement from the Catholic Church of England and Wales welcomes the Report from the Independent Inquiry, specifying that “the Report will now inform the ongoing reform and improvement of safeguarding in all aspects of the Church’s life”. “An important aspect of the Inquiry’s work was the voice given to victims and survivors of abuse, including the accounts which they gave of their subsequent engagement with the Church”, the UK Bishops wrote. “Listening attentively to their witness testimony has brought into sharp relief the extent of the damage this sexual abuse has had on their lives. We apologise to all victims and survivors who have not been properly listened to, or properly supported by us. By listening with humility to those who have suffered, we can contribute to the healing of the wounds of abuse, as well as learn from those most directly affected how we must improve the Church’s safeguarding standards”. “This is an ongoing task and one to which we are wholly committed”, the Bishops added. “Child sexual abuse is a crime. It is a crime that requires committed vigilance and strict procedures to ensure reporting to the statutory authorities. Where there have been failings and inconsistency in the application of our safeguarding procedures, we acknowledge these and commit to actions which will bring about improvement”. The Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales calls the Report “an important moment in our safeguarding journey in the Catholic Church”. “It will now be considered in detail by us, the Bishops, at our Plenary Assembly beginning next week so we can explore how to integrate the findings of this important Inquiry into the life and work of the Church in order to consistently safeguard children and the vulnerable”.

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