

Local Priests Respond to Abuse Claims

By CHRIS BLOW AND JEFF SILVER
Staff Writers

Local Roman Catholic Church officials are discounting the effects a national scandal of sexual misconduct by priests might have on their churches.

Officials also say they denounce the priests' misconduct and that such actions will not be tolerated in the local diocese.

For the first time, Pope John Paul II on Thursday condemned the sexual abuse allegations in the Catholic Church. The charges made headlines in January after the Boston Globe reported that Rev. John Geoghan, 66, was accused of molesting more than 130 children. Since then, similar charges have been levied against priests nationwide.

Leaders of the Diocese of Raleigh, which serves Chapel Hill and all of eastern North Carolina, have emphasized their disappointment with the individuals involved in the allegations.

In a statement released March 5 in the diocese's newsletter, NC Catholic, Bishop F. Joseph Gossman of the diocese emphasized his intolerance of sexual

abuse. "In my 27 years as your bishop I have never knowingly ordained, assigned or accepted a priest for ministry to serve in any assignment when such an individual had previously engaged in the sexual abuse of a minor," he wrote.

Under diocese regulations, any member of the church who is accused of sexual abuse will be placed on administrative leave and the case will be immediately investigated by law enforcement, the newsletter said.

Statewide, there have been two reported sexual abuse cases involving priests — both in western North Carolina — since the 1960s, said Frank Morock, spokesman for the eastern diocese.

The first incident, which occurred in 1969, was brought to light in 1982, he said. "The priest admitted that something happened, and he was immediately removed and forced to retire — that day."

The second case of abuse occurred in 1978 and was reported in 1979, after that priest already had retired. No legal action was taken because the family of the abused person did not want to press charges, Morock said.

The national sexual abuse scandal

began in January when the Boston Globe reported that Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston moved Geoghan, an accused child molester, from church to church rather than removing him from his position.

Since January, more than 55 priests across the country have been removed because of sexual abuse accusations, The New York Times reported Saturday.

Father John Heffernan Jr. of the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church in Durham said he thinks Law should be removed because of his "lack of insight and oversight."

Father Phillip Leach, pastor and campus minister at the Newman Catholic Student Center at UNC, said he thinks the recent scandal has had little effect on the University's Catholic community.

Leach attributed the lack of impact to the maturity of college students who show the initiative to attend church while in school. "They don't go to mass because their moms make them or their fathers tell them they'll go to hell (if they don't)," he said. "This is a pretty self-selective group."

Leach said that, in addition, students who are mature enough to be active in UNC's Catholic community understand

the imperfection of the institution.

Leach said, if anything, he has seen students more committed to the religion after the news stories came out pinpointing Geoghan and other accused priests. Leach mentioned the story of a student who said the recent events have furthered his resolve to enter the priesthood. "He said, 'I want to show I am committed to my religion in spite of all this,'" Leach said.

But Leach said the priests' actions are nonetheless a problem the church will have to face. "As in any human being's life, there are things (the church) can be extremely proud of and things we are ashamed of," Leach said. "The (Catholic) Church is a macrocosm of the human experience."

Peter Kaufman, a UNC religion professor, also said the Catholic church will survive, despite the incidents. "The church will persevere, most likely with improved sensibilities toward sexuality in the priesthood and in general."

Staff Writer Will Arey contributed to this story. The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

Developments in the War on Terrorism

4 to Be Charged in Reporter Death

The chief prosecutor in the case of slain Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl said Thursday that he has enough evidence to bring a murder charge against the main suspect — even though Pearl's body has not been found.



Rumsfeld Outlines Tribunal Rules

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Thursday that the Pentagon's new rules for military tribunals were designed to protect the rights of accused terrorists while also protecting the security of Americans.

Powell: Designate Al-Qsa Terrorists

The Bush administration said Thursday that it is taking steps to designate the al-Qsa brigades, a Palestinian militia, as a foreign terrorist organization. The brigades are linked to the Fatah faction of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Specialists Use Education To Combat Child Abuse

By ERIKA HEYDER
Staff Writer

Recent child pornography ring busts and charges against clergy members nationwide have increased local awareness in educating the targets of predators.

Although child abuse cases are uncommon in Chapel Hill, experts say there is still reason for concern.

According to the Orange County Rape Crisis Center, one in three girls and one in six boys are sexually assaulted before the age of 18.

Sabrina Garcia, a domestic violence and sexual assault specialist who works for the Chapel Hill Police Department, said the bulk of the department's cases included harassing letters, e-mails and verbal harassments. "We are very fortunate that we do not have a lot of cases reported," Garcia said. "We're still a small enough place where people are still aware and

they report any unfamiliar scenes." Orange County officials say the low numbers can be attributed to the county's use of school intervention and education on the issue.

Matt Ezzell, the community education coordinator for the Rape Crisis Center, said representatives from the center spoke to 10,000 students in 2001, including students in every kindergarten through fourth-grade class in Orange County and Chapel Hill-Carrboro City schools, as well as some middle school and high school classes.

"We follow an empowerment education model to empower kids and show them that they have rights and to help promote their safety," he said.

Ezzell said he speaks with parents and teachers to inform them about how to deal with a child who has been abused.

"We show them how to talk to kids and break it apart so that it will not be so scary," Ezzell said. "We want to show them different ideas on how to approach the kids and make them feel positive and empowered."

Ezzell said he hopes the measures will help prevent future cases by teaching kids how to say no and show them how to protect themselves. "I think there is a lot of silence, and there is always work to be done so kids aren't carrying around such a heavy burden," Ezzell said.

According to Garcia, juvenile abuse cases involve children ranging from infants to 17 years old. Cases with younger children usually involve immediate access between the child and the offender. Molesters are often neighbors or family members of the child, she said.

Garcia said technology allows for more contact with strangers. "As children get older, the natural progression is to remove family and broaden social contacts through devices like chat rooms."

Garcia said children are often left unchaperoned to chat with strangers who can exploit a child's insecurities.

Garcia said agencies like the Rape Crisis Center are available to help connected family members and friends in addition to the victims.

"Both the children and the people close to them feel the effects," Garcia said. "We have to hold offenders accountable and mandate corrective treatment."

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.

Bush: 'Two-Bit Terrorists' Won't Halt Peru Trip

The Associated Press

MONTERREY, Mexico — A day after a deadly car bombing, President Bush said Thursday that "two-bit terrorists" would not stop him from visiting Peru or thwart his goal of building better ties throughout Latin America.

"Sometimes it seems like the terror threat might be going away, but all you got to do is look on your TV today and

be reminded about how evil these murderers are," Bush said.

The president got a send-off for a four-day trip to Mexico, Peru and El Salvador with a raucous airport rally in the Texas border town of El Paso.

"We cannot let the terrorists take over freedom-loving societies, and we will not," Bush said, decrying a suicide bombing in the Middle East, a grenade attack on a church service in Pakistan

and a car bombing near the U.S. Embassy in Lima, Peru.

Bush's first stop was in Monterrey for a U.N. summit on global poverty.

The subject of terrorism loomed large over Bush's day. Before boarding Air Force One for El Paso, Bush met with Milton Green, whose wife and stepdaughter were killed in the Pakistan attack. And while en route, he called Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi

to discuss an attack by an offshoot of the Red Brigades terror group in which an Italian economist was killed.

The president told reporters in Washington that Wednesday's attack in Lima, which killed nine people, would not make him change his travel plans. He is to visit Peru on Saturday, the first U.S. president to do so. He said he trusts that President Alejandro Toledo will make his country safe for his American visitor.

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By Scott LaPierre

■ School Board Discusses Minority Achievement Plan ■
By Adrienne Clark

Campus Calendar Today

5:30 p.m. — Bicyclists unite and take back the streets! Join students and other community members for the monthly fun-filled bike ride en masse down Franklin Street sponsored by the Student Environmental Action Coalition. Meet today at the sundial behind Morehead Planetarium.

8 p.m. — The UNC Fellowship of Christian Athletes presents Chris Rice in concert. Tickets are \$3 in the Pit or at the door as long as available. The concert is at the Church of the Good Shepard, located at 3741 Garrett Road in Durham. Seating is general admission.

8:15 p.m. — Department of Dramatic Art Studio 1 presents "MELON" by Simon Gray, directed by David Chapman. Co-produced by the Office of Intellectual Life. The show will take place today through Monday at 8:15 p.m., Sunday at 4 p.m. and Tuesday at 5 p.m. at the Playmakers Theatre. Admission is \$5 or free with PRC card. Questions? Call 962-1132 or e-mail dfchap@email.unc.edu.

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P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515
Katie Hunter, Editor, 962-4086
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