

Aug. 17, 2006

Sr. Carole Shinnick, President, LCWER (Leadership Council of Women Religious):

Slowly but surely, the truth is surfacing. Ever so gradually, adults who were abused and assaulted as children by nuns are finding their voices and speaking up.

Yesterday, it was Scotland. Newspapers there report that 18 people have received a settlement from Glasgow nuns for the abuse they suffered as kids in a church- an orphanage.

Two days before, it was New Zealand . Newspapers there report that a woman is seeking justice from an order of nuns there for physical abuse that she allegedly suffered as a child.

Here in the US , we in SNAP continue to hear heart-breaking stories (more than 400 so far) from deeply wounded adults who were victimized by nuns as young children or vulnerable adults.

The trickle continues. Your organization can ignore it, and hope it magically stops. Or your organization can do what's right, and play a constructive role in healing the wounded and safeguarding the vulnerable.

Thus far, sadly, like America 's Catholic bishops, the LCWR has done little. It has essentially ignored Jesus' strong and clear mandate to actively search for and help the lost and wounded sheep. Despite a widely-professed concern for victims of trauma and oppression, your group has done little for victims of sexual and physical abuse.

We're here today desperately hoping the LCWR will reconsider this insensitive and destructive pattern.

Specifically, we are asking that you:

- allow members of our group to speak to your members, at this assembly, at future annual assemblies, at regional conferences, anywhere that groups of nuns gather
- take immediate, aggressive steps to reach out to anyone who may have been hurt by abusive nuns,
- urge such victims to report the crimes directly to law enforcement officials, not church officials,
- provide links to our support groups and our website on the websites of each member order of the LCWR, and
- formulate and publicize an effective policy, jointly drawn up with our input, to respond promptly and pastorally to victims of sexual abuse by nuns.

Even now, at this late date, we are willing to make ourselves available to talk with the LCWR over the next few days. We've provided our cell phone numbers for your convenience. While we have repeatedly been shunned by the LCWR's leadership in the past, for the sake of those still at risk, we remain hopeful that your group will act NOW to prevent future sex crimes by nuns and ameliorate the pain already suffered by victims of earlier sex crimes by nuns.

We hope to hear from you soon.

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