

# Right of Reply Holy See

22 September 2009

Mr. President

Let me clarify the issue raised by the International Humanist and Ethical Union in its intervention

- In the upcoming report of the Holy See to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which is finalized as we speak, a paragraph will be dedicated to the problem of child abuse by catholic clergy.
- While many speak of child abuse, i.e. pedophilia, it would be more correct to speak of ephebophilia, being a homosexual attraction to adolescent males. Of all priests involved in the abuses, 80 to 90% belong to this sexual orientation minority which is sexually engaged with adolescent boys between the age of 11 and 17 years old.
- From available research we now know that in the last fifty years somewhere between 1.5% and 5% of the catholic clergy has been involved in sexual abuse cases. The Christian Science Monitor reported on the results of a national survey by Christian Ministry Resources in 2002 and concluded: "Despite headlines focusing on the priest pedophile problem in the Roman Catholic Church, most American churches being hit with child sexual-abuse allegations are Protestant".<sup>1</sup> Sexual abuses within the Jewish communities approximate that found among the Protestant clergy.<sup>2</sup>
- About 85% of the offenders of child sexual abuse are family members, babysitters, neighbors, family friends or relatives. About one in six child molesters are other children, while most of the offenders are male<sup>3</sup>.
- According to a major 2004 study commissioned by the US Department of Education, nearly 10 percent of US Public school students have been targeted with unwanted sexual attention by school employees. The author of the study concluded that the scope of the school-sex problem appears to far exceed the clergy abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic Church and concluded in an interview with Education Week "the physical abuse of students in schools is likely more than 100 times the abuse by priests".<sup>4</sup>
- The Church is very conscious of the seriousness of the problem. The Code of Canon Law stipulates that priests involved in sexual abuse cases must be "punished with just punishments, not excluding expulsion from clerical state"<sup>5</sup>. The American Bishops Conference issued in 2002 "essential norms for diocesan/eparchial policies dealing with allegations of sexual abuse of minors by priests or deacons". The guidelines mention among others that "in case of sufficient evidence the bishop will withdraw the accused from exercising the ministry, impose or prohibit residence in a given place or territory...pending the outcome of the process". Other National Bishops Conferences have taken similar measures.
- As the Catholic Church has been busy cleaning its own house, it would be good if other institutions and authorities, where the major part of abuses are reported, could do the same and inform the media about it.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Clayton, "Sex Abuse Spans Spectrum of Churches", Christian Science Monitor, April 5, 2002, p.1.

<sup>2</sup> Rabbi Arthur Gross Schaefer, "Rabbi Sexual Misconduct: Crying Out for a Communal Response", [www.rrc.edu/journal](http://www.rrc.edu/journal), November 24, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Grath A. Rattray, "Child Molesters and Paedophilia", *The Gleaner*, May 14, 2002

<sup>4</sup> Caroline Hendrie, "Sexual Abuse by Educators Scrutinized", in: Education Week, March 10, 2004

<sup>5</sup> CIC c. 1395 § 2.