

300 Priests Abused More Than 1,000 Children. Now What?

This week, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court released a grand jury report into child sex abuse, listing more than 300 accused Catholic clergy and over 1,000 child victims.

The report documents that one group of Catholic priests in Pittsburgh ran a porn ring where children were exploited and groomed for abuse.

The report was released as a Roman Catholic priest, 66-year-old Monsignor John S. Mraz, was arraigned on two felony and one misdemeanor charges of sexual abuse related to child pornography. If convicted, he could be sentenced to more than 10 years in a state prison.

In addition, for 15 years, he would have to register as a sex offender. Lehigh County District Attorney James Martin said that there is no evidence Mraz had any improper contact with children.

Mraz's porn was discovered when he asked a parishioner to help him update his two laptop computers.

On one computer, the parishioner, identified only as D.M., found a file containing sexually explicit pictures. The second computer's recycling bin also had various child porn images.

D.M. notified officials from the Diocese of Allentown, who alerted the district attorney.

According to Martin,

"Those videos and pornographic images were made by someone and put out on the internet, and it's disturbing that this happens in our society."

It's Not Just a Catholic Issue

Although globally, the Catholic Church has been plagued by issues of sexual abuse, it is an issue across every denomination in America and around the world.

Evangelical leaders such as Bill Hybels, Ted Haggard and Andy Savage have been involved in well-known sex scandals. Many smaller churches around the country have also dealt with inappropriate sexual conduct from leaders and congregants.

Churches of all sizes and denomination have faced such situations. Pornography is usually a factor in these cases. Porn addiction is a growing global problem for all churches.

Unfortunately, the dominant attitude in most churches is, "Well, that would never happen here," or "It would never escalate that far."

According to research conducted by Pure Desire Ministries, 68 percent of men who attend church struggle with pornography. Over 50 percent of pastors also admit to battling porn.

In many situations where a church leader has a moral failing, they are publicly shamed and shafted by the church. This forces leaders who are struggling to keep silent and continue in their downward spiral of destruction. Churches must have in place discipleship to prevent this from happening, and a process of healing for all parties when it does occur.

The Church Must Wake Up

The Church is meant to be the body of Christ. When we think about Christ we think about redemption, grace, healing and restoration.

Sadly, when the secular world thinks about the church, often they think of sexual abuse, hurt and shame.

At the moment, we are failing to be a good representation of

the body of Christ to the world. As the church, we are desperate for healing.

Healing can only come when the illness is addressed. There are men in your church who want to be set free from their struggle with pornography.

Men Need Sexual Discipleship

For too long, the church has been silent on sexual discipleship, which has perpetuated a culture of sexual abuse and pornography addiction. Church leaders must realize the devastating effects of porn on men, families, the church and society.

The topic of sex can be a very difficult subject for church leaders to discuss, especially in a congregation full of men, women and children.

Most leaders tend to avoid even coming close to bringing up the subject.

But pornography addiction cannot be danced around or ignored. Men are seeing their families destroyed, their jobs placed in jeopardy and their own emotional and spiritual well-being attacked.

The Time to Act Is Now

This is not a 'little problem' that will just go away. For your men to find freedom from pornography, it will take a proactive, focused battle against the forces of evil. It will not be easy, but it is necessary. And it must start now.

Josh McDowell, evangelical apologist, evangelist and writer, said,

"Right at this moment, there's never been anything in history that is destroying more churches, more pastors, more marriages, more young people, than pornography. As Chuck

Swindoll said, 'It's the greatest cancer in the church.' For me, it's too late to say, 'Well, give it time and let's pray about it.' Chuck Swindoll said that if we don't move on it right now, it is too late to say we'll pray about it and then wait.'"

Thankfully, there is a movement of churches that are addressing this issue. This fall, thousands of churches will be running a cinematic course for their leadership and men's groups.

The Conquer Series is a powerful group study used by churches to provide sexual discipleship to men and help them find freedom from pornography. Churches around the country are currently preparing to run the series.