

4-21-08 - More victims come forward after papal visit's acknowledgment of sexual Abuse UNITED STATES, Catholic News Agency, Chicago

Pope Benedict XVI's visit and his recognition of the problems of clerical sexual abuse have prompted many alleged sexual abuse victims to come forward, Newsday reports.

Barbara Blaine, president of the Chicago-based Survivor's Network of Those Abused by Priests said her 8,000-member organization has been "inundated" with calls. "Several are saying that they never told anyone."

"It was because the topic was addressed and for some people [who came forward] it was because they're angry," Blaine said, according to Newsday.

"Others just want to be counted."

Addressing the bishops of the United States on Wednesday, the Pope said the sexual abuse scandal had been "very badly handled." He later met with victims of sexually abusive clergy, an historic first.

According to Newsday, Blaine said it would have been "far better" if the Pope had accompanied his statements with actions like sanctioning bishops who failed to report and discipline priests.

Dan Bartley, president of Voice of the Faithful, an organization seeking Church reforms, responded to Pope Benedict's actions, saying, "It's a start." He continued, claiming, "the underlying issues that caused the sexual abuse crisis in the first place remain unaddressed."

Father Robert Hoatson, the New Jersey co-founder of the abuse victims' group Road to Recovery, Inc., said the organization has received calls from five new victims in the last three days.