

SEX CRIMES AND THE VATICAN

by Sarah Macdonald
on CBC Newsworld
for the BBC.
November 13, 2006

Created in 1962, a now infamous document was issued in secret to bishops. Called Crimen Sollicitationis, it outlined procedures to be followed by bishops when dealing with allegations of child abuse, homosexuality and bestiality by members of the clergy. It swore all parties involved to secrecy on pain of excommunication from the Catholic Church.

This document was reissued in 2001 by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and sent to all bishops. Yet rather than ordering more openness and cooperation with the authorities as demanded by both law enforcers and the victims, he reiterated its policies and ensured that the Code of Silence be applied to all cases of child abuse involving a priest. Cardinal Ratzinger also instructed that all cases should now be referred to his office directly and that he would maintain 'exclusive competence' over the handling of allegations. This is the Catholic Church's policy to this day and Cardinal Ratzinger is now Pope Benedict XVI.

The policy laid out in the above document has led to systemic failure by the result that a significant number of priest have, in effect, been allowed to abuse again, and further children have been put at risk.

As the documentary explores, Colm O'Gorman is the man responsible for breaking open decades of abuse by Catholic Priests in Ireland in the BAFTA award-winning BBC special Suing the Pope. He links international 'systemic evidence' to argue the Vatican has a policy to cover up the sexual abuse of thousands of children across the world.

In Sex Crimes and the Vatican O'Gorman explores four separate cases internationally of widespread clerical abuse, putting the Roman Catholic Church on trial for the reckless endangerment of children. O'Gorman raises the question, 'Is the Church in default of its obligation as a signatory to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child?'
