

ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE ON MINORS BY PRIESTS - CLARIFICATION

Further to the statement released by the Archbishop's Curia and which was published by the media, regarding allegations of sexual abuses on minors by members of the clergy, that were brought before the Response Team there are a few facts which require clarification. The Response Team is the group established by local Church Authorities to investigate such allegations.

The 45 cases cited in the original statement refer to the number of allegations which were brought to the attention of the Response Team which is chaired by a Judge. These cases date as far back as the 1970s, even though they were brought to the attention of the Response Team only during the past 11 years when it was set up. Out of the 45 allegations, 13 are pending while the Response Team found no basis for such allegations in 19 cases, and it identified that cases can be instituted against 13 members of the clergy. In line with standard procedure, four of these cases were referred to the Holy See and judgment was delivered accordingly; the priests were found guilty and were sentenced. Sentences varied from being defrocked to restrictions placed upon his pastoral activity, in such a way that the priest involved would not be permitted to work with minors and be subject to supervision. The cases of three other priests are still being heard by the Tribunal instituted by the Holy See, while four others that were concluded only recently, are still to be referred to the Holy See. Two other priests have since then passed away.

The Church treats these cases extremely seriously. In spite of the fact that both Civil Law and Canon Law have a period of prescription over criminal cases, the Church Tribunal waives this prescription in cases of abuse on minors and the cases continue to be processed no matter how old they are. In every case, the persons involved, on presenting their allegations are

immediately informed that, inspite of the fact that they made the allegation before the Church authorities, they still retain the right to report their case to the civil authorities.

For the Church, every case is one too many. In this respect, we insistently repeat what the Episcopal Conference stated in its statement dated 8th April 2010, "Christians are obliged to cooperate with the Church, rather than disguising facts or remaining silent, in order that this wound may be healed once and for all".