
The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests

SNAP Press Releases

Giving Voice to Victims

BACK TO:

Press Release
List

[SNAP Home](#)

For immediate release:

December 9, 2004

For more information:

Landa Mauriello-Vernon, SNAP CT Director, 203-687-8072, cell

Steven Theisen, SNAP Northeast Iowa Co-Leader, 319-231-1663 cell

Mary Guentner, SNAP Milwaukee Leader, 414-418-3191 cell

David Clohessy, SNAP National Director, 314 566 9790, cell

Sex Abuse Victims Rejected by Nuns' Leadership

National Catholic Sisters' Group Says No To Outreach Efforts

SNAP Vows To Keep "Helping Those Who Are Hurting"

Group Feels Molestation by Nuns Is "Next Wave" Of Clergy Sex Scandal

A national group of nuns is refusing to help a self-help group that wants to reach out to men and women who were sexually abused by Catholic sisters.

The Leadership Council of Women Religious (LCWR), an umbrella organization representing some 450 orders, has written the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), rejecting each of the five requests SNAP made during an Oct. 3 meeting of the two groups in Chicago.

SNAP's "wish list" centers on ways to find and offer support to anyone who was sexually assaulted by nuns. The group asked:

- For a printed list of LCWR members
- For LCWR to put SNAP contact information on their website
- For LCWR to ask their membership to put SNAP contact information on their websites
- To be included as speakers at regional conference of LCWR
- To be included as speakers at the national assembly of LCWR

SNAP leaders from Wisconsin, Connecticut, Iowa and California who were victimized by nuns met with the four top officers of the LCWR hoping "to start a productive, amicable dialogue and relationship that would make innocent children and vulnerable adults safer around nuns," said Landa Mauriello-Vernon, SNAP CT director and co-coordinator of SNAP's committee of nun abuse victims.

"We're disappointed but not deterred," she said. "It feels like the nuns are more interested in combativeness rather than compassion."

"SNAP's committee on nun abuse is made up of courageous people who were harmed and are just trying to make the world safer for children," said Sr. Sally Butler of New York, OP, a staunch supporter of SNAP. "I pray not only for a compassionate answer from the LCWR leadership, but for the strength of the victims to continue on their journey of outreach and healing."

In late November, the LCWR wrote to SNAP declining the victims' requests, even their most basic one: a simple list of LCWR member organizations and how to contact them.

"It's sad they won't cooperate at even this basic level," said Steve Theisen, SNAP Northeast Iowa co-founder and co-coordinator of SNAP's committee of nun abuse victims. "We'll of course spend hours compiling this list through other sources, because nothing will stop us from finding those who've been molested and are still suffering in shame and self-blame. But our mission would sure be easier if the nuns' group would at least offer us this simple courtesy."

SNAP now plans to start sending letters to all of the orders of religious women in the United States, one by one. They will offer to sit down with any group of nuns "that is serious about preventing abuse in the future and responding more compassionately to victims," said Gabrielle Azzaro, a SNAP California leader.

"Abuse is about power," said Mary Guentner, a Milwaukee SNAP leader who was victimized by a nun and who attended the meeting. "Women religious who are predators use their positions to prey on children, teens, and vulnerable adults just as male clergy do."

"All we want is to be part of the healing and education," said Guentner. "We are the experts. We can truly help develop a plan to put the healing of victims first."

One of SNAP's leaders first wrote the LCWR in April of 2004. Feeling frustrated by the nuns' initial response, SNAP held a news conference in July of 2004 outside the LCWR headquarters in Washington DC inviting the Catholic sisters to meet face-to-face.

When the nuns' refused to allow a SNAP member to speak to the nuns' national conference in August of 2004, the victims held a sidewalk news conference outside the gathering. That led to the October meeting in Chicago.

"We are the ones who are wounded. Still, we have repeatedly taken the initiative to talk with the LCWR," said Landa Mauriello-Vernon. "But at every juncture, they've been resistant. They seem determined to repeat the same cold, bureaucratic, and ultimately hurtful patterns we've seen in so many bishops."

Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests
www.snapnetwork.org