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German reform catholics: Church must change after sex abuse scandal

Berlin - German reform Catholics said on Sunday that the pope's response to sexual abuse by the clergy was merely a starting point in a long process of change, and called for the church to overhaul its stance on celibacy.

The previous day, Pope Benedict XVI apologised to the victims of sexual abuses by priests in Ireland and acknowledged the failures of the Catholic Church's top clerics in handling such cases.

The reform movement We are Church said it was "regrettable" that the pope blamed rapid social changes and secularization of society, rather than inherent church structures, for the sexual abuse of minors.

"It is not sufficient to only suggest traditional spiritual paths, but no structural improvements, as concrete initiatives," the reform movement said in a statement.

It was crucial for the church to change its teachings on sexuality, especially the rule of celibacy for Catholic priests, who are not allowed to marry, they said.

While there was no direct causal connection between celibacy and sexual abuse, the reform movement said the celibacy rule was a clear expression of a hostile attitude towards sexuality and women.

It was "outrageous" that the pope blamed an incorrect interpretation of the Second Vatican Council and its programme of renewal, they said.

A spokesman for the reform movement also criticized the fact that the pope had not specifically addressed German abuse victims in his apology.

"The pope's silence doesn't look good. It certainly won't improve his authority and his esteem in the church. And just a word of compassion for the victims would have won him sympathies," spokesman Christian Weisner told German Press Agency dpa.

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http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/315075,german-reform-catholics-church-must-change-after-sex-abuse-scandal.html#ixzz0ioWtJKNP
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