



Upper Hutt, New Zealand
7 June 2023

His Holiness Pope Francis
Casa Santa Marta
00120 Vatican City State

Your Holiness, tēnā koe!

Once again, we send you warm greetings from Aotearoa New Zealand.

We draw your attention to our [prior letters](#) in which we requested an external inquiry to test the authenticity of your Church's redress and healing scheme for clergy and religious abuse survivors in New Zealand, Te Houhanga Rongo/A Path to Healing (APTH).

Again, we are disappointed to not have had the courtesy of an acknowledgement or response.

In our letters, we alleged that the APTH process set up by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference and Congregational Leaders Conference of Aotearoa New Zealand was being used to deliberately foil and dismiss legitimate survivor complaints through a circuitous and secretive process.

We are now concerned that Catholic Church hierarchs in New Zealand, who are arbitrating on those complaints to the detriment of survivors, are themselves accused of very serious sexual violations against children and the psychological torture of those children as well.

As a consequence, victims who survived such grievous assaults and other offences perpetrated by your bishops, priests and religious brothers and nuns in New Zealand are being re-abused by the internal mechanisms of your Church entities in New Zealand, whose leaders stand as both the principal accused offenders, and the sole judges, jury and executioners in assessing those allegations and deciding the outcomes for survivors.

As a consequence, clerical and religious child sexual predators remain in our communities with impunity; therefore, children and vulnerable people across New Zealand remain at risk.

We ask: How can it be anything but self-evident that the accused may not sit as arbitrators of justice in a process in which they are accused?

We are also concerned that vast sums of the faithful's money are being spent by Catholic bishops and congregational leaders on the legal defence of paedophile priests, and to contrive legal obstacles to obstruct the course of justice in New Zealand.

For example, we are aware that investigations into child sexual abuse complaints against Catholic priests, and the progress of the New Zealand Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in Care, have been obstructed by well-resourced Catholic lawyers working for your bishops and congregational leaders in New Zealand.

More alarming is the fact that this is happening while the same Catholic bishops and congregational leaders are telling the New Zealand public that they are cooperating in the Royal Inquiry.

We believe these misrepresentations must stop. Hence, our second Open Letter to you requesting again that you hold your bishops and congregational leaders in New Zealand to account.

We ask that you compel them to step aside from arbitrating on complaints in which they are also accused.

We ask that you hold them to account for not respecting your calls for openness and transparency in dealing with survivor complaints.

We ask that you urge them to change their culture of abuse and secrecy in New Zealand, and dismantle their systems of coverup and denial that are harming and misleading so many people in our country.

Sincerely / Ngā mihi nui,

SNAP Aotearoa

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