

U.S. BISHOPS VOICE CONCERN FOR VICTIMS OF CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE, THANK POPE BENEDICT FOR LEADERSHIP

**Pope Benedict has reached to victims personally and as leader
Backed bishops' response to victims, dealing with perpetrators, safe environment work
Prays with them especially for victims in Holy Week**

WASHINGTON—The U.S. bishops March 30 voiced concern for victims of child sexual abuse by clerics and praised Pope Benedict XVI for leadership in dealing with the sin and crime of child sexual abuse.

“We know from our experience how Pope Benedict is deeply concerned for those who have been harmed by sexual abuse and how he has strengthened the Church’s response to victims and supported our efforts to deal with perpetrators,” the bishops said. “We continue to intensify our efforts to provide safe environments for children in our parishes and schools. Further, we work with others in our communities to address the prevalence of sexual abuse in the larger society.”

The bishops’ comments came in a statement issued by the Executive Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Cardinal Francis George, OMI, of Chicago, president; Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson, Arizona, vice-president; Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville, treasurer; Bishop George Murry, SJ of Youngstown, Ohio, secretary; and Bishop Arthur Serratelli of Paterson, New Jersey, elected member.

The complete statement follows.

On behalf of the Catholic bishops of the United States, we, the members of the Executive Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, write both to express our deep concern for those harmed by the crime and sin of sexual abuse by clergy and to express our profound gratitude for the assistance that Pope Benedict XVI has given us in our efforts to respond to victims, deal with perpetrators and to create safe environments for children. The recent emergence of more reports of sexual abuse by clergy saddens and angers the Church and causes us shame. If there is anywhere that children should be safe, it should be in their homes and in the Church.

We know from our experience how Pope Benedict is deeply concerned for those who have been harmed by sexual abuse and how he has strengthened the Church’s response to victims and supported our efforts to deal with perpetrators. We continue to intensify our efforts to provide safe environments for children in our parishes and schools. Further, we work with others in our communities to address the prevalence of sexual abuse in the larger society.