

Below are three Letters to the Editor of the Philadelphia Inquirer, including one from Donna Farrell, spokesperson for the Archdiocese, responding to Sister Maureen Paul Turlish's recent article.

<http://www.philly.com/inquirer/opinion/11962772.html>

Posted on Fri, Nov. 30, 2007

Diocese and victims

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia respects Sister Maureen Paul Turlish's passion for wanting to help victims of child sexual abuse. However, her commentary ("In effect, Archdiocese gives sexual predators a pass," Nov. 26), falsely portrays what really is happening in the Archdiocese to prevent sexual abuse by clergy or others.

The Archdiocese has worked aggressively to reach out to those who have been harmed and to institute prevention programs and other safeguards to protect today's children. The last two years have been spent reinventing victim assistance under the guidance of a nationally recognized victim advocate.

We have engaged a probation and parole professional with national credentials and sought the advice of the Pennsylvania Sexual Offenders Assessment Board. This expertise has assisted in improving the monitoring and treatment of accused clergy.

In the last legislative session, the Archdiocese supported a variety of bills to protect victims and enhance law enforcement's ability to investigate and prosecute sexual offenders.

The Archdiocese opposes expanding civil statutes of limitation for several reasons, including that the alleged offenders have died, potential witnesses and administrators have died, and files may no longer exist.

The Archdiocese recognizes that articles and letters of this nature may be painful to those who have been hurt by sexual abuse and encourages anyone, who wishes, to contact the victim assistance coordinators at 1-888-800-8780.

Donna Farrell
Director of Communications
Archdiocese of Philadelphia

http://www.philly.com/inquirer/opinion/20071204_Letters_to_the_Editor.html

Letters to the Editor

Sex-abuse victims

Donna Farrell claims the Philadelphia Archdiocese opposes expanding the civil statutes of limitation on child-sexual abuse because "alleged offenders have died, potential witnesses and administrators have died, and files may no longer exist" (Letters, Nov. 30).

OK, then the Archdiocese will win all the cases. The timing of the statute of limitations changes only whether a plaintiff can get to court, not whether he or she will win.

So where is the complaint? One can only imagine that it is the hierarchy's concern to keep as many secrets as it possibly can about its role in the abuse of children.

However, clergy victims of sexual abuse constitute about 5 percent of all child sex-abuse victims. Extension of the statutes of limitations is desperately needed for many others as well, especially those who were abused by family or friends, which constitutes 70 to 80 percent of all child sex-abuse victims.

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The writer, a constitutional law professor, has advised victims of clergy abuse.

Not above the law

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia is not the law. The excuse that those accused of child sexual abuse have died (Letters, Nov. 30) is not always true, and where it is true, let the courts decide the merits of a case, not the Archdiocese.

And if files no longer exist, as Donna Farrell, Archdiocese director of communications, says, is this part of the proof of the coverup? Where are those files?

When will Pennsylvania legislators stand up for the youth of this state?

When will they change the statute of limitations on sexual abuse civil cases, opening a window for victims to get their day in court?

When will they hold the Archdiocese of Philadelphia accountable for the coverup, and protect our children?

If the Archdiocese really cares about its people, it will call off its lobbyists in Harrisburg, help pass legislation to protect children from sexual abuse, and see that those abused have their day in court.

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