



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

RC parish feels 'betrayed' over appointment of convicted paedophile priest



Members of a Roman Catholic parish church have accused their diocese of betraying their trust by moving there a priest known to have abused a teenager. Parishioners in Kentish Town, north London, say the Westminster diocese took an unacceptable risk. They are angry that the lay volunteer given responsibility for child protection was not told the priest's history. He has been jailed for abusing two other boys. The diocese has promised to tighten its child protection policy if necessary, in light of the complaint.

Despite once admitting indecently assaulting a 17-year-old boy, "Father" William John Hofton was allowed to return to priestly duties, albeit under supervision and forbidden contact with children. He was later moved to Kentish Town, but only the other priest was told of his history.

While there he admitted carrying out other assaults in the 1990s and was recently jailed for abusing two boys.

The parishioners claim the failure to tell their lay child protection representative casts doubt on the Church's new child protection policy.

The policy is based on a 2001 report by Lord Nolan into sex abuse in the Church, which gives guidelines on how to ensure children's protection. One such recommendation is the appointment in each parish of a child protection representative.

The Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales insists the guidelines were followed in William Hofton's case.

But a BBC religious affairs correspondent, Robert Pigott said the parishioners believe any risk was unacceptable. They claim that failing to tell their representative about the priest's past left them "dangerously exposed".

In July, the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales admitted that 52 priests and church workers had been accused of sexual abuse against a child last year.