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NEWS

Rye Community Reacts to Crisis in Roman Catholic Church

Recent incidents concerning clerical sexual abuse are raising questions that could change the Roman Catholic Church.

By **Bree Shirvell** | [Email the author](#) | June 28, 2010

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Rye's Church of the Resurrection, a Roman Catholic Church, is home to thousands of parishioners. Peacefully quiet grounds surround the formidable church, and while thousands of miles from Rome, Italy, the church isn't immune from the shockwaves of new allegations involving clerical sex abuse.

Former and current members of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as those outside of the church, are asking questions about religious leaders and celibacy.

The nature of these questions: should women be ordained, should the Roman Catholic Church forgo the celibacy requirements, and how much did Pope John Paul II know, could change the course of one of the world's oldest religions.

"Children should be protected at all costs," said Resurrection's Reverend Monsignor Patrick J. Boyle.

While Boyle said he is not sure if the Church of the Resurrection's priests have addressed the scandal in Mass, he said he addressed it during a sermon on Good Friday. Boyle said that at that time he was very supportive of Pope Benedict XVI, who has since been embroiled in controversy concerning his handling of a 1970s incident involving a priest accused of sexual abuse in Germany.

"People forget that nobody knew what was happening," Boyle said. "Pedophiles were treated differently then."

Boyle said that in light of the scandal, discussions about ordaining women and the vow of celibacy among the Church of the Resurrection's parishioners and members outside of the church are to be expected.

John Lane is one of those parishioners. While making it clear that he doesn't speak for the church and was only speaking for himself, he said he would be in favor of some changes.

"I would ordain women and married men today," Lane said.

Neighboring churches in Rye have not been subject to the same kind of crises currently engulfing the Catholic Church. Christ's Church, an Episcopal Church not far from Resurrection, has about a thousand parishioners. The Episcopal Church ordains women and does not require a vow of celibacy of its ordained clergy. Reverend Canon Susan Harriss says they have not had any formal discussions about the issues in the Roman Catholic Church.

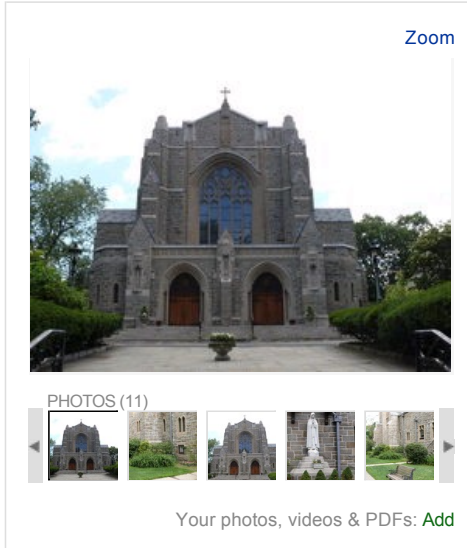
"While I'm sure it's a topic of conversation among many, there had been no official statement [from the Episcopal Church] that I know of," Harriss said.

Harriss said she prays the Roman Catholic Church finds a way to deal with its current situation.

Just this month, the Senate Codes Committee of the New York State Legislature defeated a bill known as the Child Victims Act. While the bill has been defeated every year since it was first introduced in 2006, if passed it would suspend the statute of limitations in sexual abuse cases, which could allow victims of sexual abuse that occurred decades ago to bring their cases to court.

"To me it doesn't seem right," Boyle said about the bill. "Why are we signaled out when some religious and educational institutions are not?"

This year the bill was amended to include some educational institutions, but prior versions of the bill had only applied to some religious organizations, such as the Catholic Church.



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New York is not alone in its stance. Only California and Delaware have passed similar bills.

Despite its legislative defeat in New York, Lane, the parishioner at Resurrection, said he is in favor of the bill.

"It's a sin against all people and it's against the law," he said of clerical sexual abuse.



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