



Top Vatican officials — including the future Pope Benedict XVI — did not defrock a priest who molested as many as 200 deaf boys, even though several American bishops repeatedly warned them that failure to act on the matter could embarrass the church, according to church files newly unearthed as part of a lawsuit.

The internal correspondence from bishops in Wisconsin directly to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the future pope, shows that while church officials tussled over whether the priest should be dismissed, their highest priority was protecting the church from scandal.

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