



In an effort to rein in the sexual abuse crisis threatening the church, the Vatican is inching toward introducing changes to canon law to make it easier to discipline pedophile priests, Vatican officials say.

The changes are not expected to include adoption of the “zero tolerance” policy used by bishops in the United States and elsewhere, which remove a priest from ministry at the first credible accusation of abuse, as some victims’ groups and critics had hoped.

But in the quiet battle raging deep inside Vatican City, they are likely to appear as a defeat for the many traditionalist members of the hierarchy who believe that anything short of a full canonical trial betrays the church’s trust in a priest and deprives him of due process.

According to an article in The National Catholic Reporter on Tuesday, the changes are also expected to lengthen the statute of limitations in which abuse victims can come forward, to 20 years from 10 years, after the victim’s 18th birthday. Vatican officials say they will also identify child pornography as a serious offense to be handled by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

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