



The Vatican revised its in-house rules to deal with clerical sex abuse cases Thursday, targeting priests who molest the mentally disabled as well as children and doubling the statute of limitations for such crimes.

Abuse victims said the rules are little more than administrative housekeeping since they made few substantive changes to current practice, and what is needed are bold new rules to punish bishops who shield pedophiles.

Women's ordination groups criticized the new rules because they included the attempted ordination of women as a "grave crime" subject to the same set of procedures and punishments meted out for sex abuse.

The rules, which cover the canonical procedures and penalties for the most serious sacramental and moral crimes, were issued as the Vatican confronts one of the worst scandals in recent history: revelations of hundreds of new cases of priests who raped and sodomized children, bishops who covered up for them, and Vatican officials who stood by passively for decades.

In 2003, the Vatican streamlined its 2001 procedures for disciplining abusive priests, allowing them to be defrocked without a lengthy canonical trial if the evidence against them was overwhelming. The rules issued Thursday codified those procedures into church law.

[More...](#)