News



Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich is seen in Ingolstadt, Germany, Feb. 19. The German cardinal admitted Sept. 16 that mistakes were made in the German church's handling of sex abuse of minors and said he anticipates change in the church. (CNS/KNA/Markus Now)



Zita Ballinger Fletcher

View Author Profile

Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

September 19, 2018
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Cardinal Reinhard Marx, head of the German bishops' conference, admitted that mistakes were made in the German church's handling of sex abuse of minors and said he anticipates change in the church.

Speaking out for the first time Sept. 16 regarding the contents of a leaked document on church sexual abuse in Germany, Marx attributed the abuse to the church "lacking attentiveness, lacking sensitivity, through the absence of love."

"God suffers about what we overlooked, where we looked away, what we did not want to believe as true," the cardinal said during his homily at a Mass in Schoenstatt, Germany.

The leaked document contained the findings of a confidential study, sponsored by the German bishops' conference, revealing that an estimated 3,700 minors were abused in Germany from 1946 to 2014. The bishops' conference did not disclose the findings to the public.

"The church experiences highs and lows," said Marx. "Particularly in these days, we are thinking about the dark sides of what has happened and what is happening within the church."

The cardinal described it as shocking that children had experienced such suffering at the hands of priests they trusted.

"We stand on the side of the victims of sexual abuse. That is our continual duty," said Marx. He said the bishops are "deeply depressed, shaken and ashamed before the reality of sexual abuse of minors within the Catholic Church."

Advertisement

During a Sept. 18 Mass in the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising to honor the vocation of priesthood, Marx said it was "not easy" to discuss sexual abuse in the church. However, he said the bishops must "not avoid the challenge."

"We should take criticism as encouragement to grapple with this task," said Marx. He said the German clergy should examine their consciences for signs of "carelessness" and "clerical posturing."

"Sin and violence are present throughout the history of the church," he said. "It is deeply disturbing that people within the church experience evil from people who are supposed to proclaim the Gospel."

The cardinal said the bishops' conference would examine the findings of the study during their upcoming plenary assembly in Fulda and discuss next steps.

"I am convinced that a great change is coming," said Marx.