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'Emergency bishops' synod' in the offing?

by Thomas C. Fox

NCR Today

According to a report in a British paper, Pope Benedict XVI is under mounting pressure to call an emergency synod of bishops from around the world. The purpose? To hammer out a new strategy to deal with the worsening child abuse scandal.

Writing in the Independent from Rome, John Phillips cites unnamed Vatican sources as saying that a number of Roman Catholic prelates have strongly urged the the Vatican that such an extraordinary synod be held "on the grounds that the German pontiff and the Vatican evidently cannot cope effectively on their own with the spiralling image crisis."

"There is a deep feeling of unease in the Vatican at the moment," said one well-placed source in the Holy See. "Senior people in the Curia feel under siege from parts of the international media as they see it trying to nail the Pope for allegedly covering up or mishandling abuse cases.

"Many bishops have let it be known they want Benedict to convene a special synod or worldwide conference of bishops to examine the problem because of a growing feeling that the Vatican cannot handle this."

The source added: "There is a realisation that the scandal is not going to stop. It is not one country or five countries but an increasing number."

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