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## Italians handled 100 sex abuse cases in past decade

by Carol Glatz by Catholic News Service

**VATICAN CITY** -- As bishops' conferences across Europe are coming to grips with the clerical sex abuse crisis, the Italian bishops' conference revealed for the first time that about 100 cases of alleged abuse had been handled by Italian church courts in the past decade.

"In general and factual terms, there are about 100 cases relative to canonical procedures carried out during the last 10 years," said Bishop Mariano Crociata, general secretary of the Italian bishops.

Responding to journalists' questions May 25, Bishop Crociata did not respond to queries about the number of cases that ended in a guilty verdict or how many were turned over to the police.

The Italian bishops were holding their general assembly in the Vatican synod hall May 24-28.

In his opening remarks, Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco of Genoa, president of the Italian bishops' conference, said that "a person who abuses minors needs to be concurrently brought to justice and receive treatment and mercy."

"Healing cannot replace punishment, let alone remit the sin," he said.

Cardinal Bagnasco said the church has never sought to underestimate the severity of the sex abuse crisis and called on families "to recognize that we, the church, will do everything to always, and increasingly, merit their trust."

The bishops' meeting came just as three priests were facing accusations by civil authorities for the sexual abuse of minors. A 73-year-old priest of the Diocese of Lodi was arrested May 25 on charges of sex with a minor, and a priest in Savona went on trial May 24 for allegedly sexually violating a young girl.

In late May at the trial of a Rome priest accused of sexual violence against seven boys, the current bishop of Porto-Santa Rufina, who was the accused priest's pastor, said that although he received complaints about the priest, he did not tell the Vatican because he did not think there was sufficient proof. He said he did not tell Italian police because he was not sure about the procedures to follow. It was another parish priest who reported the alleged offender to Italian authorities.

The promoter of justice in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Msgr. Charles Scicluna, said in mid-March that in Italy, "the phenomenon (of priestly sexual abuse of minors) does not seem to have dramatic proportions, although what worries me is a certain culture of silence, which I feel is still too widespread in the country."

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