

German bishops offer cash to abuse victims

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BERLIN -- Germany's Roman Catholic Church is offering cash payments of up to 5,000 euros (\$6,925) to victims of child sexual abuse in a yet unknown number of cases, some dating back decades.

The German Bishops' Conference made the announcement March 2 as a special commission continues months of work on abuse prevention and reimbursement. Church officials said they could wait no longer.

Noting that the commission's work had no end in sight, the church "felt itself obligated to immediately offer quick and non-bureaucratic assistance.

"We understand the growing impatience of those affected," the bishops' conference said in a statement.

Many victims groups said the offer is insufficient, especially in light of an offer by Germany's Jesuits last year to give 5,000 euros to each affected person.

"It's shameful, how the richest church in the world is trying to get out of this affair," Matthias Katsch, a spokesman for a victims group, told the Frankfurter Rundschau, a German newspaper.

The bishops' offer includes higher payments for victims of especially serious crimes. Other funds will be made available to pay for psychotherapy and couples counseling for victims. Additionally, a 500,000-euro prevention fund will be created, the bishops said.

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