

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

June 14, 2012 at 11:24am

Filipino archbishop shares Asian church's experience with clergy sex abuse

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NCR Today

MANILA, Philippines -- Leading theologian Archbishop Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila presented delegates and officials of the 50th International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin with a view of clergy sex abuse problem in Asia.



Tagle explained to clergy, religious and laypeople packed in the

workshop hall Tuesday the Asian bishops' perspectives and approaches to developing deep appreciation of and a comprehensive response to the problem of sex abuse by priests and religious. The workshop covered the theme "Communion in Marriage and Family."

Tagle said deeper issues underlie explicit sexual behavior. Asian bishops developing guidelines for addressing cases of sexual abuse must examine and appreciate spiritual, theological, anthropological and pastoral dimensions of abuse, he added.

Tagle, chairman of the Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, said Asian bishops are concerned about pastoral care of victims and their families, of the wounded community, of the priest offender and his family, and of the rest of the clergy.

Bishops and superiors of priestly congregations need help also, he added, noting the fury and hostility that allegations of sex abuse have generated.

Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, papal legate to the International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin, opened the gathering with a Mass on Sunday. The congress, which closes June 17, seeks to promote awareness of the centrality of the Eucharist in the life and mission of the church, improve understanding and celebration of liturgy, and attend to social dimensions of the Eucharist.

Another Asian bishop, Bishop John Baptist Lee Keh-Mien of Hsinchu, Taiwan, is scheduled to speak at a Friday workshop on the Eucharist and the pastoral care of the sick. Tagle is slated to teach a Saturday morning catechesis titled "Communion in the Word."

Bishop Antonieto Cabajog of Surigao, Philippines, said in a Wednesday email to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines headquarters in Manila that the congress is "a sign of hope" for a church that has "acknowledged its sinfulness." Cabajog said a commitment to confronting and addressing the problem of sex abuse offers hope for victims and the whole church.

He reported seeing church members joining pilgrimages and other activities related to the congress on the theme "Communion with Christ, Communion with One Another."

Cabajog also said the 14-member delegation from the Philippines, led by CBCP president Archbishop Jose Palma of Cebu, celebrated a Mass for families Monday with the archbishop of Paris and local priests that was attended by pilgrims from the four archdioceses of Ireland.



Irish media report that abuse survivors are asking to meet with

Ouellet.

Representatives of organizations representing survivors of child abuse reportedly asked Congress President Archbishop Diarmuid Martin to arrange a meeting with Ouellet, the only representative of the pope who has visited Ireland since the Ryan Report was published in 2009. The report found child abuse was "endemic" in Catholic-run schools and orphanages in Ireland most of the 20th century.

Many victims now living "lowly, miserable lives" want financial reparation from the church, spokespersons say.

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Ouellet on Tuesday went on a pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Purgatory at Lough Derg, the traditional site for repentance in Ireland. Pope Benedict XVI had reportedly asked the cardinal to make the pilgrimage for atonement for abuse committed by clergy and religious and to pray for healing for abuse victims.

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