

Asian bishops say abuse isn't just 'a problem of the West'

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TOKYO (RNS/ENInews) Roman Catholic bishops from across Asia will hold a summit on "The Impact of Pedophilia" in the Catholic Church, saying abusive priests are not simply "a problem of the West."

The Federation of Roman Catholic Asian Bishops' Conferences will host a seminar for bishops and clergy Nov. 14-19 at Assumption University in Bangkok, Thailand.

"(I)t is an urgent task before us, especially the leaders of the church, to come together to devise some mechanisms to prevent future occurrences of child abuse by church men/women," the bishops' clergy office said.

"Let us not be complacent that pedophilia is a problem of the West or the other continents of the world; it is equally prevalent in many countries of Asia," the office said in an announcement on its website.

On May 16, the Vatican gave all bishops conferences one year to formulate national policies on clerical sex abuse of minors. The Vatican's chief prosecutor of abuse cases, Monsignor Charles J. Scicluna, will be on hand to help Asian bishops craft "specific guidelines."

The Asian bishops cited several factors that led to the summit, including "letters from different quarters of the church that pedophilia has already become a considerably serious problem in Asia."

The bishops said they wanted to address the problem "squarely and without delay" before it got "out of hand like it has done in the other countries of the world."

But "how many letters, I cannot tell you exactly," the Rev. Lawrence Pinto, the office's executive secretary, told ENInews. "In my casual talks with bishops and archbishops, they mention that it is becoming a problem. So the office of clergy decided to organize this seminar."