Doubt, dismay, denial and disappointment

Catholics in Singapore have had mixed reactions to the abuse scandal that has rocked the Church. Weekend today correspondent Venessa Lee finds out more.

MRS BRYAN Goh, 18, has noticed a conspicuous silence among the Catholic community about a topic that, ironically, receives much coverage in the media.

“Though it doesn’t happen often enough, it is extensively covered whenever a parish priest is arrested or when sex abuse charges are brought against him,” said Mrs Goh, who has lived in Singapore for two years.

Mrs Goh was among 50 Catholics in Singapore interviewed by Weekend today who were asked about the abuse scandal. The survey was conducted by the Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore, but has not covered the paedophile priests scandal.

Most of the interviewees, who were fairly representative, said they were not interested in religion and were not well-informed about the abuse issue.

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Ms Dorothy Heng, 57

In contrast, a study being conducted in the United States found that about 70% of Catholic women aged 18 to 29 said they had heard of the crisis and were concerned about it.

“The innocent victims are those who can’t say anything,” said Ms Lulu Suresh — who spoke at length about the suffering of the child victims.

She thinks it’s badly handled. The announcement of each case seems to be timed, in media coverage of the paedophile priest scandal, to coincide with the weekly Sunday celebration.

“Some felt the Vatican’s handling of the scandal was a public relations fiasco,” she said.

According to a study being conducted by the Catholic University of America, more than 1.1 billion Catholics worldwide were included in the study.

Other expressed support for the Pope’s statements during the crisis: “He has made good enough apologies in terms of the Church’s failure to do more.”

Ms Heng said: “I hope the Church teaches forgiveness.”

A dangerous myopia 

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commentary

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While the research on the topic in Catholic Church circles, Ms Lulu Suresh, an exasperate from Kerala, India, said: “I think an open discussion should be welcome because awareness should be raised. The children have no voice. Rather we should raise our voice for them.”

Priests who were transferred from one place to another if there was any wrongdoing (against this), many lives could have been saved. The whole life of the child was destroyed.”

Ms Suresh was among four interviewees who mentioned the issue of transferred priests.

However, others like Mr Jay Dey, 42, expressed doubt about the usefulness of open discussions on the topic within the Catholic community. “I would support it, but ultimately it will still be just talk. What’s done is more important, he said.”

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