

# Nate's Mission: Survivors Respond to Church Statements after AG's Announcement of Investigation

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## **CONTACT:**

Peter Isely  
Program Director of Nate's Mission  
[414-429-7259](tel:414-429-7259)  
[peter@natesmission.org](mailto:peter@natesmission.org)

Sarah Pearson  
Associate Director of Nate's Mission  
[414-366-5403](tel:414-366-5403)  
[sarah@natesmission.org](mailto:sarah@natesmission.org)

Several Catholic dioceses including Milwaukee, Madison, and La Crosse released statements responding to Attorney General Kaul's announcement of the opening of a statewide investigation to examine clergy sexual abuse and cover-up in faith-based organizations. After meeting with Kaul yesterday, absent from any of the statements was a commitment to cooperate with the Attorney General's investigation.

Wisconsin dioceses and religious orders have repeatedly attempted to assure survivors that they take this issue "seriously" and have implemented "measures" to ensure the prevention of child sexual abuse. After decades of gag orders, lies, hush money payouts to abusive priests, survivors have learned not to trust church officials. If they are so confident that they have not participated in corporate crimes such as fraud, misappropriation of charitable funds, and destruction of criminal evidence, then they should be eager to provide evidence by turning over all

documents related to clergy sexual abuse and institutional management to the Wisconsin Department of Justice. The fact that they have not made any public commitment to do so raises serious questions.

This morning's statement by the Milwaukee Archdiocese characterizes the Attorney General's investigation as "singling out" the Catholic Church. At today's press conference, Attorney General Kaul told reporters that the Wisconsin Department of Justice would accept reports and evidence from victims of sexual abuse in any institution, faith-based or not. With the help of well-paid lobbyists and their corporate lawyers, the church has viciously opposed legislation like the Child Victims Act, a measure that would eliminate the civil statute of limitations for child sex crimes for all victims in Wisconsin, including victims from schools, sports organizations, and all secular institutions.

"If church officials wanted to see justice for all victims in this state," said Peter Isely, "they would immediately publicize their enthusiastic support for the Child Victims Act. If they were to do this, the bill would be passed in 24 hours."