

SEX ABUSE IN THE CHURCH: CODE OF SILENCE

From the documentary
“Sex abuse in the Church: Code of Silence,”
produced by Premieres Lignes
and translated from its French-language
TV series “Cash Investigation,” originally
aired in France in March of 2017

Transcript of segment regarding sex abuse
cases related to Pope Francis

Speaker	Audio
Reporter	<p>It seems then that only the Pope has the power to punish his cardinals. So why doesn't he take stronger action? Maybe because he too faced accusations in his homeland of Argentina... long before his election.</p> <p>When he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he apparently tried to have a pedophile priest acquitted...</p> <p>To understand, we took one last flight...</p> <p>In Buenos Aires, along with God - or rather Diego Maradona - the Pope is a star. His face is everywhere.</p> <p>And yet, some refuse to share in this iconographic cult. In the city center, we have arranged to meet a group of victims. They were abused by priests in the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires...</p> <p>They alerted Pope Francis when he was their Archbishop.</p>
Reporter	Regarding pedophile priests, in his book, Pope Francis says there were no cases in his diocese.
Woman 1	He wants people to believe that,
Woman 2	but it's a lie.
Reporter	Who here tried to contact him when he was archbishop?
Woman 1	Who tried? All of us!

Reporter	And who received a reply?
Woman 1	None of us.
Woman 2	He receives all the celebrities, like Leonardo DiCaprio, and opens his door to them. And for us, not even a quick letter to say he was sorry.
Woman 1	I don't expect anything from him, I don't believe in him.
Woman 3	I suffered a lot and I'm very disappointed... Because the Pope did nothing when he was archbishop here. Everyone told me: "Write to him, he's bound to reply." But nothing. I suffered, and now I'm very disappointed.
Reporter	<p>As Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Pope Francis was seemingly deaf to the distress of these victims.</p> <p>But apparently it's worse: in another case concerning other victims, some believe he willfully tried to divert the course of justice.</p> <p>It's the Father Grassi case... The biggest pedophilia scandal in the Argentinean Church...</p> <p>Julio Cesar Grassi was one of the best-known priests in the country... Very influential and often in the media spotlight...</p> <p>He ran a huge orphanage...</p> <p>Until some of the children there lodged a complaint against him for sexual abuse...</p> <p>In 2009, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison... Still today, he's behind bars.</p> <p>But the Argentinean Church did all in its power to have him acquitted.</p> <p>Juan Pablo Gallego represented Father Grassi's child victims. A trial spread over fifteen years and opposite him... the most renowned attorneys in the land!</p> <p>But also the Catholic Church.</p>
Juan Pablo Gallego	In 2010, after Grassi was first sentenced, we found out the Church has ordered a counter-inquiry called "Studies on the Grassi Case", by a renowned legal expert and criminal law professor at the University of Buenos Aires.
Reporter	Don't be fooled by the cover which makes you think it's a book, this 2800-

	<p>page counter-inquiry is a confidential, internal, Argentinean Church legal text!</p> <p>Inside, the children are accused of falsifications, lies, deceit and invention... Even their own sexual orientation is questioned...</p> <p>The conclusion is clear: the court's decision was wrong; Father Grassi had to be acquitted on appeal...</p> <p>One paragraph caught our eye.</p> <p>This work was commissioned in 2010 by The Argentine Episcopal Conference particularly by its then president, Cardinal Bergoglio, now Pope Francis.</p> <p>So the Pope did then commission a counter-inquiry to try to have a priest to have been sentenced for pedophilia acquitted...</p> <p>And it's said that José Bergoglio, the future Pope, actually sent it to the judges... And with a shrewd sense of timing: before Father Grassi's various appeal hearings ...</p> <p>One of the magistrates who received a copy of the counter-inquiry agreed to meet us.</p> <p>Carlos Mahiques, a former Appeal Court judge and former Minister of Justice, is today a High Court judge... It's the first time he's spoken openly about the Grassi case...</p> <p>He remembers very well the day he found this counter-inquiry on his desk.</p>
Reporter	You received this counter-inquiry?
Carlos Mahiques	Yes, I did.
Reporter	Did it influence your judgment?
Carlos Mahiques	Absolutely not. The study is a bit like a detective novel. I think it's partial in some areas, and extremely partial in others. It's clearly in favor of Father Grassi. They were trying to exert a subtle form of pressure on the judges.
Reporter	To try to influence you?
Carlos Mahiques	Yes, that's totally correct. In a subtle

	way, but...
Reporter	<p>...but finally useless... Father Grassi's sentence was upheld at both the Appeal Court and High Court.</p> <p>At the center of the counter-inquiry commissioned by the Pope when he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, is the account of a boy, an orphan, the main victim of Grassi...</p> <p>Since the case blew up in the early 2000s, it's the first time he has agreed to talk to a reporter... He wants to remain anonymous, because he's still afraid of reprisals...</p>
Witness	I received threats, and there is proof of that. People broke into my home. They smashed all the locks. They stole personal items, but also things I could have used during the Grassi trial. In the end, the courts took action for my safety and placed me in a witness protection program.
Reporter	Your opinion on this book?
Witness	I'll never forget what Father Grassi kept repeating at his trial: "Bergoglio never let go off my hand." Now, Bergoglio is Pope Francis, but he has never gone against Grassi's words. So I'm certain that he never did let go of Grassi's hand!
Reporter	<p>The Pope has never publicly commented on the Grassi case.</p> <p>For eight months, we tried to get an interview with the Holy Father. Dozens of requests... all refused.</p> <p>So at the Vatican, we tried to meet His Holiness...</p> <p>He was to hold a public audience on Saint Peter's Square...</p> <p>To get anywhere near him, you need to be up very early... and to slip into the long line of the faithful...</p> <p>The doors open...</p> <p>Like at a concert, you have to sprint to the front to get the best places...</p> <p>Mission accomplished... We're in the front row...</p> <p>We split up... One part of the crew</p>

	<p>films from the Vatican terrace...</p> <p>We want to give Pope Francis a letter with all our questions on his supposed role in the attempt to divert the course of justice in Argentina...</p> <p>Thousands of people have gathered...</p> <p>We'll need a miracle to get to talk to the Pope...</p> <p>A few hours later, the Popemobile arrives...</p> <p>The third time it passes, we shout...</p>
Reporter	Your Holiness!
Reporter	<p>We manage to give him our letter...</p> <p>And then, a few minutes later...</p>
Reporter	Your Holiness! Your Holiness, in the Grassi case, did you try to influence Argentinean justice? Your Holiness, in the Grassi case, did you try to influence Argentinean justice?
Pope	No
Reporter	No? Then why did you commission a counter-inquiry?
Pope	I never did.
Reporter	Never?
Reporter	<p>Despite our quick chat, neither Pope Francis nor any Vatican official has ever answered our letter...</p> <p>At the end of this investigation, there's one question: How can the Catholic Church retrieve itself from these guilty silences?</p> <p>Clergymen from a number of countries, such as Belgium, the United States and the Netherlands are mobilizing and launching national inquiry commissions on sexual abuse within the Church.</p> <p>All victims are listened to, and the spotlight has fallen on the responsibility of the bishops...</p> <p>So, let us pray: May the Vatican order a worldwide inquiry commission ... so that that past scars may be healed and we may still have faith in the future.</p>