

## **Cardinal Marx says transparency is decisive in the credibility of the Church**

Cardinal Reinhard Marx said Feb. 23 that administration and transparency will be key to rebuilding the trustworthiness and credibility of the Church after its mishandling of past cases of clerical sexual abuse.

“A fully-functional Church administration is an important building block in the fight against abuse, and in dealing with abuse,” Cardinal Marx of Munich and Freising said in his keynote address at the Vatican sex abuse summit.

Transparency with clearly-defined, public procedures is “a decisive factor in the trustworthiness and credibility of the Church. Let us take a courageous step in this direction,” he said.

The German cardinal’s speech praised administrative transparency for its ability to create order, uncover errors, and regulate infringements against the common interest and the “sinfulness of humanity,” as well as provide evidence that can restore the reputation of a wrongly-accused person, who would otherwise be subjected to rumors.

Marx also pointed to the Church’s past failures in transparency as an “abuse of power in the area of administration.”

For example, he said, “Files that could have documented the terrible deeds and named those responsible were destroyed, or not even created. Instead of the perpetrators, the victims were regulated and silence imposed on them.”

“The stipulated procedures and processes for the prosecution of offenses were deliberately not complied with, but instead cancelled or overridden,” he continued, saying that these failures sharply contradicted what the Church should stand for.

He later clarified in a press conference that this comment specifically referred to what was discovered in the MHG study of past clerical sex abuse commissioned by the German Bishops’ Conference. Marx proposed several concrete recommendations for improving transparency including the “public announcement of statistics on the number of cases, and details thereof, as far as possible” to combat “institutional mistrust” that leads to “conspiracy theories.”

He said that “establishing transparent procedural norms and rules for ecclesiastical processes is essential” because “the Church must not operate below the quality standards of public administration of justice.”

Marx also said that “traceability and transparency are also extremely important beyond the context of abuse, for example in the area of finances.”

Marx provided the second keynote speech on the third and final day of discussions among the 190 bishops and other Catholic leaders at the Vatican sex abuse summit Feb. 21 - 24.

The other two speakers on day three of the summit, a day dedicated to transparency, were both women. Nigerian Sister Veronica Openibo spoke about openness with the rest of the world, and veteran Vatican journalist Valentina Alazraki spoke about communication.

“Transparency does not mean the uncritical acceptance and undisciplined dissemination of abuse allegations. The goal is a transparent process, which clarifies and specifies the allegations, and follows generally accepted standards regarding when and how the public, the authorities and the Roman Curia should be informed,” Cardinal Marx said, according to a Catholic News Agency report.