

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 02/11/2004
CONTACT: Theo Gavrielides, London, +447720057750
Lisa Rea, California, +530-368-2026
Dale Coker, Belgium, +32497539026

New research on restorative justice shows the paradigm could address sexual scandals in the Catholic Church and provide a way to restore a sense of justice, the faith of victims, the Catholic Church and the community

New research by Theo Gavrielides (Law Degree, LLB, LL.M, PhD) and Dale Coker (BA, MSc, MA) shows restorative justice (RJ) values of compassion, communication, understanding, honest repentance, forgiving and reintegration could be used to construct an auxiliary system to deal with the sexual offences that occurred in the Catholic Church.

The two researchers work in collaboration with JRP (The Justice and Reconciliation Project) on a long term project investigating how RJ values and interventions may be used to address sexual offending that occurred within the Catholic Church. The JRP is a US non-profit organization dedicated to bringing restoration, reconciliation and healing to crime victims and offenders. Since 2002, Lisa Rea, president of JRP and RJ expert, has urged the U.S. Catholic Church to embrace and apply RJ principles to the cases of sexual abuse by priests. JRP became directly involved with one California victim of sexual abuse by a priest who was willing to explore victim offender dialogue.

Theo Gavrielides and Dale Coker are members of the newly formed voluntary group IARS (Independent Academic Research Studies), which has been formed to provide young researchers in restorative justice, criminal justice and human rights a chance to exchange ideas and collaborate on research projects within these areas.

The first stage of the project has been completed and will be published as "Restoring faith: Resolving the Catholic Church's sexual scandals through restorative justice, Working Paper I". The report aims to build the theoretical framework of the larger project. Two more reports will be produced at a later stage constructing a practical framework for implementation and policymaking.

"Through the various types of its programs, RJ offers the possibility of merging justice proceedings with healing processes in an effective and constructive way", the two researchers said. "RJ's rootedness in theology and the Christian themes of forgiveness and reconciliation should make it particularly attractive to a Church craving reunion with its followers and a higher moral road not offered by the traditional criminal justice system". However, the researchers added: "It is with small steps that we make big changes". Lisa Rea of the JRP concluded in her letter to the Archbishop of St. Paul/Minneapolis, Harry J. Flynn, DD: "I believe you start applying these principles case by case".

For further information visit IARS' website www.restorativejustice.4t.com or email currentproject@restorativejustice.4t.com .To contact JRP visit www.thejrp.org

Ends.