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Every time clergy sex crimes and cover ups are discussed, kids are safer. But for an institution to hide these records for decades or years – leaving police, prosecutors, parents, parishioners and the public in the dark, and leaving kids in harms' way – is stunningly irresponsible.

This information could and should have been revealed years ago. Lives could have been saved. Crimes could have been prevented. Families could have been preserved. Instead, Cardinal Francis George and dozens of his clerical colleagues have, for years, opted to put their reputations and comfort ahead of the safety of children.

It's as if Catholic officials thought, for years, that "Our job is to protect ourselves from lawsuits. So we'll yank these dangerous men from parishes. But that's all we'll do. And whoever they molest next, that's not our concern."

Today's belated, grudging and partial disclosure should be seen in this context.

Church officials harp on healing. But healing is secondary. Prevention is primary. Yet Catholic officials never talk about prevention. They want us to believe that all of this is "in the past." It's not.

Of these 36 men, 21 who are too dangerous to have in Catholic parishes now live among unsuspecting neighbors. Some of them babysat kids last night or tutored kids this morning or will coach kids this afternoon.

But Catholic officials are apparently content with this. Otherwise, they would release the addresses of these men, provide their photos and beg victims, witnesses and whistleblowers to call police and prosecutors.

But they'd rather lull us all into believing the threat has passed. It hasn't.

The issue now is what will Cupich and George do about these 21 living offenders: Richard B. Bartz, Leonard A. Bogdan, Daniel P. Buck, John W. Calicott, Walter G. DeRoeck, James V. Flosi, Robert D. Friese, Jesus P. Garza, John E. Hefferan, James Hoder, Michael J. Hogan, Walter E. Huppenbauer, Robert L. Kealy, John J. Keehan, John J. Keough, William L. Lupo, Robert J. McDonald, Peter J. McNamara, Gary M. Miller, James M. Ray, John A. Robinson, and John F. Rohrich.

So we now do what George should have done ages ago: We beg anyone with information or suspicions about any child molesting Chicago cleric – alive or deceased, archdiocesan or religious order, proven, admitted or credibly accused – to call police, prosecutors, therapists or independent groups like ours, so that kids might be safer and wrongdoers might be exposed and criminals might be punished.

And we beg Chicago Catholics and citizens to read these records, stay vigilant, and recognize that centuries-old patterns of secrecy and selfishness change very slowly and only with outside pressure.

(SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, is the world's oldest and largest support group for clergy abuse victims. We've been around for 25 years and have more than 20,000 members. Despite the word "priest" in our title, we have members who were molested by religious figures of all denominations, including nuns, rabbis, bishops, and Protestant ministers. Our website is SNAPnetwork.org)

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