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Ethics ‘Declaration’ Won’t Help

Wed, 01/20/2016 - 09:25

David Clohessy

Hundreds of Jewish officials have signed a “declaration” challenging individuals and organizations to be more transparent and accountable in scandals (“Seeing ‘Crisis’ In Jewish Ethics, Group Urges Reform,” Jan. 15).

We don’t think it will help, at least not in cases of clergy sexual abuse and cover-up. Decisive discipline, not moral exhortations, is what deters those who commit or conceal sexual misdeeds.

In our decades of experience, we’ve seen officials in many denominations make pronouncements, protocols, procedures and policies about clergy sex crimes, misconduct and cover-up. They rarely have any effect.

What does make a difference? The vulnerable are protected, the guilty are punished and the wrongdoing is deterred when two steps are taken.

First, when secular law is reformed, victims, witnesses and whistleblowers are able to expose wrongdoers in court. Second, when church officials publicly and harshly punish those who commit or conceal clergy sex crimes and misdeeds.

These two steps will do far more to prompt more responsible behavior in Jewish institutions than hundreds of “declarations.”

Director, SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests), St. Louis

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Submitted by Yerachmiel Lopin (not verified) on Wed, 01/20/2016 - 23:42.

Well said. Thank you.

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