



Dutch religious leaders have ordered an independent inquiry into alleged sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests. Earlier, the Vatican defended its response to child sex abuse allegations in a number of European states, saying it had reacted rapidly and decisively.

In the latest revelations, the head of an Austrian monastery confessed to abusing a boy more than 40 years ago. Separately, Pope Benedict's brother said in an interview he slapped pupils in the face at a German choir school.

The Dutch investigation will be opened "as soon as possible", it was announced after Dutch bishops met to discuss abuse claims by about 200 alleged victims, some from several decades ago.

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