



In 2001, while he was a cardinal, he issued a secret Vatican edict to Catholic bishops all over the world, instructing them to put the Church's interests ahead of child safety.

The document recommended that rather than reporting sexual abuse to the relevant legal authorities, bishops should encourage the victim, witnesses and perpetrator not to talk about it. And, to keep victims quiet, it threatened that if they repeat the allegations they would be excommunicated.

Before being elected as Pope Benedict XVI in April last year, the pontiff was Cardinal Thomas Ratzinger who had, for 24 years, been the head of the powerful Congregation of the Doctrine of The Faith, the department of the Roman Catholic Church charged with promoting Catholic teachings on morals and matters of faith. An arch-Conservative, he was regarded as the 'enforcer' of Pope John Paul II in cracking down on liberal challenges to traditional Catholic teachings.

Five years ago he sent out an updated version of the notorious 1962 Vatican document *Crimen Sollicitationis* - Latin for The Crime of Solicitation - which laid down the Vatican's strict instructions on covering up sexual scandal. It was regarded as so secret that it came with instructions that bishops had to keep it locked in a safe at all times.

Cardinal Ratzinger reinforced the strict cover-up policy by introducing a new principle: that the Vatican must have what it calls Exclusive Competence. In other words, he commanded that all child abuse allegations should be dealt with direct by Rome.

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