

Retired Catholic Bishop Geoffrey Robinson says:

“SOME priests didn't see the molestation of boys as a breach of their celibacy vows” and offers his recommendations of how to deal properly with the issue.



Child sex ‘no breach of virtue’, some priests believe

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- From: [The Australian](#)
- April 28, 2010 12:00AM

SOME priests didn't see the molestation of boys as a breach of their celibacy vows, retired Catholic bishop Geoffrey Robinson says.

The former auxiliary bishop of Sydney blames the absence of women from church life as a catalyst for the sexual abuse crisis enveloping the faith.

In an interview with *The Australian Women's Weekly*, Bishop Robinson says boys suffered more than girls at the hands of pedophile priests partly because they were more available to them, with nuns tending to play a greater role in the religious education of young girls.

There was also a view among some offenders with whom he had worked that a priest's celibacy vows weren't broken if a boy was involved.

"We've met it often enough to see it as a factor," he tells the magazine, out today. "That's what the vow of celibacy refers to, being married. If it's not an adult woman, then somehow they're not breaking their vow."

Three years ago, Bishop Robinson broke 50 years of silence about his own abuse at the hands of a stranger, who he said wasn't a family member or a priest. It goes some way to explaining his work with abuse victims and his commitment to change within the church.

Bishop Robinson says getting women more involved in church life is a crucial step forward.

"If the feminine had been given greater importance and a much larger voice, the church would not have seen anything like the same level of abuse and would most certainly have responded far better," he says.

He believes the issue will not be properly dealt with until the church holds a council, or a conference of all the bishops in the church, to revise the centuries-old doctrine on celibacy, women and sexuality.