

# SMEAR MERCHANTS ATTACK POPE LEO XIV

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Few things excite the media more than a juicy sex story about Catholic priests, no matter how half-baked the story is. The latest iteration of this phenomenon came on the day Cardinal Robert Prevost became Pope Leo XIV. Wasting no time claiming he is guilty of covering up priestly sexual abuse was SNAP (Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests).

On May 8, it slammed the new pope for the way he addressed accusations of priestly sexual abuse in the United States and Peru. Indeed, six weeks before he was elected, this totally discredited association of anti-Catholic activists filed a complaint with the Vatican saying that Cardinal Prevost “harmed the vulnerable.” The facts prove otherwise.

In 2000, when Father Prevost was the provincial supervisor in Chicago for the Augustinians, he allowed a suspended homosexual priest who had been accused of sexually abusing minors to reside at a rectory not far from a Catholic school. Father James Ray lived there with other priests and restrictions were placed on him.

Two years later, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the Dallas reforms, new guidelines dealing with clergy sexual abuse. It was then that Ray was removed from the Augustinian residence, as well as from public ministry. He was tossed from the priesthood in 2012.

Now it is legitimate to question the decision to place Ray

near a school, but to jump to the conclusion that this was an egregious dereliction of duty is absurd. Had Ray been put up in a hotel in a deserted part of town, Prevost's critics would say he was left unsupervised.

The more intricate case is the one dealing with three sisters from Peru. SNAP says, "When Prevost was Bishop of Chiclayo, three victims reported to civil authorities in 2022 after there was no movement on their canonical case filed through the diocese." They claim he "failed to open an investigation, sent inadequate information to Rome, and that the diocese allowed the priest to continue saying mass."

None of this is true. Here's what happened.

In April 2022, three sisters made accusations about two priests to church authorities about sexual abuse (inappropriate touching) dating back to 2007 when they were minors. The bishop of Chiclayo was Msgr. Robert Prevost.

Contrary to what SNAP reports, the priest was removed from the parish where he worked and prohibited from exercising his ministerial duties.

Also contrary to what SNAP reports, Prevost met with the women in April 2022 and *encouraged them to take their case to civil authorities. Meanwhile he opened a canonical probe.* He also offered them psychological help.

In July 2022, Prevost contacted the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith after the investigation was completed. A Vatican probe found that the allegations lacked sufficient evidence to warrant further action. Moreover, the statute of limitations had long expired. In addition, the civil investigation was also dismissed for lack of evidence and because the statute of limitations had expired.

The women weren't satisfied and registered another complaint. The diocese responded by sending further documentation to the

Vatican. (In April 2023, Msgr. Prevost was named Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops in Rome.)

In November 2023, Ana Maria Quispe, the oldest of the sisters, contended that both the civil and ecclesiastical courts were wrong. She started a social media campaign to keep her account alive.

The case was then reopened by the Apostolic Administrator in Chiclayo, addressing her complaint. Victims were summoned to meet but Quispe never showed up.

Meanwhile, there was another development happening, one which SNAP is deadly silent on.

In April 2024, after Archbishop José Eguren, a member of an ultraconservative movement, the Peruvian Sodalitium of Christian Life, was ousted—he was accused of abuse and financial wrongdoing—accusations of a Cardinal Prevost coverup percolated.

To understand why Prevost was being accused, consider the role that Fr. Ricardo Coronado played. In May 2024, Coronado, a canon lawyer, took up the women's cases. He was associated with this extremist movement and was widely believed to have engaged in corruption, violence and sexual abuse.

In August 2024, the Peruvian Bishops' Conference issued a public statement saying Coronado could no longer practice canon law. He was accused of having a sexual relationship with a consenting adult.

Off-the-record comments against Coronado continued to surface from Augustinian priests. They maintained that he “despised” Prevost and that he was guilty of “a pattern of sexually inappropriate and aggressive behavior.”

In January 2025, Pope Francis and Cardinal Prevost met with one of the group's abuse victims. Weeks before he died, the

pope dissolved the movement.

Pedro Salinas, a noted Peruvian journalist who knows this issue well, said Prevost played “an extremely important role” in ending it. In fact, he said, “The campaign of disinformation and discrediting Robert Prevost’s career has always come from the source of Robert Prevost, Archbishop Eguren.”

Having written a book on this subject, *The Truth about Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes*, I can say with confidence that the accusations of a coverup by Cardinal Prevost are false. If anything, Pope Leo XIV acted fairly and with dispatch.