

Report: Critics of Pope favorite Prevost received \$150K to remain silent

By Special to the Globe Banner

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A Catholic diocese in northern Peru is alleged to have paid \$150,000 to silence critics of its former bishop and now leading candidate for Pope, Cardinal Robert Prevost.

[That's according to a report in Madrid-based InfoVaticana](#), which describes itself as “a free and independent means of information that has the vocation of serving the Catholic Church and society.”

The report alleges that three Peruvian girls, longtime public critics of Prevost who blame him for covering up their sexual abuse by a popular priest, recently received the payments and have gone silent.

“Days before the Pope's death, this media received the information that the diocese of Chiclayo would have allegedly paid 150 thousand dollars to the victims of abuse who denounced Cardinal Prevost of cover-up,” InfoVaticana wrote. “The response to today of the bishopric (diocese) is silence.”

InfoVaticana described the Peruvian scandal, which was the subject of a national television report including interview with the girls last fall, as the “stone in the shoe for Cardinal Prevost,” who has emerged as a surprise favorite to win the papacy, despite his American roots.

"After a few hours, I got up to vomit"

The scandal began in 2022, when three minor girls went to Prevost and accused Father Eleuterio Vasquez Gonzalez and Ricardo Yesquen Paiva, two priests in his diocese, of molesting them.

Ana Maria Quispe said she told Prevost that at age nine, Vasquez Gonzalez "sat me on his legs and began to kiss me," [according to a Sept. 2024 report by Cuarto Poder, a national investigative news program in Peru.](#)

"He lies down and hugs me, he takes me with his arms and legs. I froze, I didn't sleep at all. After a few hours, I got up to vomit," she said.

Another young girl, age 11, told Prevost that Vasquez Gonzalez told her 'bring something to warm yourself' (...) I arranged the bed and (...) I feel that he begins to hug me under the polo shirt, touching my back."

Quispe Diaz and the other girls sent a letter to Pope Francis in April 2022 detailing their allegations.

"A previous investigation was never carried out during the mandate of Mons. Robert Prevost Martínez OSA, despite having direct knowledge of the victim priest Eleuterio Vásquez Gonzales had accepted the facts before his person," [it said](#).

They said Prevost has "been assuming a tenacious defense in favor of the priest accused of child abuse, who from his beginning accepted the facts of abuse of minors."

Prevost, 69, was born, raised and attended seminary to become a priest in Chicago before being named bishop of Chiclayo, Peru in 2014.

In 2023, Pope Francis recalled Prevost to Rome and appointed him as Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, responsible for evaluating and recommending bishops around the world.

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