

Küng warns against total condemnation of church over sexual abuse scandal: "A bad generalization"

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Vatican critic Hans Küng has warned against "condemning the church and its priests wholesale" for the current spate of sexual abuse allegations. "It would be a bad generalization to place the whole clergy and Catholic Church under suspicion," the Roman Catholic priest said in an interview with the European, a Berlin-based online news service.

The Swiss-born theologian, 83, was speaking two weeks after criticizing the pope in an "open letter" to Roman Catholic bishops worldwide in which he said Benedict's papacy had "failed."

In the letter, Küng said there had been a "worldwide system of covering up cases of [clergy] sexual crimes" on the part of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which was led by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger before he became Pope Benedict XVI in 2005.

But in the online interview posted April 27, Küng described as "complete nonsense" claims that the present pope is "the worst for centuries."

"In the course of its five years, this pontificate has seen many breakdowns, as well as many wasted chances, above all in its approach to Protestant churches," said the theologian. "But we still need a Petrine [papal] office to serve the unity of Christians, though not a Roman papacy as it developed in the 11th century."

Küng—whose works include *Infal libe?*, which questioned papal authority—served as an expert adviser at the 1962–1965 Second Vatican Council, which introduced reforms into the life of the Catholic Church. He also taught alongside Ratzinger at the University of Tübingen in the 1960s. In 1979 his license to teach Catholic theology was withdrawn by the Vatican after it ruled that he could "no longer be considered a Catholic theologian."

In his interview, Küng said he believed that the pope had missed an opportunity to consolidate links with Jews and Muslims but added that it would be "totally

inadmissible” to compare Benedict XVI with “immoral and criminal” popes in history.

Küng also said he agrees with Pope Benedict XVI on some key issues. “The pope and I are united on the relationship between reason and science, the necessity of dialogue between religions and the need for worldwide ethics, even if my hopes of a reformist course have not been fulfilled,” Küng said. -*Ecumenical News International*