

To reach Sunflowers UK see email below.

Helpline for priests' secret lovers

A support group aimed at helping women who have had affairs with Catholic priests is to open a Scottish branch because its English HQ cannot cope with the number of calls coming from Scotland. The Sunflowers group, which is based in Daventry, Northamptonshire, helps women who have had longterm relationships and even children with priests.

Adrianna Alsworth, 46, who has two daughters by an English priest, said she has been "inundated" with calls after placing an advert in a Catholic magazine. Two women even discovered they were both having an affair with the same Scottish priest who had managed to keep it a secret from his bishop. She claims the Catholic Church refuses to acknowledge the scale of the problem despite high-profile cases such as Bishop Roddy Wright, the former Bishop of Argyll and the Isles who ran off with a married parishioner after fathering a child with a second woman.

Alsworth says the Church will have to face up to its "silent mistresses" in the same way it has been forced to address the issue of pedophile clergy. She said: "The Church in Scotland wants to pretend this is not a major issue and that it is indeed very rare. But it's only the sad cases that hit the headlines and as long as there's no publicity, the Church is happy to turn a blind eye.

"I know of many older priests who have been in long-term relationships which are an open secret in their parishes.

"Sadly, all the stress and responsibility is placed on the women and it's a heavy burden. If the relationship becomes public, it's the woman, the Church's silent mistresses, who get the blame."

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The rest of this article can be found at this link:

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4156/is_20030119/ai_n9627242/?tag=content;col1

To reach Sunflowers UK email:

sonflowers@live.co.uk *Sunflowers is based in the UK to support woman who are, or who have been in secret relationships with RC priests, and also the children of these relationships. The helpline set up in 1996 is confidential.*