

'Homosexuality is a ticking timebomb for the Catholic Church': Explosive claim of former friar who says half of recruits are gay

- **Mark Dowd says gay men are 'massively over-represented' within Church**
- **Ex-Dominican friar insists half of those attracted into seminaries are gay**
- **Openly gay Dowd also blasts 'culture of secrecy and guilt and repression'**
- **He researched homosexuality in Catholicism for a Channel 4 documentary**

By Mark Duell

An openly gay former Dominican friar insisted today that homosexuality is the 'ticking time bomb in the Catholic Church' and that homosexual men are 'massively over-represented' within the Church. Mark Dowd, who is now a journalist, said research for his 2001 Channel 4 documentary *Queer and Catholic* suggested that at least half of people attracted into seminaries in the priesthood are gay. His comments came as the former leader of Roman Catholics in England and Wales, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, said the scandal-hit Catholic Church must undergo renewal and reform.



Former friar: Mark Dowd, who is now a journalist, said research for his 2001 Channel 4 documentary *Queer and Catholic* had suggested at least half of people attracted into seminaries in the priesthood are gay

Mr Dowd told **CNN**: 'When you have this culture of secrecy and guilt and repression, you have conditions which foster the potential for blackmail and for manipulation.'

'This is a very unhealthy stage for the church, because basically when you have secrecy, you have lies - and when you have lies, people often are put in terrible pressures of being compromised.' Meanwhile, the Cardinal said the successor to Benedict XVI would need to be able to tackle reform of the Roman Curia, the Vatican departments which govern the 1.2-billion-strong global church.

Last weekend Italian newspapers published claims of homosexuality and blackmail within the Church, with one allegation centering around a secret 'gay cabal' of priests, reported CNN. But veteran Vatican journalist Marco Politi said this idea was 'rubbish', adding: 'Here in the Vatican, there are monsignors who have love affairs, with women and with men. But they hide it.' Mr Dowd added: 'I've got my own experience of being in religious life myself. And I can tell you that gay men are massively, massively overrepresented in Catholic life. There's nothing wrong with that.'



Vatican: Italian media ran a series of stories last week about the alleged contents of a secret report prepared for the Pope by a commission of three cardinals who investigated the Vatileaks scandal last year

'The problem is that a lot of them are told that they are intrinsically unhealthy according to church teaching. And that's not a very appropriate state of affairs if we're talking about psychosexual health and emotional maturity.'

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Mark Dowd, former Dominican friar

Earlier this week Britain's most senior Roman Catholic, Cardinal Keith O'Brien, apologised for his failures after being ordered to quit by the Pope as a further sex scandal swept the church.

Italian media ran stories last week about the alleged contents of a secret report prepared for the Pope by a commission of three cardinals who investigated the Vatileaks scandal last year. Paolo Gabriele, the pope's butler, was convicted of stealing personal papal documents and leaking them to the media. He was jailed and later pardoned by the pope.

The documents alleged corruption in the Vatican and infighting over the running of its bank, which has been at the heart of a series of scandals in past decades. But the Vatican said the Italian media had spread 'false and damaging' reports and claimed it was an attempt to influence cardinals who will meet in a secret conclave next month to elect a new pope.