

# ABUSE SCANDAL IS NOT WIDENING

Every news story and commentary that stated that the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church is widening is factually wrong. The evidence, in fact, shows just the opposite—it has been contracting for approximately a quarter century.

Here's the proof: the John Jay College of Criminal Justice—not exactly an arm of the Catholic Church—has shown repeatedly that the vast majority of the abuse cases took place from the mid-60s to the mid-80s. And the reports over the last five years show a rapid decline. The latest report, covering 2008-2009, shows exactly six credible allegations made against over 40,000 priests and tens of thousands of others working for the Catholic Church.

Almost all of the chatter about the alleged widening of the scandal was a direct result of media sensationalism. Here is a perfect example, taken from an April 9 story from Reuters. The headline read, "Norway's Catholic Church Reveals New Abuse Cases." But what was *new* is not a new wave of incidents, rather it was an admission by the Norwegian Catholic Conference of four cases of alleged abuse that it had not previously disclosed. Two of the abuse cases date back to the 50s; another dates back two decades; and the fourth one was based on "rumors."

The same Reuters story opened by saying these four stories come "two days after it [the Norwegian Catholic Conference] revealed that a bishop who resigned last year did so after abusing an altar boy." With a sentence like that, one would assume that the Church was guilty of a cover-up. Only at the end of the story did the reader learn that the reason why this story had not emerged until then was precisely because the victim initially asked that it not be made public.

There is no other religious or secular institution being

cherry-picked by lawyers and the media like the Catholic Church. If what happened in the 1950s qualifies as news when it happened in the Catholic Church, then surely it would be news to learn of all those who were abused a half-century ago by ministers, rabbis, school teachers and others. But it will never happen—such *news* fails to make the media salivate. This is a clear case where the media are at fault.