

ABUSE SCANDAL IS NOT WIDENING

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest developments in the sexual abuse scandal:

Every news story and commentary stating that the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church is widening is factually wrong. The evidence 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 is a direct result of media sensationalism. Here is a perfect example, taken from a Reuters story today. The headline reads, "Norway's Catholic Church Reveals New Abuse Cases." But what is *new* is not a new wave of incidents, rather it is an admission by the Norwegian Catholic Church of four cases of alleged abuse that it had not previously disclosed. Two of the cases date back to the 1950s; another dates back two decades; and the fourth one was based on "rumors."

The same Reuters story opens by saying these four stories come "two days after it [the Norwegian Catholic Church] revealed that a bishop who resigned last year did so after abusing an altar boy." That makes it sound like a Church cover-up. Only at the end of the story does the reader learn that the reason why this story did not emerge until this week is 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 that of 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.