

# ASSESSING THE DALLAS REFORMS

In June, the U.S. bishops met in Atlanta, ten years after they instituted reforms to combat the sexual abuse of minors. Though there is room for honest disagreement on why the problem has almost disappeared, it is indisputable that the Catholic Church has the best record of any institution today regarding this matter. In the last three years, there has been an average of 7 new credible accusations made against over 40,000 priests.

Millions of employees and children have gone through programs to combat abuse. The “zero tolerance” policy that was adopted has won praise, though in practice it has had a deleterious impact on the rights of the accused. Moreover, spurious accusations abound: An allegation was recently made in Montana against a nun who was said to fondle a boy in 1943.

Two years ago we investigated which entities in the media, education, and religion had adopted a “zero tolerance” policy for handling cases of sexual abuse. Few did, and none were analogous to the Dallas reforms.

Today attention has turned to the public schools where sex abuse is rampant, as well as to elite private schools such as Horace Mann in the Bronx; the Orthodox Jewish community is currently facing dozens of cases. Still, old cases involving priests get most of the press: in Philadelphia, Lynne Abraham, the D.A. who started the grand jury hearings over a decade ago, never once investigated other religions, though she was explicitly asked to do so.

In all of these institutions, homosexuals account for a disproportionate share of the abuse, yet it is almost never reported. The media even tagged Jerry Sandusky as a pedophile, though his first accuser identified the former Penn State coach as a homosexual.