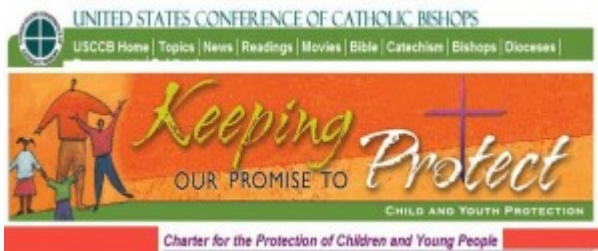


ASSESSING THE DALLAS REFORMS



Bill Donohue assesses the reforms that were authorized ten years ago when the bishops assembled in Dallas:

Tomorrow the bishops will meet 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 abated—it has almost disappeared—it is indisputable that the Catholic Church has the best record of any institution today regarding this matter, religious or secular. 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 this problem. The “zero tolerance” policy that was adopted has won much praise, though in practice it has had a deleterious impact on the rights of the accused. Moreover, spurious accusations abound. For example, one week ago today an allegation was made in Montana against a nun who was said to fondle a boy in 1943, two years before the end of World War II.

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: we found few that did, and none that had anything analogous to the Dallas reforms.

Today attention has turned to the public schools where sexual abuse is still 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, it is old cases involving priests that garner 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. Her bias is palpable.

In all of these institutions, homosexuals account for a disproportionate share of the abuse, yet it is almost never reported. Even now the media (especially in Philly) tag Jerry Sandusky as a pedophile, though yesterday his first accuser identified the former Penn State coach as a homosexual.
