

ATLANTA TYPIFIES ABUSE CASES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the issue of clergy abuse in the Archdiocese of Atlanta:

Atlanta Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory has released the names of priests who have been credibly accused of molesting a minor since 1956. He included deacons and seminarians, as well as those from religious orders.

The list typifies sexual abuse in the Catholic Church found elsewhere in the United States: most of the cases are old, and most were dealt with judiciously.

Of the fifteen men named, seven are dead and the others have either been laicized, removed from ministry, or convicted (some fall into more than one category); there are no data on one priest. Most of the offenses took place in the last century, beginning in the late 1950s.

Some media stories call the release of this list a “bombshell.” Nonsense. We would expect that in any institution where adults and minors interact, there will be some level of sexual misconduct. Catholics rightly hold priests to a higher standard, but even so, the fact that there are fifteen bad priests over a period of 62 years is hardly “bombshell” news. And compared to whom?

We don’t know how many kids were abused by ministers in the Atlanta area over the past six decades, and that’s because none of the clergy have released the data. We surely do not know how many elementary and secondary students have been sexually molested in the Atlanta public schools, and that’s because the teachers’ unions, and the politicians whom they grease, won’t allow it.

Regarding the public schools, while hard data are unavailable, there are enough interesting nuggets provided by the *Atlanta*

Journal-Constitution (AJC), and other media outlets, to raise the eyebrows of all fair-minded persons.

For example, in 2016 AJC criticized the failure of the states and the federal government to keep updated statistics on the sexual abuse of public school students by teachers. We know from other articles that 46 teachers in Georgia, 14 from Atlanta, had their licenses pulled in 2001 because of sexual misconduct with students. Other stories detail how schools learned of sexual abuse but did nothing about it.

There are many AJC articles on specific teachers who have abused students (Gwinnett County, which is just outside Atlanta, but within the Archdiocese of Atlanta, has had its fair share of abuse cases). Last year, five teachers (mostly from Gwinnett) were arrested within one month for sexual misconduct with students, ranging from groping to rape. This past May, a former Atlanta middle-school employee was taken into custody for sexually abusing a male student at least six times since the beginning of the year.

Last month, a teacher at a Georgia high school was accused of molesting a 13-year-old girl. And a few weeks ago, another teacher was arrested on several counts: sexual battery against a child under the age of 16, sexual assault while a teacher, attempted sexual exploitation of a child and tampering with evidence, as well as four counts of distributing obscene material.

Why aren't cases like these, and there are many of them, considered "bombshell" news?

Predatory priests in the Atlanta Archdiocese have been dealt with. The same is not true of predatory teachers in Atlanta: The problem in the public schools is not confined to the past—it is ongoing.

If we are serious about the sexual abuse of minors, then the kind of investigations that the Catholic Church has been

subjected to should be launched against the public schools nationwide. Not to do so is to evince religious profiling and anti-Catholic bigotry, to say nothing of insincerity dealing with this serious issue.