

CLERGY SEXUAL ABUSE IN U.S. VIRTUALLY DISAPPEARS

It's too bad public school officials don't convene a national seminar inviting Catholic officials and scholars to explain to them how to resolve the sexual abuse of minors that is plaguing their schools. The Catholic Church knows a thing or two about this issue, having made horrible decisions about sexual offenders in the past. But the data clearly show that this problem is pretty much over.

The worst offenses took place a half century ago or more: it was between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s that the homosexual scandal was at its peak. Today, this issue has virtually disappeared, at least in the U.S.

Every year, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops publishes the findings of a major investigation into clergy sexual abuse. The audits, conducted by StoneBridge Partners, accesses relevant survey information from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. The data from the "2024 Annual Report" on this subject are the most promising we have ever seen.

Data from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024 show that there has been a 31 percent decrease in allegations of clergy sexual abuse over the past year. This is encouraging, but it should not command our attention. After all, it is not a high bar for allegations against the clergy to be deemed credible—it is fairly easy—and therefore it is not of much utility in accurately judging the extent of this problem.

What is a serious problem is the extent to which accusations continue to be made about innocent priests who have been targeted by shakedown artists. It is lamentable that the annual reports give scant coverage to this.

Similarly, allegations about offenses that took place many decades ago are also of dubious utility—we know for certain that almost all the offending clergy are either dead or are no longer in ministry.

What should command our attention has unfortunately not commanded the attention of the media, including the Catholic media.

Of central interest to the Catholic League is the proportion of the clergy who had a *substantiated* accusation made against him in the past year. There were two. That's right. There were two substantiated accusations in the entire nation made against 48,176 members of the clergy. This means that a whopping **0.004 percent** had a substantiated case of sexual abuse made against him by a minor.

There is no institution in the nation, secular or religious, where adults regularly interact with minors which can beat this record. None.

The other issue of grave importance is, "Who is doing the molesting?" On this score, the relevant data must be gleaned from those who have been credibly charged.

When the John Jay College of Criminal Justice released its report in 2004, it found that between 1950 and 2002, 81 percent of the offenses were committed against postpubescent boys, meaning the abuser was a homosexual. In the latest annual report, 80 percent of all the credible allegations of sexual abuse involved victims who are minors, and in 84 percent of the cases the victim was male.

In other words, homosexual priests remain the big problem. This does not mean that most homosexual priests are sexual abusers—we have made this point many times—but it does mean that most of the abusers have been, and still are, gay.

Catholics are called to tell the truth—we are not called to

shade it because the truth sometimes stings. The homosexual coverup in the Catholic Church is still a problem, and it shows no signs of abating.

Nonetheless, we should all take note of the astounding progress that has been made.