

# DATA ON PRIESTLY SEXUAL ABUSE DESERVES SCRUTINY

An AP story that was just released reports that a group led by Paul Baier, Survivors First, has listed the names of 573 U.S. priests who have faced public accusations of child sex abuse since 1996. The group claims to possess the names of 2,100 clerics in its database and boasts that it also lists the names of priests who have been falsely accused.

Here's what league president William Donohue said about this today:

"Last Friday, Paul Baier said he was going to release the names of 800 priests who have either been convicted or have had allegations made against them for sexual abuse. This morning Baier said the figure had been scaled back to over 600 and now he's adjusted the figure to 573.

"This area is fraught with difficulties. To begin with, there is a profound difference between the guilty and the accused, though Baier is apparently unimpressed. Included in his database are seminarians as well: he lumps them in with priests, thus giving a false impression. Regarding falsely accused priests, Survivors First lists a grand total of three!

"The website of Survivors First has a link to Linkup, another victim-advocacy group. Using the most absurd arithmetical model imaginable, Linkup contends that 'as many as 10,076,800 people have been victimized by priests.' It is not clear how the handful of priests found guilty (99.3 percent of priests currently have no charges against them) ever had time to eat, never mind attending to the sacraments. It needs to be emphasized that a *Washington Post* survey (released in June) found that over the past four decades, less than 1.5 percent of the estimated 60,000 priests have been accused of child

sexual abuse.

“What’s behind the disparity in the figures? Politics. Baier is currently seeking to employ a lawyer for the purpose of finding ‘a loophole in any Vatican treaties’ and supports the idea of having members of Voice of the Faithful (of which he is a founding member) withhold donations to their parish every first Sunday. In short, this guy’s got an agenda.”