

IS THE SCANDAL OVER?

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I won't keep you guessing: the scandal—in terms of significant numbers of molesting priests who are currently active—is over. Indeed, it's been over for years. But in terms of coming to grips with the causes of the scandal, that problem remains.

At the end of March, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released its third annual audit on what is being done about priestly sexual abuse; supplementary data on an earlier report by researchers at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice was also published. Together, the two documents provide insightful observations on the prevalence, and timeline, of the scandal. Though not intended, the supplementary report also shines light on something disturbing: the professors who prepared the study allowed their ideological blinders to misstate the nature of the problem.

First, the good news. So much progress has been made that I am willing to bet that there is no institution, demographic group or profession in the United States today that has *less of a problem* with sexual abuse of minors than the Catholic Church. Because comparative data are not available, it is impossible to prove if I'm right or wrong. But a review of the latest data gives credence to my conclusion.

The vast majority of the cases of sexual abuse occurred between the mid-1960s and mid-1980s. This isn't a matter of opinion: the John Jay report provides indisputable evidence. This, of course, was a time when the sexual revolution hit our society by storm; we now know that some of those winds found their way into many of our seminaries.

Like all revolutions, this one would come to an end, but not before much damage had been done. To understand what happened,

recall that in 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected president. In 1981, AIDS was discovered. The two together symbolized that the sexual revolution had run its course: Reagan's election represented a yearning for a more traditional moral voice, and AIDS represented the consequences of promiscuous gay sex. In other words, new cultural winds were evident, the result of which were felt in the seminaries.

So what about the scandal today? In 2005, 783 credible accusations of abuse against 532 priests were made. Sounds bad. But consider that 87 percent of the new allegations involved abuse that occurred before the 1990s, and that the majority of the cases took place in the 1960s and 1970s. For the year 2005, there were 21 allegations that involved minors as victims, but only five were found to be credible; two were still under investigation and in two instances there was insufficient information.

For the sake of argument, let's group the two cases under investigation with the two cases where there wasn't enough information and add them to the five where there are credible allegations. That brings us to a total of nine priests. Now do the math: we had approximately 42,000 priests in 2005, which means that .02 percent had a credible accusation made against him last year.

It is unlikely you've read this before. That's because there was an almost total media blackout on the audit (the best reporting was done by the *Washington Post*). To top it off, the most startling statistic of them all—the one which shows that 99.98 percent of the priests throughout the United States had no credible accusation made against them in 2005—was *nowhere* reported! Now you know why I'm willing to bet that no institution, demographic group or profession has less of a problem today with sexual abuse of minors than the Catholic Church.

But there is one remaining problem. Nowhere in the report does

it even mention the word "homosexual," but there are 14 mentions of "pedophile" and 12 citations of "ephebophile." Yet fully 81 percent of the victims are male, and most are postpubescent males. This is properly called homosexuality. The term "ephebophile," meaning sex with older teenagers, is rarely used by experts outside the Catholic Church, and in any event is an ideologically coined term. It is not for nothing that the term is never used to refer to heterosexual acts.

By the way, the 81 percent figure is the exact figure that was found previously. To put it differently, the John Jay report covering the years 1950-2002 found that 81 percent of the victims were male—the same figure reported in the audit for 2005. So much for the positively stupid argument that has been floating around for years that the reason why there are so few female victims is because priests only had access to altar boys until recently. Well, it's been 12 years since girl altar servers became a reality, yet it's still the males that the molesters want.

Many times have I said that while most gay priests are not molesters, most of the molesters are gay. While it is true the Vatican has taken steps to address this reality, it remains sadly true that some of those providing reports and advice to the bishops are still living in a state of absolute denial.