

SEAN HANNITY DEAD WRONG ON CLERGY ABUSE

Bill Donohue

I have known Sean Hannity for years, and he is a good guy. But I cannot allow our friendship to get in the way of my job. He made comments on his April 16 Fox News show about the clergy sexual abuse scandal that are dead wrong. Apparently, he also offended Catholics on his radio show recently.

Sean started out by saying he was raised Catholic, went to Catholic schools and attended a seminary high school. He said he broke away from the Catholic Church because of the clergy sexual abuse scandal. That is his business. But it is my business to correct the record when misstatements of fact abound about this subject.

Sean said, "I left the Catholic Church in large part because of institutionalized corruption. And it was at the parish level to the bishop level, cardinals, all the way to Rome. And you know, the very top scandals, terrible behavior, frankly, went not only unchecked, but they never fully corrected it or dealt with it. And others at the Vatican have totally lost sight of the true meaning of the bible and its teachings."

His sweeping statements do not hold up under scrutiny.

There was a scandal in the Catholic Church, but its heyday ended approximately a half-century ago. Most of the offenses took place between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s. How widespread was it at its height? The *Washington Post* published a survey in 2002 showing that less than 1.5 percent of the estimated sixty thousand or more men who served in the Catholic clergy were accused of the sexual abuse of minors. A *New York Times* survey reported that 1.8 percent of all priests ordained between 1950 and 2001 were accused of sexually

abusing minors.

The John Jay College of Criminal Justice issued a study in 2004 that found that in the period 1950-2002, 4 percent of the Catholic clergy were accused of sexually molesting minors. It also found that 149 priests, or 3.5 percent, who had more than ten allegations of abuse were responsible for 26 percent of all the allegations. In other words, of the 4,393 priests who had an accusation made against them between 1950 and 2002 (not all of which were substantiated), a mere 149 of them accounted for more than a quarter of the allegations.

This is a far cry from what Sean would have us believe. A more egregious error is assuming that nothing has changed.

Data from the last year that we have reliable information on, July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, show that of the 48,176 members of the clergy, exactly two had a substantiated accusation made against him during this period. This means that a whopping 0.004 percent of priests had a substantiated case of sexual abuse made against them by a minor.

Unfortunately, in any institution where adults regularly interact with minors, sexual misconduct is a problem. But there is no institution in American society today, religious or secular, that has *less of a problem with the sexual abuse of minors than the Catholic Church*. To imply otherwise is irresponsible.

We know that 81 percent of the victims were male, and that 78 percent were postpubescent, meaning that the lion's share of the abuse was committed by homosexuals (3.8 percent were pedophiles). Of course, don't expect the media to report these facts, including Fox News, which is part of the cover-up.

I wrote a book on this subject in 2021, *The Truth About Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes*. When it was released, I was asked to sit for an interview at Fox News. The executives who run the cable TV station said that my book was

so controversial (I bet none of them read it) that they would only agree to a debate between me and someone else. Not surprisingly, every notable liberal Catholic turned down the debate. So it never aired. Would that not be called "institutionalized corruption," Sean?

Most priests, at every level, are good men and they do not deserve to be spoken about with derision. The scandal should never have happened, but it is totally unfair to generalize from the few to the collective, regardless of the demographic.

If Sean wants to debate me, he can give me a call. He has my work and home numbers.