

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN SEMINARIES IS RARE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a new study on American seminarians:

In a joint effort by researchers at the University of Notre Dame's McGrath Institute for Church Life and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, a study of U.S. seminarians found that six percent have experienced some form of sexual harassment. It was also determined that 84 percent said that their administration and faculty took reports of sexual misconduct very seriously. Seventy-five percent said such behavior was "not at all a problem," and nearly nine in ten said there is none or little talk of sexual promiscuity at their seminary.

This is a significant change from the 1970s when sexual misconduct at U.S. seminaries was a serious problem. The sexual revolution flourished during that decade, impacting the Church as well as the larger society. That was a time when Fr. Andrew Greeley spoke about the "Lavender Mafia" of homosexual subcultures in the seminaries.

The media are not likely to run with this story as it doesn't fit into their narrative of sexual misbehavior in the Church. They certainly will not do what I will do now—compare the situation in the seminaries to other venues.

In 2013, Hollaback! commissioned a College Harassment Survey and found that 67 percent of students experienced harassment on campus. In 2006, the American Association of University Women reported that nearly two-thirds of college students experienced sexual harassment at some point during college. In 2018, an online survey by Stop Street Harassment found that 81 percent of women and 43 percent of men said they experienced

some form of sexual harassment during their lifetime.

Definitions of sexual harassment vary widely, and incidents range from a sexual joke to rape, thus making comparisons difficult. No matter, compared to life outside the seminaries, the condition in most seminaries today is far better than on college campuses or in the workplace. And they are a vast improvement over what existed in many seminaries not long ago.