

TIME TO END BISHOPS' PRIESTLY ABUSE AUDIT

In 2004, two years after the priestly sexual abuse scandal broke in the media, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released its first annual audit of this subject. We have been tracking this issue every year, noting the incredible progress, and have now concluded that it is time to discontinue the audits. Here's why.

In the latest audit, the 2017 Annual Report, there were 24 new allegations made by minors during the period July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. But only six were substantiated; the clergy were removed from ministry. Moreover, four of the six allegations were made against the same priest. This means that of the 50,245 priests and deacons, *.006 percent of the clergy had a substantiated charge made against him.*

The 2016 Annual Report showed that there were two new substantiated cases made against 52,238 priests and deacons. This means that *.004 percent of the clergy had a substantiated charge made against him.*

In short, over the past two years, an average of *.005 percent of the clergy had a substantiated charge made against him.*

The time has come to end the audits. If not now, when?

The problem of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church occurred mostly between 1965 and 1985. Now that it is harder for practicing homosexuals to enter the priesthood—they are responsible for 8 in 10 cases of the sexual abuse of minors (pedophiles are responsible for less than 5 percent)—there is no need for the annual study.

To be sure, the training programs and screening procedures that have worked so well should continue, but it makes no

sense to waste money on a study of this magnitude any longer. Indeed, it only feeds the erroneous perception that the problem continues unabated. This is not our problem anymore. We need to have the guts to say so.