

USA TODAY ARTICLE DISTORTS CHURCH'S RECORD ON ABUSE

Bill Donohue comments on a story in today's *USA Today*:

"Parishes Across Nation Under Shadow Of Abuse," blares a headline in today's *USA Today*. The subhead is even more misleading: "Latest revelations are sign that the church's problems with its priests are not over."

The implication is obvious: the crisis of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests is still ongoing, and the Church is still failing to protect children. And that is the message that comes across to the casual reader of the almost 2,500 word article.

A more careful reading, however, contradicts that conclusion. For while the article highlights recent reports of abuse, and current or recent court cases and settlements in dioceses around the country, we see that the vast majority of actual or alleged incidents are from decades ago, some even "dating back to the 1950s."

This affirms what we know: that the Catholic Church has responded forcefully and effectively to the crisis of clergy sexual abuse, to the point that today, virtually every allegation made against a priest is from years earlier. The 2016 Annual Report on clergy sexual abuse in the Catholic Church found only two new substantiated cases from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. That comes to .004 percent of the 52,238 Catholic priests and deacons in the United States.

We know of no other institution in the United States, secular or religious, which has a better record than the Catholic Church today when it comes to the sexual abuse of minors by adult employees. Yet the *USA Today* headline, and the tone of the whole piece, would lead one to think that nothing has

changed.