

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The study of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests and deacons resulting in this report was authorized and paid for by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) pursuant to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (Charter) adopted by the USCCB at its June 2002 meeting. The Charter called for many responses to this victimization of minors within the Catholic Church.

Article 9 of the Charter provided for the creation of a lay body, the National Review Board, which was mandated (among other things) to commission a descriptive study of the nature and scope of the problem of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.

Accordingly, the Board approached John Jay College of Criminal Justice to conduct such a study. The College assembled an experienced team of researchers with expertise in the areas of forensic psychology, criminology, and human behavior, and, working with the Board, formulated a methodology to address the study mandate. Data collection commenced in March 2003, and ended in February 2004. The information contained in this report is based upon surveys provided by 195 dioceses and eparchies of the United States and its territories, representing 97% all diocesan priests in the United States, and 140 communities, representing approximately 60% of religious communities and 80% of all religious priests.

The mandate for the study was to:

1. Examine the number and nature of allegations of sexual abuse of minors under the age of 18 by Catholic priests between 1950 and 2002.
2. Collect information about the alleged abusers, including official status in the church, age, number of victims, responses by the church and legal authorities to the allegations of abuse, and other characteristics of the alleged abusers.
3. Collect information about the characteristics of the alleged victims, the nature of their relationship to the alleged abusers, the nature of the abuse, and the time frame within which the allegations are reported.
4. Accumulate information about the financial impact of the abuse on the Church.

Three surveys provide the data for this study:

1. A profile of each diocese, providing information about characteristics of the diocese including region and size, the total numbers of allegations, and the total expenditures occasioned by allegations of abuse.
2. A survey of church records relating to individual priests against whom allegations of abuse had been made.
3. A survey of church records relating to the alleged victims of abuse and the nature of the alleged abuse.

Based upon the inquiries and communications that we received from the dioceses, eparchies and religious communities, it is our impression that, despite the complexity of

the surveys and the difficulties of identifying relevant church records, these data reflect a conscientious and good-faith effort to provide exhaustive and reliable information regarding allegations of abuse made to church authorities.

Due to the sensitive nature of the abuse allegations, which form the core of this report, many steps were taken to assure the anonymity of alleged victims and priests who were the subjects of the study. The study used a double-blind procedure in which all reports were first sent to Ernst & Young, an accounting firm, where they were stripped of information that could be used to identify the area from which they were sent. Ernst & Young then sent the unopened envelopes containing survey responses to the John Jay researchers. The data set is thus stripped of all identifying information that may be linked to an individual diocese, eparchy or religious community, priest or victim.

## OVERVIEW OF PREVALENCE AND REPORTING

### PREVALENCE

- Priest surveys asked for birth dates and initials of the accused priests in order to determine if a single priest had allegations in multiple dioceses, eparchies or religious communities. To maintain anonymity, this information was encrypted into a unique identifying number, and birthdays and initials were then discarded. We detected 310 matching encrypted numbers, accounting for 143 priests with allegations in more than one diocese, eparchy or religious community (3.3% of the total number of priests with allegations). When we removed the replicated files of priests who have allegations in more than one place, we received allegations of sexual abuse against a total of 4,392 priests that were not withdrawn or known to be false for the period 1950-2002.
- The total number of priests with allegations of abuse in our survey is 4,392. The percentage of all priests with allegations of sexual abuse is difficult to derive because there is no definitive number of priests who were active between the years of 1950 and 2002. We used two sets of numbers to estimate the total number of active priests and estimated this percentage against whom allegations were made.
  - We asked each diocese, eparchy and community for their total number of active priests in this time period. Adding up all their responses, there were 109,694 priests reported by dioceses, eparchies and religious communities to have served in their ecclesiastical ministry from 1950-2002. Using this number, 4.0% of all priests active between 1950 and 2002 had allegations of abuse.
  - The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) reports a total of 94,607 priests for the period 1960-1996. When we look at the time period covered by the CARA database, the number of priests with allegations of sexual abuse is 4,085. Thus, the percentage of priests

accused for this time period is 4.3% if we rely on the CARA figures assessing the total number of priests.

- If we examine the differences between diocesan and religious priests, then our numbers result in a total of 4.3% of diocesan priests with allegations of abuse and 2.5% of religious priests with allegations of abuse. The CARA numbers yield a total of 5% of diocesan priests from 1960-1996 with allegations of abuse and 2.7% of religious priests from 1960-1996 with allegations of abuse.
- Our analyses revealed little variability in the rates of alleged abuse across regions of the Catholic Church in the U.S.—the range was from 3% to 6% of priests.
- A total of 10,667 individuals made allegations of child sexual abuse by priests. Of those who alleged abuse, the file contained information that 17.2% of them had siblings who were also allegedly abused.
- It is impossible to determine from our surveys what percent of all cases of abuse that occurred between 1950 and 2002 have been reported to the Church and are therefore in our dataset. Allegations of child sexual abuse are made gradually over an extended time period and it is likely that further allegations will be made with respect to recent time periods covered in our surveys. Less than 13% of allegations were made in the year in which the abuse allegedly began, and more than 25% of the allegations were made more than 30 years after the alleged abuse began.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF CASES BY YEAR

- The distribution of reported cases by the year the abuse is alleged to have occurred or begun shows a peak in the year 1970. However, considering the duration of some repeated abusive acts, more abuse occurred in the 1970s than any other decade, peaking in 1980. But, these conclusions have to be qualified because additional allegations for those time periods may surface in the future.
- Alleged abuse sometimes extended over many years. In 38.4% of allegations the abuse is alleged to have occurred within a single year, in 21.8% the alleged abuse lasted more than a year but less than 2 years, in 28% between 2 and 4 years, in 10.2% between 5 and 9 years and, in under 1%, 10 or more years.
- Approximately one-third of all allegations were reported in 2002-2003, and two-thirds have been made since 1993. Thus, prior to 1993, only one-third of cases were known to Church officials. The allegations made in 1993 and 2002-2003 include offenses that allegedly occurred within the full time period from 1950-1993 and 1950-2002. The distribution of allegations made in 2002-2003 resembles the distribution of offenses alleged at all other time periods—with the exception that allegations of abuse in recent years are a smaller share of all allegations.

## COSTS OF ALLEGATIONS

- The amount of money already paid by the Church, as a result of allegations, to victims, for the treatment of priests and for legal expenses reported in our surveys was \$422,000,000. That figure is not the total paid by the Church to date—14% of dioceses and religious orders did not report dollar figures. In addition, survey responses were filed over a 10-month period and would not include settlements and expenses incurred after surveys were submitted. In addition, no diocese reported the recent and highly publicized \$85,000,000 settlement. If we include the \$85,000,000 reported settlement, the total cost paid by the church exceeds \$500,000,000.

## PRIESTS AND ACCUSERS

### PROFILE OF PRIESTS WITH ALLEGATIONS

- The majority of priests with allegations of abuse were ordained between 1950 and 1979 (68%). Priests ordained prior to 1950 accounted for 21.3% of the allegations, and priests ordained after 1979 accounted for 10.7% of allegations.
- Over 79% of these priests were between 25 and 29 years of age when ordained. For priests whose age at the time of the first alleged abuse was reported, the largest group—over 40% was between 30 and 39. An additional 20% were under age 30, nearly 23% were between 40 and 49, and nearly 17% were over 50.
- At the time abuse is alleged to have occurred, 42.3% of priests were associate pastors, 25.1% were pastors, 10.5% were resident priests and 7.1% were teachers. Other categories (e.g., chaplain, deacon, and seminary administrator) were under 3% each.
- The majority of priests (56%) were alleged to have abused one victim, nearly 27% were alleged to have abused two or three victims, nearly 14% were alleged to have abused four to nine victims and 3.4% were alleged to have abused more than ten victims. The 149 priests (3.4%) who had more than ten allegations of abuse were allegedly responsible for abusing 2960 victims, thus accounting for 27% of allegations. Therefore, a very small percentage of accused priests are responsible for a substantial percentage of the allegations.
- Though priests' personnel files contain limited information on their own childhood victimization and their substance and/or alcohol abuse problems, the surveys report that nearly 7% of priests had been physically, sexually and/or emotionally abused as children. The surveys also indicate that nearly 19% had alcohol or substance abuse problems. There are indications that some sort of intervention was undertaken by church authorities in over 80% of the cases involving substance abuse.

- The surveys indicate that 23% of priests who were subject to allegations of sexual abuse were also recognized as having other behavioral or psychological problems.

#### OFFENSE CHARACTERISTICS

- The largest group of alleged victims (50.9%) was between the ages of 11 and 14, 27.3% were 15-17, 16% were 8-10 and nearly 6% were under age 7. Overall, 81% of victims were male and 19% female. Male victims tended to be older than female victims. Over 40% of all victims were males between the ages of 11 and 14.
- Nearly 40% of priests with allegations of sexual abuse participated in treatment programs; the most common treatment programs were sex-offender specific treatment programs specifically for clergy and one-on-one psychological counseling. The more allegations a priest had, the more likely he was to participate in treatment. However, the severity of the alleged offense did not have an effect on whether or not a priest participated in a treatment program. Those who allegedly committed acts of penetration or oral sex were no more likely to participate in treatment than priests accused of less severe offenses.
- The types of offenses allegedly committed were classified into more than 20 categories. The most frequent acts alleged against priests are: touching under the victim's clothes (57.3%), touching over the victim's clothing (56.8%), victim disrobed (27.5%), cleric performing oral sex (27.3%) and penile penetration or attempted penile penetration (25.1%). Many of the abusers were alleged to have committed multiple types of abuse against individual victims, and relatively few priests committed only the most minor acts. Of the 73.4% of the incidents reported in which we had specific offense details, no incidents were reported that included only verbal abuse or pornography. Only 3.0% of the acts included exclusively touching over the victim's clothes.
- The alleged abuse occurred in a variety of locations. The abuse is alleged to have occurred in the following locations: in the priest's home or the parish residence (40.9%), in the church (16.3%), in the victim's home (12.4%), in a vacation house (10.3%), in school (10.3%), and in a car (9.8%). The abuse allegedly occurred in other sites, such as church outings or in a hotel room, in less than 10% of the allegations. The most common event or setting in which the abuse occurred was during a social event (20.4%), while visiting or working at the priest's home (14.7%), and during travel (14.0%). Abuse allegedly occurred in other settings, such as during counseling, school hours, and sporting events, in less than 10% of the allegations.
- In the 51% of cases where information was provided, half of the victims who made allegations of sexual abuse (2621, or 25.6% of all alleged victims) socialized

with the priest outside of church. Of those who did socialize with the priests who allegedly abused them, the majority had interactions in the family's home. Other places of socialization included in the church, in the residence of the priest, and in church-day activities.

#### REPORTING AND ACTIONS TAKEN

- To date, the police have been contacted about 640 priests with allegations of abuse, or 14% of our total. Nearly all of these reports have led to investigations, and 226 instances have led to criminal charges. Of the 217 priests for whom information about dispositions is available, 138 (63.5%) were convicted and at least 100 of those served time in prison. Thus, 3% of all priests against whom allegations were made were convicted and about 2% received prison sentences to date.
- Half of the allegations that were made (49.9%) were reported by the victim. In one-fifth of the cases (20.3%), the allegation of sexual abuse was made by the alleged victim's attorney. The third most common way in which the abuse was reported was by the parent or guardian of the victim (13.6%). Allegations made by other individuals, such as by a police officer, a sibling, or another priest, occurred in 3% of cases or less. These allegations were most commonly made by calling the diocese (30.2%), in a signed letter to the diocese (22.8%), or in a legal filing (10.5%). All other methods by which the allegations were made, such as in person, by telling a trusted priest, or through the media, occurred in less than 10% of cases. Cases reported in 2002 had a similar distribution of types of reporting as in previous years.

The full report contains more detailed and additional analyses related to the information provided above. This report is descriptive in nature. Future reports will examine the relationships among the variables described here in more detail and will be multivariate and analytic in nature.