



“Receding Waves: Child Sex Abuse and Homosexual Priests Since 2000”

A report by Fr. Paul Sullins, Ph.D.

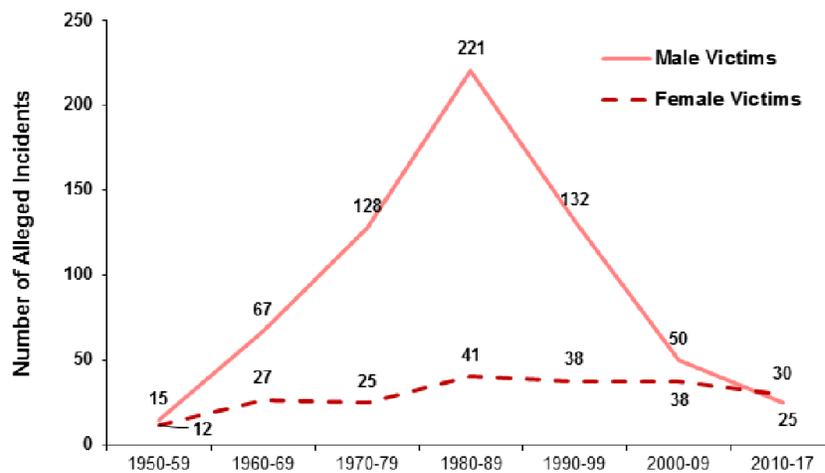
Presented by the Ruth Institute

Executive Summary

June 2019

Executive Summary: Male victimization and homosexual priests rose together through the 1980s and have since fallen together. These twin waves have largely receded. Female victimization has not fallen, persisting today at roughly the same level as in the 1980s. See the figure below.

Figure 14
Rise and fall of abuse by sex of victim



Source: SACCADAS Data, Current allegations only

Key Findings:

1. Overall, clergy sexual abuse of minors is recently rising: The priest sexual abuse of children dropped to an all-time low just after 2002 but has since disturbingly risen, though it remains well below its peak in the 1980s. Reports of current abuse averaged 7.0 per year from 2005-09, rising to 8.2 per year from 2010-14, a 17% increase. In the 1980s, there were an average 26.2 reports of current abuse per year. (See Figures 2 and 6 in the main report.)

Recent Abuse is Different:

2. Fewer males: The percent of abuse victims who were male plummeted from 74% in 2000 to only 34% by 2016, averaging 62% over the period. In 1985, males comprised 92% of victims and averaged 82% from 1950-1999. (Figures 3 and 4 in the main report.)

3. Older victims: Recent abuse has involved more older victims past puberty. Since 2000 half (50%) of abuse victims were teenagers aged 14-17; before 2000 only a third (33%) were this old. (Figures 3 and 4 in the main report.)
4. Mostly not by new priests: Since 2000 only a small fraction (11%) of abuse has been perpetrated by newly ordained priests (less than 10 years), while over half (52%) of abuse has been perpetrated by priests ordained 30 years or more. This reverses the pattern prior to 2000, when a third (31%) of abuse was due to newly ordained priests, and only 10% by priests ordained 30 years or more. (Figure 7 in the main report.)

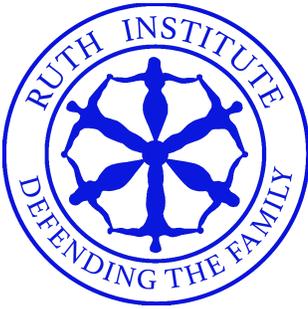
Recently Ordained Priests Appear to be Different:

5. Very few are homosexual: We do not have data on homosexual ordinations after 2000, but statistical projections estimate that recent ordination classes have contained very few homosexual men. This is a sharp decline from the 1980s, when as many as half of new ordinations were of homosexual men.
6. Orthodox, faithful younger priests: Concurrent with the drop in homosexual ordinations is the rise of a newer generation of young, orthodox candidates for the priesthood. In addition, the current generation of seminary directors seems more likely to exclude men with deeply rooted homosexual tendencies from the path to priesthood. This policy conforms to longstanding papal instruction as well as a theology of priestly celibacy as a calling reserved for heterosexual men, capable of marriage and fatherhood.
7. Aging homosexual priests: Despite few recent homosexual ordinations, the share of homosexual priests has risen since 2000 due to the declining number of ordinations, aging of the priesthood, and the large number of homosexual priests ordained earlier. Today, half of all Catholic priests are between the ages of 60 and 84, and about one in five of these priests self-describes as homosexual compared with less than one in thirty priests under age 50. As the wave of older homosexual priests passes on in coming years, the share of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood will drop rapidly.
8. Since the 1960s, priests engaged in child sex abuse have been relatively concentrated in two age groups: one ordained in the late 1960s and the other ordained in the early 1980s.
9. The pattern of clergy abuse of minors in the twentieth century closely tracks the estimates of numbers of self-identified homosexual clergy. Fewer homosexual clergy roughly equals fewer cases of clergy sexual abuse.

Recommendations:

1. Catholics must remain vigilant in protecting all minors against clerical sexual abuse.
2. As the twin waves of male victimization and homosexual priests recede, Catholics must pay particular attention to the persistent sexual abuse of girls.
3. The Church or interested scholars and lay organizations should conduct further research on clergy self-description of their patterns of sexual attraction and behavior.
4. The Church or interested lay organizations should increase educational programs on authentic Church teaching on human sexuality. Such educational efforts should include all levels of education such as seminaries, universities, high schools, elementary schools, and parish catechism

classes. The topics covered should include Pope St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body and how traditional Christian sexual ethics promotes and promotes the interests of children, women, men, and society.



The Ruth Institute is a global non-profit organization equipping Christians to defend their beliefs about the family to create a culture of lifelong married love. The Ruth Institute has responded to the latest round of clergy sex abuse revelations by encouraging the laity to do two things:

- *Insist on justice regarding clergy sex abuse. That includes punishment for the guilty, protection for the innocent, and restoration for the victims, as far as humanly possible.*
- *Proclaim the full truth of the Church's teaching on marriage, family, and human sexuality.*

Only by doing these can we put an end to the scourge of clergy sexual abuse.

The Ruth Institute would like to thank retired journalist G.R. Pafumi for sharing his data, described in our report as the SACCADAS database. Pafumi's research is housed at VictimsSpeakDB.org.

To schedule an interview with Dr. Morse or Fr. Sullins, contact: media@ruthinstitute.org