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## Hundreds Of Priests Removed Since '60s

*Survey Shows Scope  
Wider Than Disclosed*

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The Roman Catholic Church has removed 218 priests from their positions this year because of allegations of child sexual abuse, but at least 34 known offenders remain in church jobs, according to a survey of Catholic dioceses across the United States by The Washington Post.

The survey also found that at least 850 U.S. priests have been accused of sexual misconduct with minors since the early 1960s, and that more than 350 of them were removed from ministry before this year.

The numbers, which are considerably higher than previously disclosed, not only suggest the scope of the scandal rocking the Catholic Church in the United States but also underscore the continuing shortage of reliable statistics on the church's sex abuse problem. Catholic officials have said that, as a decentralized institution of autonomous dioceses, the church has no way of compiling those figures.

The Post conducted its survey by contacting each of the nation's 178 mainstream Roman Catholic dioceses. Ninety-six dioceses responded and 82 did not, despite repeated phone calls and e-mail messages. Of those that did answer The Post's

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### Survey of Cases

*Results of The Washington Post's survey of 178 Western Rite dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States:*

**218** priests placed on administrative leave or dismissed this year

**355** priests removed in previous years

**866** priests accused of sexual misconduct with minors since the 1960s

**34** past offenders still in ministry

# Hundreds of Priests Removed, Study Finds

SURVEY. From A1

questions, only a few provided information on financial settlements. Many diocesan spokesmen said they did not know whether the victims of local priests were boys or girls, teenagers or small children. Supplementary data were then gathered from local newspapers, church newsletters and diocesan Web sites.

David Clohessy, national director of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP), an 11-year-old support group that says it has 4,000 members, speculated that the lack of information may reflect a deliberate strategy to shield the church from liability.

"It's ludicrous that you can't get very, very basic data such as the number of priests who've been defrocked or the number of criminal or civil abuse cases filed against priests," Clohessy said. "I think any prudent person would assume the church has more data than it's sharing. But I also think that the church is smart enough not to have collected data, which could be discoverable" by plaintiffs' lawyers in lawsuits.

As the nearly 300 active U.S. bishops head for Dallas this week to debate and vote on a mandatory policy toward priests accused of sexual misconduct, they themselves don't know the extent of the problem and have made no real effort to figure it out.

The bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse has proposed, for example, to allow some offenders to remain in the Catholic ministry if they have committed only a single known act of abuse in the distant past, have undergone psychological treatment and have not been diagnosed as pedophiles.

But the committee's chairman, Archbishop Harry J. Flynn of St. Paul and Minneapolis, said no one knows how many priests fit that description.

The president of the bishops' conference, Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., said that he is committed to greater transparency, but that many of his fellow bishops are reluctant to provide statistical data, fearing they would only lead to more bad publicity.

"In my diocese, two weeks ago, I gave a complete financial accounting for what this has cost us—legal fees, settlements, counseling for victims, everything going back 10 years—and I did that because people have a right to know. It's their

money," Gregory said. "But not every bishop is there." (Belleville, a relatively small diocese with 105,000 Catholics and 180 priests, has spent \$3.1 million on lawsuits and counseling.)

Among the proposals on the agenda for the Dallas meeting is the setting up of a commission to research the church's response to sex abuse. Flynn's committee has recommended that the bishops require every diocese to "develop a communications policy that reflects a commitment to transparency and openness."

At present, however, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops does not keep any nationwide statistics on sexual abuse cases, and individual dioceses vary greatly in their openness.

The archdiocese of New Orleans, for example, responded to the survey by saying that, over the past 50 years, 18 of its priests have been accused of sexual misconduct with minors. An independent board of lay people reviewed those records this year and decided that the allegations in eight cases were credible, in six cases were not credible and in four cases required further investigation. Archbishop Alfred C. Hughes removed 11 priests from their positions this year because of sexual abuse allegations, and the archdiocese reported payments of \$455,000 for legal settlements and \$420,000 for psychological counseling in abuse cases since 1980.

The archdiocese of Indianapolis, in contrast, said it had conducted an "internal review" of past allegations and would not make public any of its findings. "We've made a decision not to release names or numbers. We believe that one case is one too many, that child abuse is wrong and that it's not helpful for people to have numbers," said Susan Borcherts, spokeswoman for Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein.

Officials in several dioceses said they have a policy of not responding to surveys. Some said they would answer questions only from local media, not the national press.

Monsignor Gerald Calovini, spokesman for the diocese of Steubenville, Ohio, said no abuse allegations are "now pending" there, but he declined to discuss how many Steubenville priests have been accused or how those allegations were resolved. "We're not talking about cases in the past. That's confidential information," he said.

Generally, church officials were even less willing to talk about legal settlements. The Post survey found only \$106 million in acknowledged payments. Plaintiffs' lawyers say that the true figure is in the range of

\$1 billion, but that most of the settlements have been made under confidentiality agreements.

The survey found that 866 priests have been accused of child sexual abuse over the past four decades, less than 1.5 percent of the estimated 60,000 or more men who have served in the Catholic clergy over that period.

The actual number accused, however, may be considerably higher. Sylvia Demarest, a plaintiff's lawyer in Texas, said that she compiled a database in the mid-1990s of about 1,200 priests who were accused of sexual misconduct with minors, and that she believes the current figure is higher than 1,500.

A.W. Richard Sipe, a former priest turned psychotherapist who has counseled hundreds of clergymen and victims of abuse, estimates that 6 percent of all U.S. priests have committed child sexual abuse. Some church officials, including Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington, have cited figures between 1 percent and 2 percent, based on a study several years ago of personnel records in the archdiocese of Chicago.

The scandal that erupted in January with the revelations that Boston's Cardinal Bernard Law and other prelates had transferred known sex offenders from parish to parish may have created an impression that, in the past, problematic priests were usually shuffled around and seldom removed from ministry altogether. But The Post's survey found that, even before this year, 355 priests had been removed from ministry because of sex abuse allegations.

Of those, however, only a small percentage were defrocked or "laicized," the church's term for removal from the organized priesthood. The survey turned up just 20 laicizations in abuse cases. Most of the other offenders apparently were forced to retire or had their priestly "faculties" lifted—meaning that they were not allowed to say Masses publicly or to engage in any ministry—but they remained priests.

This year, 218 priests have been removed from their jobs and not reassigned. Most have been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of investigations by the church into the allegations against them.

Catholic leaders have said that they expect a heated debate at the Dallas meeting on the question of whether past offenders can, under certain conditions, remain in ministry. Some bishops, led by Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles, favor a strict "one strike you're out" policy. Others, including Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, want to allow exceptions for priests who have undergone therapy and have been vetted by lay review boards before being returned to ministry under continuing supervision.

The Post survey found nearly three dozen such priests across the country, including a few who have served prison time. In most cases, the past offenders are in some form of restricted ministry, working in convents, hospitals or administrative jobs in which they are not supposed to have any regular contact with minors. Many dioceses have disclosed the priests' names and positions to the public, but a few have not.

The Rev. Harlan Clapsaddle of Rockford, Ill., is an example of an acknowledged offender who has re-



BY JOE MARQUETTE—ASSOCIATED PRESS

Archbishop Harry J. Flynn of St. Paul and Minneapolis led the drafting of a proposed policy on sexual abuse.

mained in ministry under supervision. Rockford Bishop Thomas G. Doran publicly discussed the case last month, announcing that the diocese had paid \$80,000 to settle sexual abuse claims against the priest.

Doran said that when the charges were made against Clapsaddle about five years ago, he was removed from his parish and underwent evaluation and treatment for several months. He was allowed to return to the diocese, but his work was restricted to a home for the elderly and to the local administrative offices of Catholic Charities, Doran said.

In Grand Rapids, Mich., the Rev. Don Heydens is also in a restricted ministry, running the diocese's program for deacons, because of an abuse incident in the 1970s. In Springfield, Mass., the Rev. Richard Meehan is working as an archivist eight years after being removed from his post because of an allegation of abuse. In Columbus, Ohio, Bishop James A. Griffin this year transferred Monsignor Joseph Fete from a parish to the position of director of ecumenical and interfaith affairs because Fete acknowledged having a sexual relationship with an adolescent boy from 1976 to 1979.

The archdiocese of Chicago has four past offenders in some form of ministry. Milwaukee has six whose names and positions have not been made public, but whose status is under review by a lay panel. The diocese of Covington, Ky., disclosed in March that three of its 110 priests remain in restricted assignments "after allegations of misconduct with teenagers." Their names and jobs have not been made public.

How many other offenders hold church positions with the quiet knowledge of Catholic leaders is unclear because some bishops still treat such cases with the utmost secrecy. The Rev. Gerald Calhoun, the vicar general, or second-ranking official, in the diocese of Owensboro, Ky., said he suspects that there are two priests in restricted ministry there. "But I don't know," he said. "Only the bishop would know."