**Sexual Abuse**

**Decades of evil: The Archdiocese of Baltimore spent years working to cover up the sexual abuse of 600 children, some in preschool, by more than 150 clergy members, Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown disclosed last week. A 456-page report, based on a four-year investigation, offered harrowing descriptions of “depraved” abuse from the mid-1940s to 2002. Many victims were altar servers, choir singers, or students, and some were “preyed upon by multiple abusers over decades,” according to the report, which described two sisters abused in grade school “hundreds of times” by one priest, a deacon who molested more than 100 minors, and clergy who abused children they’d met recovering at hospitals. “It’s the tip of the iceberg,” survivor Teresa Lancaster said. Numerous victims attempted suicide. Archbishop William Lori called the report “shocking and soul-searing.” *(The Week magazine, April 21, 2023)***

**More than 130 Catholic bishops in the U.S. have been accused of failing to adequately respond to sexual misconduct in their diocese during their careers, nearly a third of American bishops. Of those, at least 15 have been accused of committing abuse themselves. *(The Boston Globe, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 16, 2018)***

**Sex-abuse charges: Former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick was charged this week with sexual assaulting a 16-year-old boy during a 1974 wedding reception, making McCarrick the first U.S. cardinal ever to be criminally charged for a sex abuse crime against a minor. Defrocked by Pope Francis after a Vatican trial found that he had sexually abused minors and adult seminarians for decades. McCarrick, 91, evaded several criminal charges because of statutes of limitations, but per Massachusetts law, the clock stopped ticking when McCarrick left the state. An accuser, now in his 60s, says that at his brother’s wedding at Wellesley College, McCarrick sexually assaulted him in a coat room, then told him to say prayers before returning to the party,” so God can redeem you for your sins.” The accuser says McCarrick, a family friend, continued to abuse him into adulthood. A once powerful archbishop of Washington, D. C., McCarrick was made a cardinal in 2001 despite the church knowing that he routinely demanded to share a bed with seminarians. *(The Week magazine, August 13, 2021)***

**Technology companies last year reported 45 million online photos and videos of children being sexually abused to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. That’s more than double the number the firms found in 2017. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 11, 2019)***

**So far, sexual predators in the priesthood have cost the U.S. Roman Catholic Church $1 billion in settlements, legal fees, and other expenses. *(Associated Press, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 24, 2005)***

**Field’s sexual-abuse exorcism: Sally Field spent years concealing the torment created by sexual abuse, said Dave Itzkoff in The New York Times. She never let on about that suffering while winning three Emmy’s and two Oscars and starring in films like Norma Rae and Forrest Gump. “I didn’t know I had a voice,” she says. Only after being cast in 2012’s Lincoln did she reveal to her mother, who was dying of cancer, that her stepfather repeatedly sexually abused her until she was 14. “Something was growing in me, this urgency that felt gangrenous,” says Field, 71. “I could hardly breathe.” She poured those emotions into a new memoir, In Pieces, which details her abuse and her troubled teen years. She also describes her romance with Burt Reynolds, with whom she starred in Smokey and the Bandit and Hooper. Looking back, she thinks that her “complicated and hurtful” relationship with the swaggering and controlling Reynolds was about “exorcising something” from her childhood trauma. Reynolds died last month, and Field says she’s partly relieved. “This would hurt him. I felt glad he wasn’t going to have to defend himself or lash out, which he probably would have.” Confronting her demons may bring Field comfort, but “outrage has to come first. It can’t just be quieted and go away.” *(The Week magazine, October 5, 2018)***

**Church abuse scandal: An investigation of the Catholic Church in France has found that up to 330,000 children were sexually abused by priests, church employees, and volunteers over the past seven decades. The report, compiled by an independent commission at the request of church officials, estimates that there were over 3,000 perpetrators – most of them priests or clerics. About 80 percent of the victims were boys. “There was a whole bunch of negligence, of deficiency, of silence, an institutional cover-up,” said commission head Jean-Marc Sauve. Until the 2000s, the church showed “deep, total, and even cruel indifference” toward victims. He called on the church to overhaul its treatment of abusive clergy and to compensate the victims, who in many cases now can’t get justice in the courts because of statutes of limitations. *(The Week magazine, October 15, 2021)***

**How our priests could go so badly astray: When did the Irish Catholic Church lose its moral compass? asked Rev. Vincent Twomey in the Dublin Irish Times. For lose it we surely did in committing the great “evil” of covering up forpedophile priests. And the moment of wavering seems to have come in the wake of the radical changes of the Second Vatican Council. Vatican II changed our devotional practices enormously, as omissions that had been sins in the past were suddenly perfectly okay. “The result was an insecurity about traditional teaching and practices, especially among clerics.” Compassion was suddenly “in,”including the new notion of “compassion for the sinner.” We began to see sexual sins, in particular, not as evils requiring atonement but as, “at worst, emotional aberrations to be treated with psychiatry.” This is an explanation, but it is not an excuse. “The damage done to individual souls and to the inner life of the church by grievous sins, compounded by sacrilege in many cases, is incalculable.” The church must now return to an old-fashioned practice, one that predates Vatican II: penance. Irish bishops should proclaim an annual day of public penance “with strict fasting to be observed by all the clergy.” This day should be kept for years. The damage done by the predatory priests was long-lasting. “Reparation must also be so.” *(The Week magazine, November 25, 2005)***

**At least 20 coaches who were banned from participating in Olympic-affiliated sports because of sexual-misconduct convictions or credible allegations are still working with young athletes. The U.S. Center for SafeSport, founded in 2018, currently bans about 1,400 coaches, but it lacks jurisdiction over most sports programs in which 45 million children participate. *(NBCNews.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 13, 2022)***

**Abusive priests were protected here too: The Catholic sex abuse scandal is breaking late in Portugal, said Ines Cardoso, but now the reports of victims violated by their priests are coming thick and fast. Apparently “we are no different from other countries” that uncovered rampant abuse, like Ireland, Germany, and the U.S., except for the delay in our reckoning.” The shocking aspect here, though, is “the lame excuses of some of our bishops in response to accusations of cover-ups.” Haven’t they seen the outrage in other countries, which has caused so many Catholics to leave the church they were brought up in? So far, the commission investigating the dioceses of Portugal has found more than 400 victims since the 1950s, mostly boys, ranging in age from 2 to 17. Their priestly molesters also number in the hundreds. And just like in other countries, many of those priests, when caught, were simply transferred to new parishes where they went on to attack new altar boys. The Catholic Church permeates every aspect of life in Portugal, from education to charity work to socializing. It “touches millions of people.” Yet if it wishes to survive and thrive in an awakened and appalled Portugal, it will have to change its focus, from protecting priests to comforting victims. If the church cannot manage to purge the offenders and “purify itself,” it will “choke on its own corruption. *(The Week magazine, October 28, 2022)***

**In the U.S., 6,721 Catholic priests were reported to U.S. bishops for allegedly sexually abusing children between 1950 and 2016, according to BishopAccountability.org. That represents 5.8 percent of the 116,690 priests working during that time period – and it only counts those who were officially reported. *(Axios.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 7, 2018)***

**Southern Baptist disgrace: Leaders of the Nashville-based Southern Baptist Convention – the nation’s largest Protestant denomination, with nearly 14 million members – suppressed reports of sexual abuse over more than two decades, stonewalled reforms, and belittled victims, according to an explosive third-party investigation released this week. Leadership kept a secret list of hundreds of SBC-affiliated ministers identified as sex abusers, the report found, and at least nine of them are still connected to ministries. The report said victims were denigrated as “opportunists,” and in an internal email, SBC leader August Boto described the work of victims’ advocates as a “satanic scheme to completely distract us from evangelism.” The report also described “credible” allegations that Johnny Hunt, SBC president from 2008 to 2010, sexually assaulted a pastor’s wife. Hunt, who denies the allegations, resigned from an SBC board this month. *(The Week magazine, June 3, 2022)***

**Catholic abuse revealed: Spanish priests and other Catholic Church personnel sexually abused more than 900 victims, most of them young men and boys, over the past 80 years, a new report by Spanish bishops says. Half of the 728 abusers were clergy. The bishops released the report last week in conjunction with new child-protection policies, including requirements to report allegations to police. Spain is late in probing abuse in the church. After the first big revelations came to light in Boston in 2002, many countries conducted investigations, but the Spanish church began looking into the matter only after the newspaper El Pais made a blockbuster report in 2021. El Pais this week called the bishops’ report inadequate, saying the judicial records alone show more than 950 defendants and nearly 2,000 victims. *(The Week magazine, June 16, 2023)***

**Catholic dioceses in the U.S. spent $399 million last year on legal settlements with sex-abuse victims. Thus far, the church has spent about $1.5 billion settling claims by 12,500 people against 5,000 priests. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 14, 2006)***

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