

## **Timeline re: abuse in the Catholic Church\***

**1983-1986:** A lawsuit and criminal conviction of a priest in Louisiana draws national attention to the abuse of children by Catholic priests. In **1985** Fr. Tom Doyle, O.P. briefs all the bishops at their USCCB meeting in November on the seriousness of sexual abuse, that there are no cures, and that strict, stringent policies, including reporting to the police for abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, need to be put in place. Here in Western Washington, Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen immediately acts to set in place the structures and strictures needed to support the victims, remove culpable priests from ministry, and to establish well-honed policies to prevent future abuse. **1992.** As several dioceses across the country begin to develop policies for responding to abuse allegations, the bishops discuss the abuse problem at their national meeting: Ongoing conversation among US bishops and between bishops' conference and Vatican, attempting to develop and strengthen policies to prevent and respond to abuse.

**2002:** *The Boston Globe* publishes an investigative series on the mishandling of abuse allegations in the Archdiocese of Boston, leading to the resignation of Cardinal Bernard Law. The story becomes **national, as other news media begin investigations in their dioceses.**

The Vatican instructs U.S. cardinals to develop binding legislation on all U.S. dioceses to protect the young, leading to the adoption of a "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" at Dallas in June 2002.

A national office is formed to oversee its implementation. The USCCB commissions CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice to report on the nature and scope of sexual abuse of minors by clergy between 1950-2002 (the report was completed in 2004; a 2011 update of the report can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youthprotection/upload/The-Causes-and-Context-of-Sexual-Abuse-of-Minors-by-Catholic-Priests-in-the-United-States-1950-2010.pdf>).

**2010:** Claims of sexual abuse by clergy and its mishandling by church authorities lead to resignations of members of the church hierarchy in Ireland, Belgium, Germany, and elsewhere, undermining the argument that clerical sexual abuse was an issue unique to the U.S.

**2012** Over several years, some U.S. bishops resign or are removed from ministry due to their failure to report or address sexual abuse.

**2018:** Cardinal Theodore McCarrick removed from ministry at the validation of charges of sexual abuse of teenagers and seminarians. A Pennsylvania grand jury releases a report linking more than 300 priests with sexual abuse claims involving more than 1,000 victims in six of the state's eight dioceses, stating that the church had hidden allegations of abuse and brushed victims aside. The bishops issued a statement saying that they "are shamed by and sorry for the sins and omissions of Catholic priests and Catholic bishops."

**Nov. 12-14, 2018:** Gathered in Baltimore, the United States bishops prepare to ratify two proposals for greater accountability of the bishops themselves and to approve standards for review boards which incorporate lay leaders in an authoritative role. Suddenly, the Vatican intervenes and asks the bishops to hold off until March. Meanwhile Pope Francis has convened a summit of the worldwide leadership of bishops to meet in Rome, Feb 21-24, 2019, to address the sexual abuse by clergy and to ensure the protection of minors. There are 114 conferences of bishops and 21 eastern-rite patriarchal synods, councils of churches and assemblies of ordinaries.

\*A more detailed timeline is available from Catholic News Service/OSV Newsweekly

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