

VIEWS OF THE LAITY

*Findings of the Chicago Archdiocese
Public Forums on
Sexual Abuse by the Clergy*

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Prepared for
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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This is a broad view of many opinions and suggestions offered through oral and written testimony. Since many of these areas overlap, ideas may be repeated in this document. The full summary of each issue is contained in the attached executive summary.

I. Victims and Prevention

A. Victims

- This is the most important issue concerning those who participated in the forums and responded to the questionnaire
- Included in the support that should be provided to victims of clerical sexual abuse are:
 - Assurance from the Archdiocese that allegations of sexual abuse be taken seriously, thoroughly investigated.
 - Reporting to the proper civil authorities.
 - Communication with the victims throughout an investigation of sexual abuse.
 - Counseling for the victim and his/her family paid for by the Archdiocese to help the victim overcome the trauma of the abuse.
 - Financial compensation to meet the abuse-related needs of the victim.
 - Public apology by the abuser and the Archdiocese.

B. Prevention

- The overall consensus is that the safety and protection of children must be the Church's first and foremost goal. Preventing future incidents is imperative.
- The cover-up by the Bishops of scandal has inhibited victims to come forward. In efforts to prevent future incidents, victims must be encouraged to

report cases.

- Parents should receive instruction on behavior that may indicate their child is a victim of abuse and how to handle it if he/she suspects abuse.
- Children should receive instruction on what is an appropriate relationship with an adult. They should be taught that it is acceptable to talk about a relationship that makes them uncomfortable.

II. Accountability

- The overwhelming consensus is that the Church has completely mishandled cases of clerical sexual misconduct and therefore it is perceived as a cover-up. Many participants said that the Church is not "above the law."
- Many speakers feel that the Church has never regarded the crimes seriously enough, which is evident in its reassignment of priests charged and/or found guilty of sexual abuse.
- Universally, participants felt that the laity should be informed of cases of sexual abuse and remove the shroud of secrecy.
- Remorse by Church officials is wanted.
- 87% percent of the questionnaire respondents indicated that "zero-tolerance" and full reporting policies are necessary.
- A national policy to hold priests accountable is necessary.
- Regarding the Church's investigative role, opinion varied. Some felt that the Church should simply report an allegation of a crime to the proper authorities and remove itself from the investigative process. Others felt the Church's duty included investigating charges. Many agreed that the laity should participate in investigating cases.
- It was suggested that a professional code of ethics for priests be established that would include guidelines for reporting other priests who are suspected of sexual abuse.

III. Reassignment to Ministry

- A substantial majority favors "zero tolerance" or no reassignment of any priest found guilty of sexual misconduct with a minor. This approach was rooted in an overriding concern for the protection of children, the difficulty in treating pedophilia successfully and belief that priests who had engaged in sexual misconduct with a minor should be removed from their position.
- Some approached reassignment on a case-by-case analysis, placing a greater focus on the particular facts of the incident and on the rehabilitation of the priest.
- 92% believe that a priest should not be reassigned to any other ministry.
- A review board was also suggested to consider allegations against a priest to prevent future cover-ups.
- Some suggested that lay persons should oversee reassignment.

IV. Reporting Allegations

- The large majority of forum participants strongly felt that in every instance allegations of sexual misconduct with minors should be reported to the civil authorities that would decide if the accusation could be substantiated.
- Those who opposed a blanket reporting policy were concerned about false accusations hurting the priest, parish and the Church. Many felt separating the Church's spiritual role and the State is important and that victim confidentiality should be respected.
- Most felt that the name of the priest should be disclosed as long as a minimal level of credibility was given to the accusation by the Church or the State.
- Opinion on naming the accuser varied from those supporting full disclosure to those who felt full disclosure would inhibit victims from coming forward.

V. Other Comments by Parishioners

- The sexual misconduct and the cover-up have profoundly impacted the faith of some in the hierarchy of the Church. This is different from their spiritual faith. The bishop's conference offers the hierarchy a forum to restore their own credibility in the eyes of the laity.

- Many speakers indicated that the safety and protection of our children is of utmost importance to the laity. Therefore, laity should be included in the bishop's discussion on clerical sexual misconduct.
- There is strong feeling that review boards and national standards are important that should include laity members. These participants should include professional in psychiatry, psychology and child abuse. Victims should also be invited to the table.
- Some pointed to homosexuality as the basis for the crisis while others acknowledged that a link does not exist.
- Many felt that married priests and women priests could alleviate the problem.
- Some suggested better training and screening within the seminary.
- The faith of the young people of the Catholic Church is unstable because they do not have years of commitment to the Church. This scandal has shaken it terribly. Outreach by the Church to young people is critical or it risks losing this generation.
- Many speakers expressed hope for the future of the Church.

INTRODUCTION

On May 1, 2002 the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago (CLGCC) offered to conduct a series of forums that would provide Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I., with a broad sense of the feelings of the parishioners in the Archdiocese of Chicago on the subject of sexual abuse by the clergy. The major challenge was to plan and execute the forums and prepare a report for the Cardinal to bring with him to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in Dallas, Texas on June 13, 2002. Luckily the laity responded with enthusiasm to the idea of the forums, sharing their suggestions with the Cardinal.

An executive committee from the CLGC's membership was formed to plan the forums. The goal was to offer public forums geographically accessible so that the greatest number of people could be heard. Based on the short time frame, the committee determined that the forums could only be held on one evening, Tuesday, May 21, 2002. The second issue was the location of the forums. The Archdiocese offered to provide parishes within each deanery. The Archdiocese of Chicago consists of Lake and Cook Counties, which, in turn, is subdivided into 26 geographical areas called deaneries. Originally, the goal was to offer one forum within each deanery. However, the number of forums soon was expanded to 38, to accommodate the overwhelming interest by the laity to participate.

Through the parishes in the Archdiocese, the CLGC sent a guideline of suggested topics, based on the USCCB's agenda document on clerical sexual misconduct, for participants to use in forming their testimony. Questions concerning "victims" and "other comments" were added to the USCCB questionnaire. In addition, the CLGC distributed a questionnaire for those interested in offering their opinion without speaking publicly. This questionnaire was available on the CLGC website, www.CLGC.org, and through the parishes in English, Spanish and Polish. We would like to recognize ABC, WGN and Fox Networks that linked their websites to the CLGC to allow people access to the questionnaires.

More than 200 people volunteered their time to moderate the forums and to document the comments of the speakers. A special letter sent to the CLGC 's membership yielded many of these volunteers. We also reached out to the Chicago Bar Association, the Women's Bar Association, and the Illinois State Bar Association, whose help was instrumental in the success of this project. We also recruited interpreters to assist in Hispanic and Polish communities. Our volunteers included people of all faiths. A proposal to use court reporters to document the statements proved cost prohibitive at \$105,000. Therefore, tape recorders were used as the back up to the notes taken of each speaker.

The format of the forums included a sign-in sheet providing for a first-come, first-serve opportunity to speak. Each person was provided five minutes to speak in order to accommodate as many speakers as possible. A timer was used to help ensure that the flow of speakers ran smoothly. Speakers were permitted to address any topic, but the CLGC encouraged presenting ideas or opinions on national policy regarding sexual misconduct. The moderators were present only to facilitate the forum, not to answer questions regarding current Church policy or to ask questions.

The CLGC is extremely gratified by the success of this project that could serve as a model for other dioceses throughout the nation. It was noted to the members of the committee that has such forums been in existence in Boston two decades ago the disastrous "cover-up" could not have occurred. Overall, more than 3,000 voices of the laity, with their own perspectives, were heard. 700 people spoke at the forums. 1,000 questionnaires were tabulated through the CLGC website and another 1,000 were collected through the mail and from the parishes. In addition, the CLGC received 300 separate written comments. We held our costs to \$12,000, a minimal expense and reasonable for almost any Archdiocese.

Once the forums were complete, the materials from each forum were collected and a team of volunteer writers began reviewing and summarizing statements made at the forums. Tabulation of the questionnaires also began immediately. The following Summary Report was produced by that committee.

1. VICTIMS

The focus of many of those who spoke at the forums and responded to the questionnaires was on the victims of clergy sexual abuse. The prevailing sentiment was expressed by one speaker who stated: "Bishops must concentrate upon helping the victims." Most of the comments dealt with the help that should be provided to persons (and their families) who come forward with allegations of sexual abuse. Those allegations may be of sexual abuse in the future or of incidents that occurred in the past but only now are being reported. In addition, the speakers at the forums and questionnaires discussed the need to take steps to prevent clergy sexual abuse so that there are no more victims.

A. Help for Victims Who Have Been Sexually Abused

The most detailed comments concerned the steps that the Church should take to help the victims of sexual abuse and their families. In the words of one speaker, the "[c]are of victims must be the primary concern." Many of the allegations of clergy sexual abuse that have been reported or come to light in recent months occurred many years or decades ago. Some of the speakers at the forums also stated that they (or their children) had been the victims of abuse while minors. Unfortunately, few of the speakers or questionnaires distinguished between steps that should be taken to help persons who now are adults, but who were the victims of sexual abuse many years ago, and steps that should be taken to help more recent victims and victims in the future. One of the few speakers who addressed the issue of adults who were the victims of sexual abuse as minors wrote "as a Church and as the people of God we owe them compassion, profound apologies and access to psychological treatment. These too are wounded children, now grown into adults, who need our protection, care and support, both emotional and financial."

Although many of the suggestions made by the speakers and in the questionnaires were phrased in terms of steps that should be taken to deal with recent or future allegations of sexual abuse, a number of the suggestions also apply to adults who were victims of abuse while minors. The speakers and questionnaires felt that the Archdiocese should provide the following to victims of sexual abuse:

- "Access to all services for healing;"

- Acknowledgment by the Archdiocese and the individual priest of wrongdoing;
- Assurances that allegations of sexual abuse will be taken seriously, thoroughly investigated and reported to the proper civil authorities;
- Assurances that, if the allegations of sexual abuse are proven to be true, the offending priests will be removed from his position and not put back into a situation to harm others;
- "Compassion, support, acknowledgment, valuation, and respect. [Victims] must be listened to and their perpetrators must be held accountable. We must console them and admit a crime has been committed."
- Counseling for the victim and his/her family from a qualified psychologist paid for by the Archdiocese to help the victim overcome the trauma of the abuse: "A genuine on-going support system for victims and family. Referral to professional help or counseling underwritten by the Archdiocese."
- Financial compensation to meet the abuse-related needs of the victim;
- "Immediate response and follow through" with victims told "the result."
- Information as to what is going on during the investigation;
- Justice;
- Legal support;
- To be listened to and believed;
- Medical assistance;
- Moral support;
- Open, honest and fair dealings;

- Physical, mental and emotional support;
- Prosecution of "the perpetrator like you do any one else accused of this awful crime."
- Psychiatric assistance: "The Church should give unlimited psychological and medical assistance for these victims of crimes committed by the clergy."
- Public apology from the abuser to his victim and to the parish; some speakers felt that a large number of victims would be satisfied with an apology by the Church and a promise from the Church to do more to prevent future abuse; one speaker suggested that the bishop of each diocese in which a case of child abuse has occurred should meet with each victim and apologize to the victim for the pain and suffering the Church has caused them;
- "I do believe in recompense of some sort – monetary and spiritual in nature. The spiritual is the most important."
- Spiritual counseling;
- "Stick by the victim and pray for him until the matter is settled;"
- Sympathy;
- Treatment with dignity;
- Understanding;
- Whatever professional help the victim may require (i.e., medical, mental).

Thus, the vast majority of those who spoke or wrote about victims stated that the Church owes them financial, legal, psychological and spiritual support. However, a small minority of speakers and questionnaires stated that sexual abuse is a civil matter between the victim and the individual abuser. While the Church owes the victims compassion, they felt that the Church, as an institution, does not owe the victim any material or financial support.

B. Steps to Prevent Sexual Abuse By Clergy in the Future

There was agreement among those who spoke at the forums and responded to the questionnaires that the safety and the protection of children must be the Church's first and foremost goal in order to prevent future victims of sexual abuse. In a written statement, one speaker wrote that "the safety of children is the first priority of the people of God." This was echoed by another speaker, who read a letter he had sent to Cardinal George. In the letter, he stated that "the Church has a particular and overriding duty to insure that these young people are not 'put in harm's way' by the Church's personnel, its policies or implementation."

Many of the speakers and questionnaires were critical of the Church hierarchy for policies that have concealed incidents of clergy abuse. According to one speaker: "How many children right now are suffering and won't tell anyone? Maybe another 20 to 50 years before they can face what happened to them." A speaker at another forum was a teen coordinator. He stated that Catholics and society must protect children as much as possible. He observed that parents have never taught their children to be wary to priests or of the Church. However, given the current scandal, he observed that it may be incumbent upon them to do so. A number of speakers indicated that they believed that the priesthood shared many of the attributes of a "fraternity" and that it appeared that the first concern of many priests and bishops was to protect their fellow priests from damaging publicity or exposure. If this is in fact the case, then these speakers indicated that the priests and bishops must reorder their priorities immediately.

Among those who addressed the issue at the forums and in questionnaires, there was agreement that the way to reduce future incidents of sexual abuse is to encourage persons to report it. While it may not be possible to prevent it completely, there was a feeling among forum participants that sexual abuse has reoccurred because of the secrecy with which it has been treated. Thus, speakers and questionnaires urged that everyone who experiences any form of inappropriate behavior should be encouraged to come forward and report it.

Closely associated with encouraging victims to come forward and report incidents of abuse was how victims are treated when an allegations are made.

Speakers felt that the Church must realize how destructive sexual abuse is to the victims. According to one speaker, victims never really get over sexual abuse and the "experience stays with them the rest of their lives." Speakers urged that there must be more focus on victims when an allegation is made. Many people expressed concern that victims have too often been ignored or their accusations dismissed as unimportant. Thus, a trained person should listen to the accuser with compassion. The accuser and his/her accusation should be respected. Another speaker called for a set of clear policies to report abuse so that children know how to make such a report. "We don't want the future kids to have to deal with a system with no procedures and policies. We must take care of the problem now."

Among the other statements made by speakers and the questionnaires were:

- "Parents need to be instructed on how to deal with children who are abused. Kids need to be told that it is not their fault."
- "Each case [should be] considered respectfully."
- "Treat them with respect and dignity, not as a threat."
- "The Archdiocese should have a hotline for reporting allegations of abuse."
- "There should be non-lawyer victim advocates."

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

Many forum speakers and persons who responded to the questionnaire expressed anger and disappointment at the Church and its hierarchy for their perceived mismanagement of the sexual misconduct cases. One parishioner stated: "Bishops who move priests who have committed any sexual crimes are guilty of a great sin. They have a part in the crimes and have failed miserably in their task to shepherd and protect the people that God has entrusted to them."

Another Church member stated that the bishops and cardinals cared more about protecting abusive priests and the reputation of the Church than the safety of innocent children. A number of respondents felt that the Church's response to the crisis deserves at least as much if not more condemnation than the individual priests that sexually abused minors. One person wrote: "The real issue is not pedophile priests but the inaction of the cardinals and bishops to address the problem. Even today, there is only one cardinal that has taken a zero-tolerance position on pedophile priests while the others wait and consider while the Church suffers."

A substantial percentage of those who participated in the forums and responded to the questionnaire believe that Church officials do not understand the seriousness of the sexual misconduct offenses and the laity's indignation over the Church's reassignment of pedophile priests. One individual suggested that the "bishops do not think that the abuse is horrendous enough." Other people voiced their dismay over recent comments by a high-level Vatican official who was quoted in a newspaper article as having said that a bishop should avoid telling their congregation that a priest had sexually abused someone if the bishop believes that the priest will not abuse anyone again. Equally unpopular were other comments attributed to the same Vatican official, which indicated that he believed that the Church had no legal or moral responsibility for sexual abuse by a priest.

An almost universal theme conveyed by forum attendees was the need for honesty and openness from the Church with the laity about instances of sexual abuse by a priest. "Transparency is the key," stated one member. "The culture of secrecy must end," stated another. More than one person stated that as a parent, she had a right to know whether the priest that would be ministering her child had an instance of sexual abuse in his past. Others commented that "covering up" the scandal violated Church tenets with respect to sin and forgiveness.

In addition to honesty and openness, many persons wanted the Church hierarchy to offer some expression of genuine remorse for the manner in which it has handled the sexual misconduct cases. A typical comment from one respondent was: "When the bishops meet in June, I would hope for the following results - an apology. Why haven't we heard a simple, 'We are sorry'? We are owed this, with no 'ifs', 'ands', or 'buts' attached." Another respondent wrote: "The Church needs to recognize that it has made a huge mistake. It needs to admit that it was wrong, apologize, and do everything possible to make it right."

Approximately ninety percent (90%) of the people who completed the questionnaire indicated that they agreed with the following statement: "Bishops should commit themselves publicly to being accountable to each other and to their people for the implementation of their policies regarding sexual misconduct." Approximately seventy-five percent (75%) of the people who completed the questionnaire indicated that they agreed with the following statement: "The USCCB should adopt 'zero tolerance' and full reporting policies."

With respect to the steps the Church should take in order to implement an acceptable policy for dealing with sexually abusive priests, there were many suggestions offered. A number of persons wanted any reform to be instituted on a nationwide basis and to permeate all hierarchical levels of the Church. Anything less than a unified, national policy on this issue will allow dangerous priests to avoid detection and find new parishes to victimize. The importance of a national policy was not lost on one respondent, who commented: "This scandal could drive a number of dioceses into bankruptcy from the twin pressures of litigation judgments and declines in Church attendance and donations. . . . For the American Church to survive, the U.S. bishops must forge a consistent, effective, national personnel management policy for dealing with cases of serious abuses." A few speakers at the forums suggested withholding contributions to the Church until it implemented an effective national policy to combat this problem.

There was a split of opinion as to what investigative role the Church should play in holding its priests accountable for committing sexual misconduct. Many speakers and questionnaires felt that the Church simply should report an allegation of sexual abuse to the proper civil authorities and leave itself out of the investigative process. Persons opposed to investigations conducted by the Church pointed out that there was an inherent conflict of interest and that the Church was not equipped or designed to undertake such a role.

Others felt that the Church had a duty to investigate when one of its own had been accused of a crime. According to many respondents who favored investigations by the Church, any review board created to decide such sexual abuse cases should include members from the laity. In their view, since the Church has "covered up" past cases, it is imperative to include lay people so that the rest of the laity and those outside the Church are assured that pedophile priests are revealed and dealt with in an appropriate manner. Without laity involvement, any Church investigations will lack the credibility that they need in order to be effective.

Other suggestions included a professional code of ethics for priests that would promulgate guidelines for reporting other priests who are suspected of sexual abuse. Some persons requested a more careful vetting of seminarians by Church officials, including possible psychiatric examinations to screen for candidates who are predisposed toward pedophilia. A few participants referred to the Youth Protection Program adopted by the Boy Scouts of America several years ago when they encountered a similar rash of pedophilia cases. The program emphasizes education of the youth and leadership on an annual basis and calls for the immediate removal of a leader upon an allegation of abuse until the matter is resolved.

Some of the most impassioned comments dealt with Church officials who reassigned known pedophile priests without informing the parishes to which they had been reassigned. Although the idea of zero-tolerance was raised in the questionnaires with respect to the priests who had committed the sexual abuse, many respondents felt zero-tolerance should apply to the bishops and cardinals who approved such transfers. Some representative comments:

- "The Church's hierarchy is not above or beyond the laws of the state."
- "My anger over this is mostly confined to those in the hierarchy who aided, abetted, and were complicit. Those who enabled this evil should resign in disgrace. If they refuse, the laity should turn their backs on them whenever they are seen in public. Those bishops and cardinals who are too egotistical and arrogant to leave, show contempt for the laity and the good, honest priests who serve us so nobly. They have forfeited their right to lead."

- "Priests who abuse and Cardinals who cover-up are criminals and should go to jail."
- "Bishops who have lost trust from their people should resign."
- "A Bishop is just as responsible as the perpetrator when he protects the individual priest."

Several speakers mentioned Cardinal Bernard Law by name and indicated that he and other bishops and cardinals who made similar reassignment decisions should resign. A number of parishioners believe that some cardinals, such as Cardinal Law, must resign or be removed in order for reform to occur.

3. REASSIGNMENT TO MINISTRY

A substantial majority of speakers and persons who responded to questionnaires expressed the clear opinion that a priest should not be reassigned to ministry after proof of his sexual misconduct with a minor. For example, almost 90% of questionnaire responses expressed the "no reassignment" view for parochial ministry. However, that number dropped to slightly over 60% in response to "no reassignment" to any other ministry, including office work, hospital chaplain, etc. Comments delivered at public hearings and by way of written and e-mail communications also conveyed a substantial majority position against reassignment, although the majority does not appear to be as great as in the questionnaire responses. The emotional tenor of comments ranged from sadness to frustration and anger over the way in which some dioceses have reassigned priests found guilty of sexual misconduct with minors.

Many of those holding this majority "no reassignment" view characterized it as "zero tolerance." Their zero tolerance approach was rooted in an overriding concern for the protection of children, the difficulty in treating pedophilia successfully, and belief that priest who had engaged in sexual misconduct with a minor should be removed from office. The following comments are illustrative:

A. Protection of Children

- No one should be excused from hurting a child.
- This is a crime. Priests are no different than anyone else. If anyone else did this they would never work with children again.
- *(From a summary of public comments)* A number of people spoke in favor of the zero tolerance policy even though they acknowledged that it might not always be a fair system to the priests. They said that the most important and overriding concern was the protection of the children.

B. Pedophilia

- Very few pedophiles can be cured; there is a 90% recidivism rate.

- Pedophilia is inherently predatory in nature, and therefore promotes serial offenses.
- I don't know if pedophile can be rehabilitated. This is a sickness. The pedophile should not be in any contact with children.
- It is my understanding that there is currently no way to treat true pedophiles successfully. As far as I know, these men are a danger to children as long as they live.

C. Removal from Ministry

- I believe that if a priest has been accused of pedophilia, and the claims are found that to be true, the priest should be expelled from the priesthood. As with any other sin, they are entitled to forgiveness if they are truly repentant, but as far as I'm concerned there is no longer a place for them as a priest. If charges are filed against them, the Church should cooperate in any way that is possible.
- To err is human -- to forgive divine. God hates the sin, but loves the sinner. However, abuse by priest to minor is not acceptable!! Zero tolerance -- past/president/future. Priest is defrocked -- sent to a home for help -- no more ministry anywhere -- any time.
- The call to the ministry is a privilege. If somebody is ordained who breaches that trust, they should be "laicized." One strike and you're out.

A minority would permit reassignment under limited circumstances, although some of these replies appeared to come from individuals who opposed reassignment, but who were offering suggestions in the event that the Church decided to continue with reassignments. Under the reassignment view, zero tolerance is an inflexible, overly harsh response to a tragic transgression. One written comment provided the following advice:

Each case should be treated separately... There should be no tolerance (of abuse), but "zero tolerance" is often unfair in some circumstances. There is no such thing as "one size fits all" re: sin.

These commentators would suggest a case-by-case analysis, placing a greater focus on the particular facts of the incident and on the rehabilitation of the priest. Lay persons should oversee reassignments. Reassignment would depend on the circumstances of the sexual misconduct. The prerequisites for reassignment would include successful completion of psychological therapy and an interval with no further misconduct. The reassignment would include ongoing counseling, close supervision and no contact with children. One questionnaire response suggested that reassignment to a monastery, cloistered community, or a research assignment would be permissible. Another questionnaire provided the following comment: "If he is well, he should be allowed back in the ministry."

Some who supported reassignment suggested that the priest should not be reassigned to a parochial ministry, in light of the presence of children. Questionnaires offered the following reassignment suggestions:

- If the job does not involve minors -- may be reassigned depending on crime. If reassigned, the disclosure should be made.
- People should be able to have input -- the convicted priest as well as the ministry where he will be assigned, so an open, honest, discussion about acceptance for the work can be made. No surprises later!

One comment suggests that a single or dated instance of misconduct should be considered differently than recent acts. Removal from the ministry should be restricted to repeat offenders.

Participants also provided a few suggestions regarding involvement of an independent review board to receive allegations against priests. Some counseled against the involvement of a review board, suggesting that the existing Chicago review board has failed to address the situation adequately. Those commentators suggested that complainants should be referred to civil authorities, which would handle the investigation. Others suggested that Church officials should be mandated to report such allegations to the appropriate law enforcement authorities. Priests should be treated as any other citizen and should not be considered to be above the law.

Comments in favor of a review board suggested that such a board should be independent to eliminate cover-ups. The board should not be appointed by the hierarchy, but rather selected by a larger group. Board membership should not include priests or members of the Church hierarchy. Board members should be

civilian men and women who have expertise to deal with issues arising from sexual misconduct cases. Another suggestion was for the creation of a central (national) review board system under the auspices of the USCCB. Another commentator suggested that national sexual misconduct norms are needed for all dioceses.

4. REPORTING ALLEGATIONS

The large majority of forum participants and questionnaires felt strongly that, in every instance, allegations of sexual misconduct by clergy with minors should be reported to the civil authorities. It would be the responsibility of civil authorities to decide whether the accusation could be substantiated. This opinion was based on the feeling that secrecy and trusting internal Church procedures caused the current situation. They felt that the interests of justice and of society would be served best by a blanket reporting policy.

Those commentators who did not agree that a blanket policy of reporting all claims is the only workable policy made three general points. First, there may be accusations that are without any credibility. By reporting baseless and unsubstantiated claims, the Church would be needlessly destroying the reputation of a priest, hurting the Church, and creating unnecessary worry and distrust in the parish involved. Second, some felt that, because the Church's role is spiritual, it would not act as an agent of the state by making reports. Finally, many persons thought that, if a victim approaches the Church in confidence, seeking private counseling or reconciliation, that this request should be honored.

If the Church decides to appoint a review board that is tasked with reporting to civil authorities only substantiated allegations, that board must be seen to be outside the influence of the Church hierarchy. Experts on the board should not be diocesan employees. There should be a majority of lay members on the board.

On the issue of disclosing the names of priests accused of sexual abuse, the opinion of the participants was that only the names of those priests involved in situations where someone, civil or Church, had decided that there was some minimal level of credibility to the accusation should be disclosed.

Opinion regarding whether the name of the accuser should be disclosed was very divided. Some persons felt that openness and fairness mandated disclosure of the information about the alleged victim. Others felt that disclosure would discourage reports. Opponents of disclosure also felt that it would create yet another penalty for the victim. In the end, concern for the victim led many persons to say that, although openness and fairness would seem to require disclosure, and even though it was unfair to the accused priest, victims should be able to choose privacy.

Regardless of their opinion on reporting allegations of sexual abuse, all participants felt that, in every instance where there is a substantiated finding that abuse has occurred, the clergy member involved must be removed from contact with children and that he must not be transferred to another parish or diocese.

5. OTHER TOPICS RAISED BY PARISHIONERS

A. The Laity's Faith In The Hierarchy Of The Church Has Been Profoundly Shaken.

Many of the laity who attended the forums indicated that their faith in the Catholic hierarchy has been profoundly shaken by the current scandal. Many speakers expressed their utter disbelief that some of our bishops had actually reassigned priests whom they knew or whom they had reason to believe had abused young children from one parish to another where these priests continued to abuse young children. These speakers indicated that in their opinion these bishops were actually more culpable for the continued wrongful conduct of these priests than the priests themselves.

One speaker described the current crisis as the Church's Watergate. Just as Watergate had a profoundly negative impact upon most Americans' view of the Presidency, so too the current scandal has had a profoundly negative impact upon most American Catholics' view of the Catholic hierarchy in this country. Many speakers echoed this view and indicated that the bishops must take meaningful action to address the current crisis at their meeting in Texas this month if they wish to restore their own credibility in the eyes of the laity.

B. There Needs To Be More Openness And More Lay Involvement In The Church Hierarchy's Handling Of The Current Crisis.

Many of the laity who attended the forums indicated that there must be much more openness on the part of the Church hierarchy regarding the problem of sexual abuse of minors by priests within the Church. These speakers indicated that the hierarchy's efforts to conceal the nature and the extent of this problem has only made the problem worse. These speakers demanded an immediate end to all of the Church's secrecy regarding this matter.

Many of the persons who spoke at the forums indicated that the safety and the protection of our children is perhaps the single most important issue to the laity. For this reason, many of the speakers indicated that they believed that the bishops should include representatives of the laity in their deliberations on this subject and expressed disappointment that the bishops have not invited any representatives of the laity to participate in their meeting in Dallas this month on this subject.

C. Review Boards/National Guidelines

Many speakers at the forums addressed the subjects of review boards and national guidelines. Most of the speakers who addressed the subject of review boards felt that such boards were a good idea. A few of the speakers were concerned that the bishops might attempt to use the creation of these boards as a mechanism by which to distance themselves from the current controversy and to insulate themselves from criticism for not effectively addressing the current situation.

Many speakers expressed their opinions regarding the proper composition of these boards. Most of the speakers who addressed this subject indicated that they believed that a majority of those persons serving on such boards should be lay people. They believed that the boards should consist of both men and women. They also believed that the boards should include men and women with professional expertise in the areas of psychology, psychiatry and child abuse. Several speakers indicated that they believed that a person who had been a victim of child abuse should also serve on these boards. One speaker indicated that she believed that the members of these boards should be selected by a diocesan organization comprised of the laity such as the diocesan pastoral council rather than the bishop of the diocese.

There was universal agreement among those who addressed the subject that the bishops should adopt national guidelines on this subject. There was also universal agreement that these guidelines should be applied in a uniform manner throughout the United States. One speaker indicated that he did not believe that the bishops could be trusted to implement whatever guidelines they might adopt at their meeting in Texas and that some national oversight board should be created to ensure that these guidelines were actually implemented and that these guidelines were applied in a uniform manner throughout the United States.

D. Homosexuality

A number of speakers at the forums addressed the subject of homosexuality. There were two deeply held and strongly expressed viewpoints on this subject. One group of speakers was of the opinion that the only persons who abuse young boys are homosexual men. These speakers were of the

opinion that the Church could resolve the current crisis by removing homosexual men from the priesthood. The other group of speakers was of the opinion that homosexual men were no more likely to abuse young children than heterosexual men. These speakers stated that homosexual priests have served the Church honorably and that the views expressed by the first group of speakers were unfair and completely untrue.

E. Women Priests/Married Clergy

A number of speakers noted that the current crisis underscored the need for women priests and married clergy. These speakers made two points. First, these speakers indicated that by expanding the pool of potential priests to include women and married individuals, the Church would not have to be so dependent upon priests or seminarians with actual or possible deviant sexual impulses or tendencies. These speakers asserted that the Archdiocese could actually be more selective with respect to the types of persons whom the Archdiocese would accept into its seminary program and retain as priests within the Archdiocese if the Church were to permit women and married individuals to become priests. These speakers also indicated that they believed that women priests and married clergy would have been much less likely to have tolerated the degree of sexual abuse of young children by priests that the current Church hierarchy that is comprised exclusively of unmarried men appears to have been willing to accept.

F. The Current Crisis Is Having A Very Negative Impact Upon Our Young People

Many speakers at the forums expressed concern about the effect that the current crisis is having upon our young people. These speakers observed that while their faith in the Church is deeply rooted, the faith of their children and their grandchildren is not nearly as deeply rooted as their own. One twenty-two year old speaker observed that her generation does not identify very closely with the Church and that the current crisis has caused her generation's already tenuous relationship with the Church to deteriorate even further. She indicated that the Church must make some dramatic changes in how the Church relates to younger Catholics in order to bring them back into the mainstream of the Church. Otherwise, she fears that the Church will lose not only her generation but the children who will be born to her generation who will not even be brought up as Catholics.

G. Hope

A number of the speakers at the forums urged those who were present at these forums not to lose hope in the Church's ability to address the current crisis in a positive and constructive manner. These speakers expressed their belief that Jesus continues to be present among us and that He continues to be present within the institutional Church. They expressed their hope that the Holy Spirit would descend upon the Church and give comfort to those who have been victims of sexual abuse and that the Holy Spirit would inspire the bishops during their deliberations in Dallas this month.

CONCLUSION

It was clear from day one that this project was unique. The three major conclusions that can be drawn from these forums did not even appear in the questionnaire that was used by the Catholic Lawyers' Guild as adapted from the questions prepared by the National Catholic Conference of Bishops.

There is a tremendous reservoir of good will that exists for Cardinal Francis George for forum projects. The response of nearly 200 people who were willing to commit at least one whole evening and in many cases much more time to volunteer to work at and assemble these forums was amazing. What is nearly unbelievable is that only two days after the Cardinal requested help from the laity, nearly 10,000 persons responded by participating in these forums.

We believe this is the largest outpouring of advice to a Cardinal on one specific subject that has ever occurred in the United States. It is the only series of forums of this magnitude that was ever produced in the United States.

Most importantly, the emphasis on the question of sexual abuse of minors has immediately switch from the cleric to the victim. Three weeks ago the National Conference of Catholic Bishops prepared an agenda that did not address victims as the number one priority. It could have lead to a week of commentary that the Bishops "...just don't get it". Subsequently, last week the Bishop issued a four page agenda for their Dallas meeting of which the first page and a half dealt with discussion about the victims.

The responses received overwhelmingly delivered the message that bishops MUST interact with the victims on a pastoral level, not a legal one. The responses show that there is room for debate and discussion as to the best method of approaching the problem and different ideas as to the proper solution to the problem. However, the parishioners' advice is clear that the priority is the actual victim and the potential victims. The children must be protected.

It was equally clear that the people feel that the bishops failed miserably in dealing with the problem. The reassignment of the clergy from one parish to another is inexcusable. Many thought that bishops were equally responsible for the sexual abuse problem. Some thought of the offending bishops as indictable co-conspirators.

Finally the question of zero tolerance was mentioned at length. Some thought

the bishops' questions were phrased in order to justify a policy of less than zero tolerance. There were complaints that the concept was not well defined. There was a lack of clarity as to whether the phrase was limited to the child cases or all cases of sexual misconduct. Overwhelmingly the parishioners would prefer a policy of one transgression and you are out. If the bishops propose anything less they had better have numerous safeguards clearly articulated.

The question of "zero tolerance" is an emotional issue. It seems to have taken on a definition of its own. It appears to be contrasted to the "one strike" theory. People who advocate "zero tolerance" often use the expression "...if it were your child..." . However, as you get further removed from the victim, the idea of repentance and rehabilitation start to appear in the responses. It appears to imitate the population's view of the criminal justice system as a whole; namely, the initial, vocal response is "no mercy" then there is a gradual acceptance of rehabilitation, psychological counseling, probation, etc.

Unfortunately we are engaged in the greatest scandal in the history of the Catholic Church in America. We are there because of an arrogant abuse of power on the part of some clerics and hierarchy. The abuse of power created an immoral fraternity that allowed clerics to abuse their power in the community by using little children as sex objects and the arrogance of certain members of the hierarchy who believed they had the power to cover up the sinful transgressions as if they were unruly fraternity pranks that the "boys" would outgrow. They apparently adopted the philosophy "...if we don't talk about it, it didn't happen".

Fortunately, the laity and the vast majority of Roman Catholics priests and hierarchy did not belong to the immoral fraternity, nor did they adopt its philosophy. The laity have spoken loud and clearly. The bishops are beginning to respond.

We hope the Cardinal and other bishops accept the report for what it is, an attempt by the laity to share its ideas and suggestions with the hierarchy. To adopt a fortress mentality and take this report as another criticism would mean the hierarchy has learned little from this terrible scandal.

Forum Questionnaire

The following are issues that will come before the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) at their June meeting. Cardinal George would like your feedback so he may help shape policy that reflects the point of view of the laity of the Archdiocese.

Victims:

Upon making an allegation, what assistance does a victim expect from the Archdiocese?

Comments:

Reassignment to ministry:

- 1) No priest should ever be reassigned to parochial ministry after a substantiated allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor.

<u>Circle one:</u>	Agree	Disagree
<u>Comments:</u>	92%	8%

- 2) No priest should ever be reassigned to *any other* ministry (office work, hospital chaplain, etc.) after a substantiated allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor.

<u>Circle one:</u>	Agree	Disagree
<u>Comments:</u>	64%	36%

- 3) Any reassignment to any ministry after a substantiated allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor must be accompanied by full public disclosure, and in consultation with parishes, victims, and other concerned parties.

<u>Circle one:</u>	Agree	Disagree
<u>Comments:</u>	81%	19%

- 4) Any reassignment to any ministry after a substantiated allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor must be approved by a diocesan fitness review board, which includes lay persons and experts not in the employ of the Archdiocese.

<u>Circle one:</u>	Agree	Disagree
<u>Comments:</u>	80%	20%

Reporting allegations:

- 5) All allegations involving sexual misconduct with a person still a minor should be reported to the civil authorities whether required by law or not.

<u>Circle one:</u>	Agree	Disagree
<u>Comments:</u>	92%	8%

- ⑥ All new allegations involving sexual misconduct with a person who was a minor when the alleged abuse occurred, but is now an adult, should be reported to the civil authorities.

Circle one: Agree Disagree
Comments: 88% 14%

- ⑦ The names of all clergy against whom any allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor has ever been made should be released to civil authorities.

Circle one: Agree Disagree
Comments: 78% 22%

- ⑧ The names of all persons who have made allegations of sexual misconduct against a priest should be released to the civil authorities.

Circle one: Agree Disagree
Comments: 76% 24%

- ⑨ Each diocese should have an independent review board to receive allegations against priests.

Circle one: Agree Disagree
Comments: 90% 10%

Accountability:

- ⑩ Bishops should commit themselves publicly to being accountable to each other and to their people for the implementation of their policies regarding sexual misconduct.

Circle one: Agree Disagree
Comments: 99% 1%

- ⑪ The USCCB should adopt "zero tolerance" and full-reporting policies.

Circle one: Agree Disagree
Comments: 87% 13%

Other comments:

Name (optional) _____

Parish (optional) _____

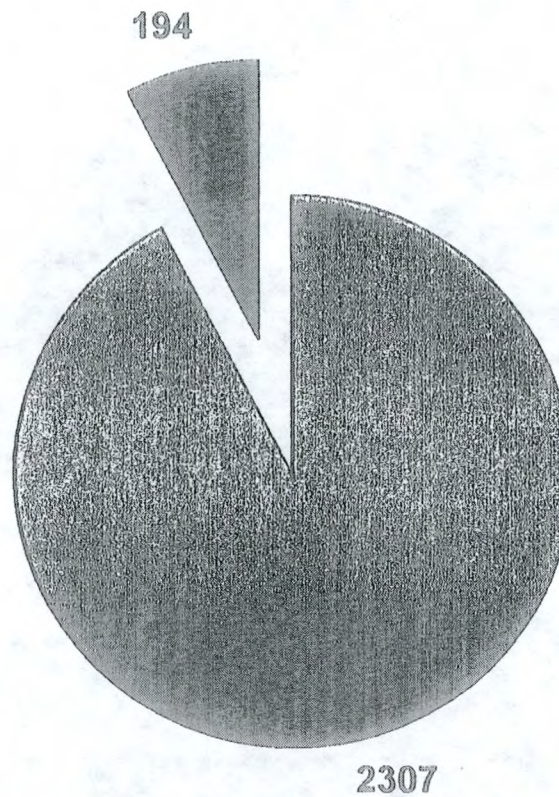
Return To:

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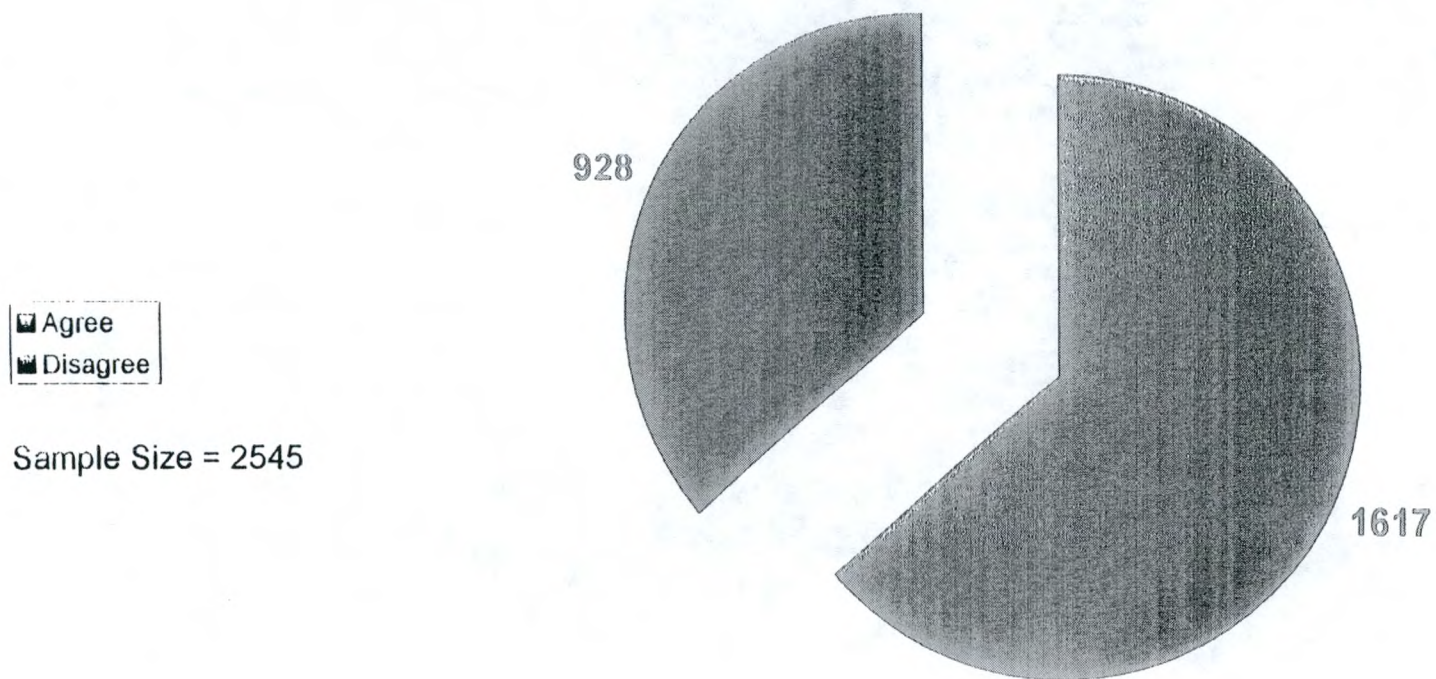
1. No priest should ever be reassigned to parochial ministry after a substantiated allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor.

☒ Agree
☐ Disagree

Sample Size = 2501



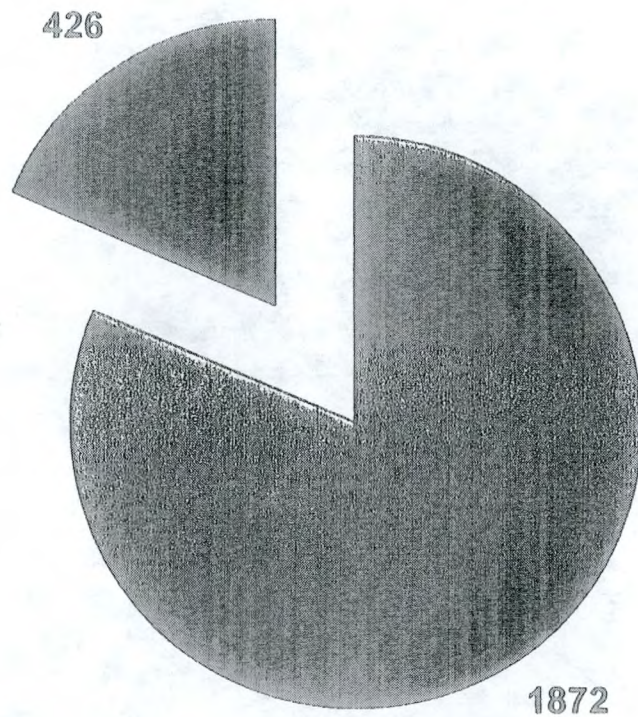
2. No priest should ever be reassigned to any other ministry (office work, hospital chaplain, etc.) after a substantiated allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor.



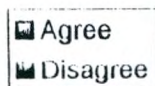
3. Any reassignment to any ministry after a substantiated allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor must be accompanied by full public disclosure, and in consultation with parishes, victims, and other concerned parties.

☒ Agree
☐ Disagree

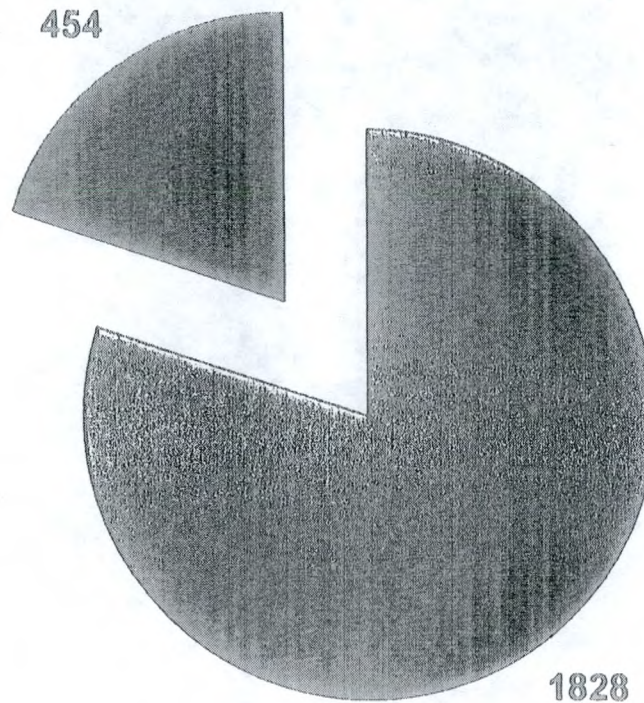
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4. Any reassignment to any ministry after a substantiated allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor must be approved by a diocesan fitness review board, which includes lay persons and experts not in the employment of the Archdiocese.



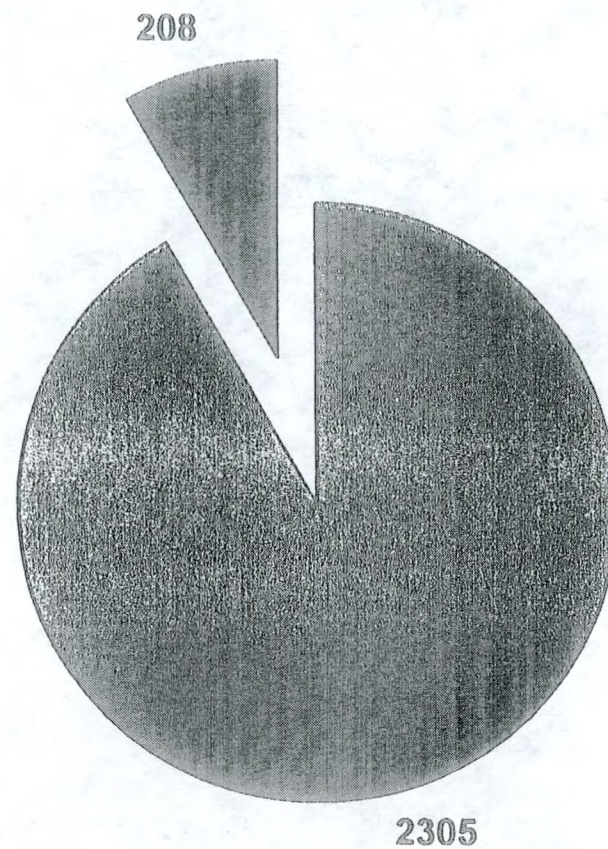
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5. All allegations involving sexual misconduct with a person still a minor should be reported to the civil authorities whether required by law or not.

☒ Agree
☐ Disagree

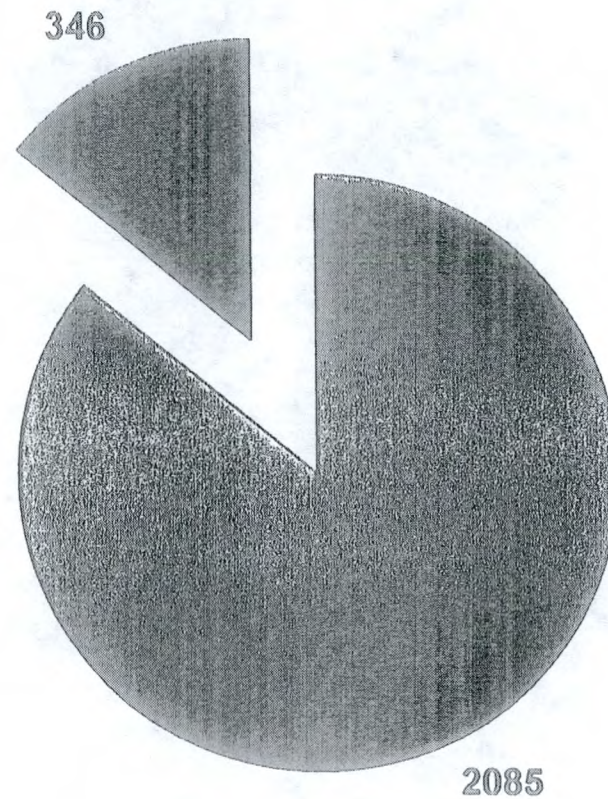
Sample Size = 2513



6. All new allegations involving sexual misconduct with a person who was a minor when the alleged abuse occurred, but is now an adult, should be reported to the civil authorities.

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree

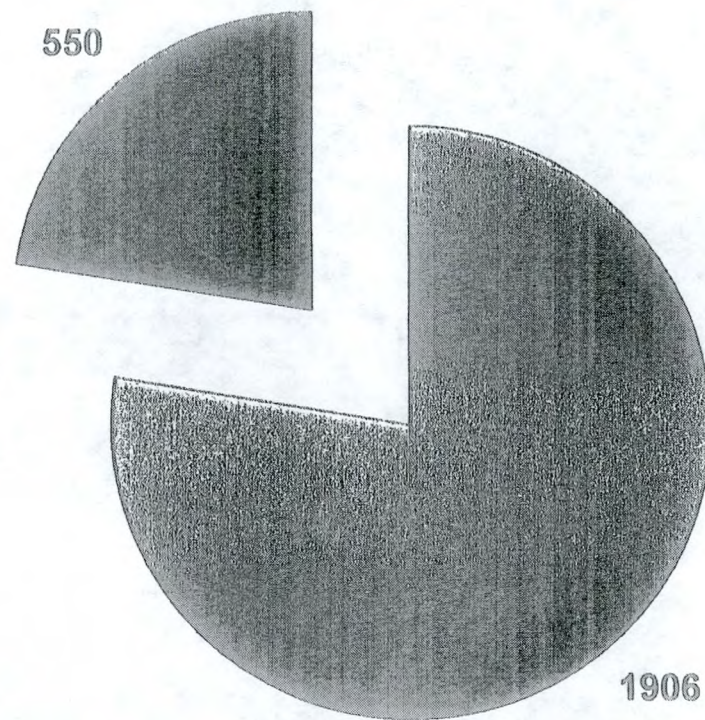
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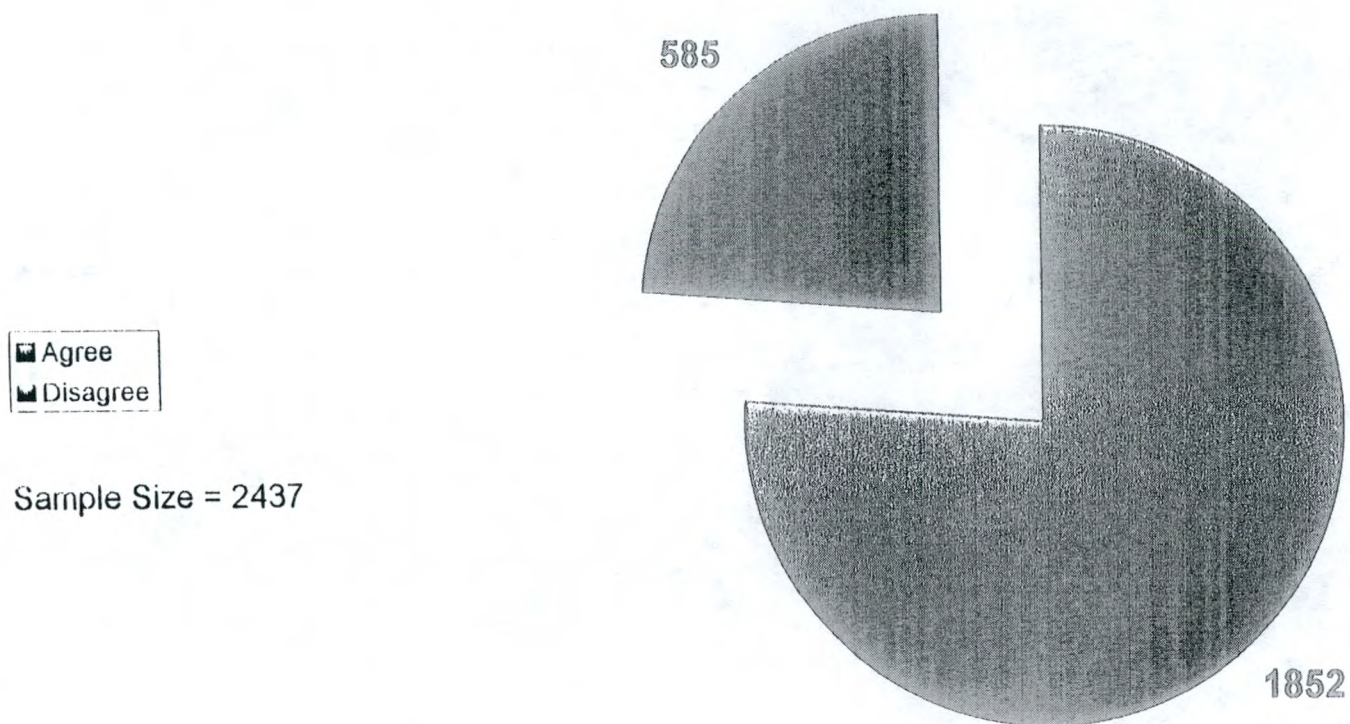
7. The names of all clergy against whom any allegation of sexual misconduct with a minor has ever been made should be released to civil authorities.

☒ Agree
☐ Disagree

Sample Size = 2456



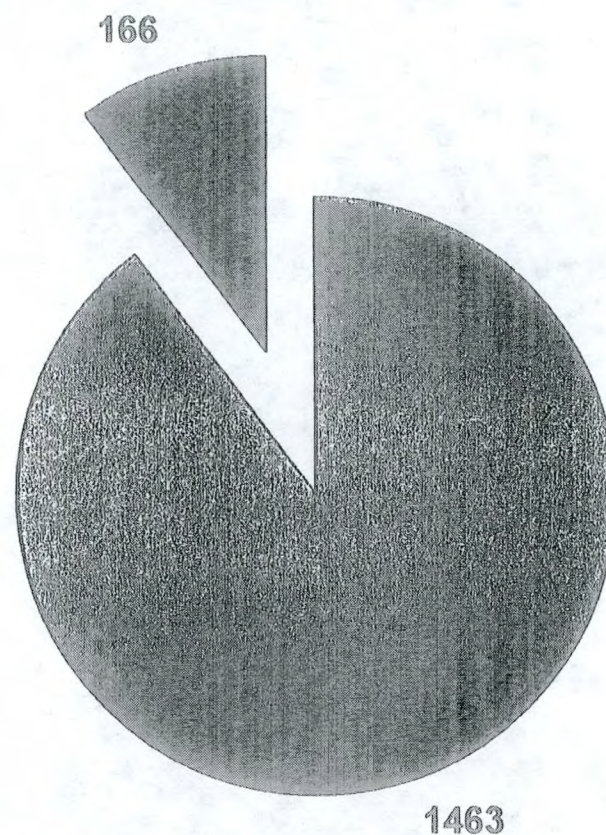
8. The names of all persons who have made allegations of sexual misconduct against a priest should be released to the civil authorities.



9. Each diocese should have an independent review board to receive allegations against priests.

☐ Agree
☐ Disagree

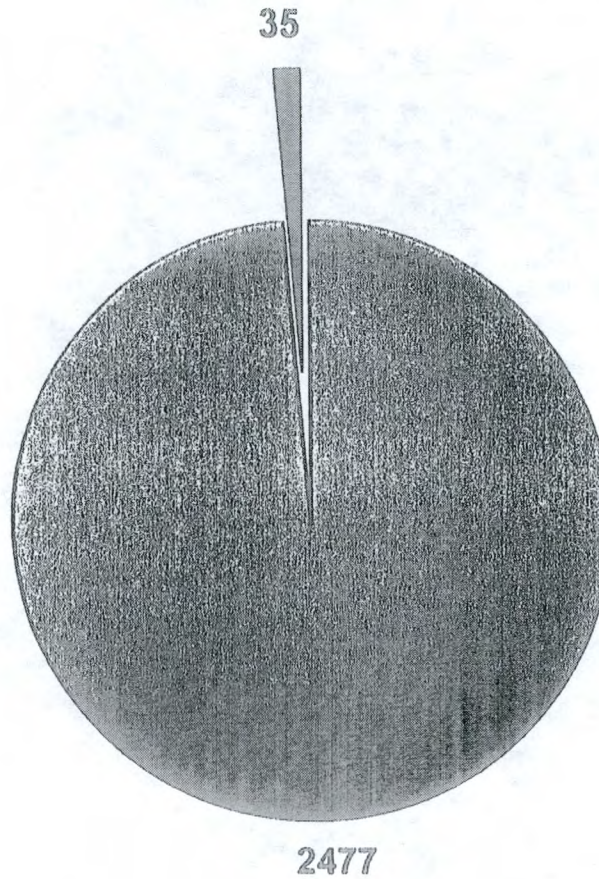
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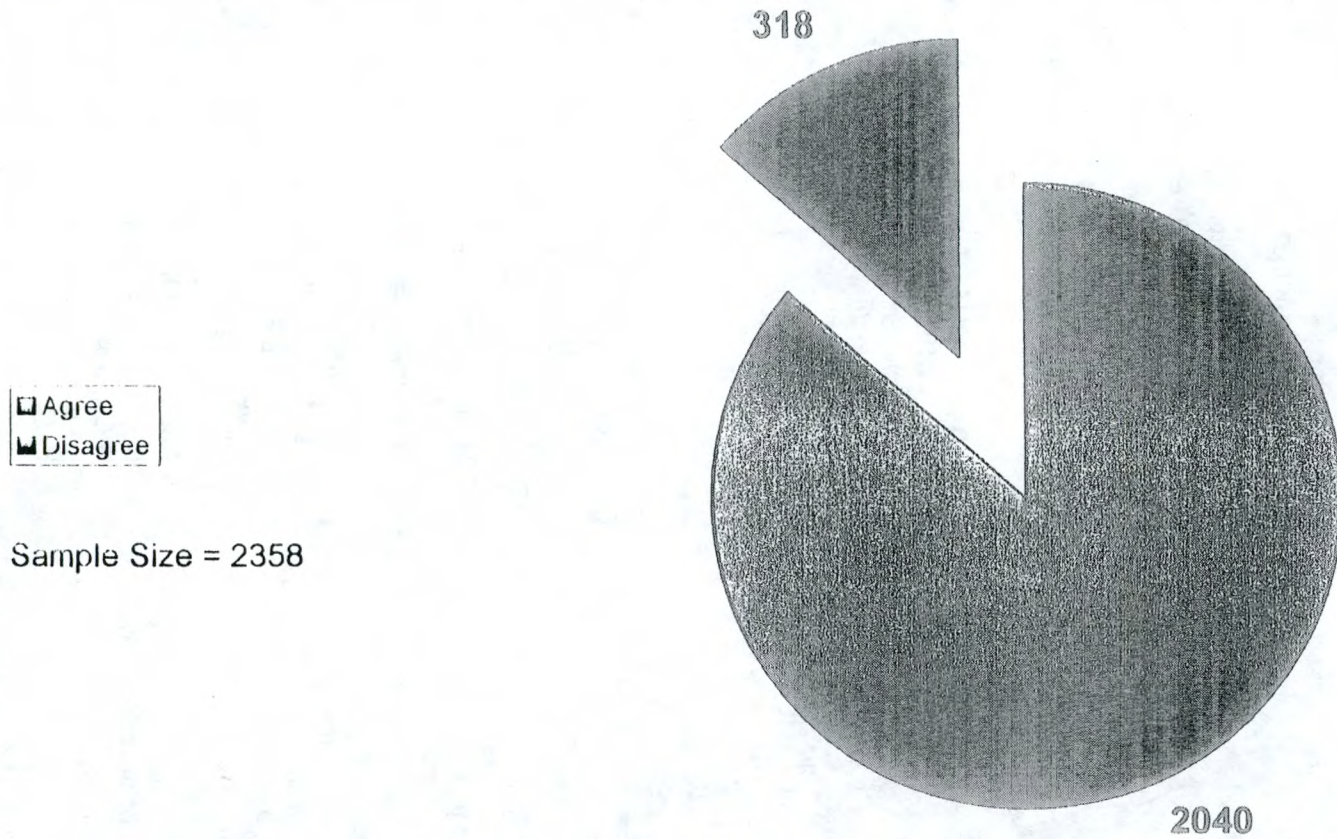
10. Bishops should commit themselves publicly to being accountable to each other and to their people for the implementation of their policies regarding sexual misconduct.

□ Agree
■ Disagree

Sample Size = 2512



11. The USCCB should adopt "zero tolerance" and full-reporting policies.



**PARISH
DATA COLLECTED
VOLUME 1**

1. St. Joseph, Libertyville
2. St. Gilbert, Grayslake
3. Church of the Holy Spirit, Schaumburg

**PARISH
DATA COLLECTED
VOLUME 2**

4. St. Cecilia, Mount Prospect
5. St. Joseph, Wilmette

**PARISH
DATA COLLECTED
VOLUME 3**

6. St. Margaret Mary, Chicago
7. St. Benedict, Chicago
8. Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago

**PARISH
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VOLUME 4**

9. Mary Seat of Wisdom Park Ridge
10. Queen of All Saints Basilica, Chicago
11. Our Lady of Grace, Chicago

**PARISH
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VOLUME 5**

12. St. Mary of the Angels, Chicago
13. Notre Dame de Chicago
14. St. Adelbert, Chicago
15. St. Constance, Chicago
16. St. Beatrice, Chicago

**PARISH
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VOLUME 6**

17. St. Edmund, Oak Park
18. St. Mary of Czestochowa, Cicero
19. St. Cletus, LaGrange

**PARISH
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VOLUME 7**

20. All Saints/St. Anthony Chicago
21. Five Holy Martyrs, Chicago
22. St. Bruno, Chicago
23. St. Nicholas of Tolentine Chicago
24. St. Symphorosa, Chicago
25. St. Denis, Chicago

**PARISH
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VOLUME 8**

26. St. Cajetan, Chicago
27. St. Germaine, Oak Lawn
28. St. Patricia, Hickory Hills
29. St. Damian, Oak Forest

**PARISH
DATA COLLECTED
VOLUME 9**

30. Sacred Heart, Palos Hills
1. St. Ambrose, Chicago
2. St. Thomas the Apostle Chicago
3. St. Dorothy, Chicago

**PARISH
DATA COLLECTED
VOLUME 10**

4. St. Kilian, Chicago
5. St. Columba, Chicago
6. Annunciata, Chicago
7. Infant Jesus of Prague, Flossmoor
8. St. Jude the Apostle, South Holland

**MAILED-IN DATA
VOLUME 11**

**MAILED-IN DATA
VOLUME 12**

**MAILED-IN DATA
VOLUME 13**

**ONLINE DATA
VOLUME 14**