**Module A – Background and Responses to Sexual Abuse of Minors**

**by Catholic Priests in the United States**

**Outline, Goals and Comments, Discussion Questions, References and Sources**

**Outline**

1. Causes and Contexts Methodology (A-3 to A-6)
2. Timeframes and Historical Changes in Abuse (A-7 to A-13)
3. Seminary Formation (A-14)
4. Reports and Response to Sexual Abuse (A-15 to A -18)
5. Development and Implementation of “The Five Principles” (A-19 to A-21)
6. Understanding of Abuse by Church Leaders and Ongoing Concerns (A-22 to A-24)
7. Summary and Discussion Questions (A-25 to A-26)

**Goals and Comments**

The goal of Module A is to provide a brief introduction to understanding Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States. It begins with the methodology utilized by researchers as they gathered data for the studies authorized by the USCCB. It then considers the changes in abuse patterns, which show that more than 90 percent of abuse took place between 1960 and 1984, though most of it was reported in the year 2002 or later. A brief reference is made to seminary formation. A full explanation of the response of seminaries is provided in Module B. Here more detail is provided about when abuse was reported and by whom. Early along the bishops’ conference developed “The Five Principles” for dealing with abuse. These principles were designed to guide bishops in their handling of reports of clergy abuse. Module A concludes by naming some of the problems encountered in implementing the guidelines and in understanding the gravity and extent of abuse.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What reflections do you have on your own experience of this time period?
2. What lessons can be learned from the changes in patterns of abuse over time?
3. How can the implementation of “The Five Principles” by dioceses be improved?
4. What are some of the major concerns about the understanding of sexual abuse?
5. How can the response by those who must be accountable for preventing sexual abuse be improved?

**Titles of Slides and References**

A-1: Module A

A-2: Title Slide

A-3: Main Sources of Data

A-4: Causes and Context – Methodology

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 2

A-5: Methodology, 2

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 2

A-6: Methodology, 3

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 2

A-7: Timeframes of First Abuse

A-8: Historical Changes in Abusers

A-9: The Rise and Fall of Abuse

Notes: For details, see Module “C,” especially slide C-26

A-10: National Patterns of Social Change

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 3

A-11: Distribution of Abuse – Incidence

A-12: Priests Who Have Allegations of Sexual Abuse against Them

Notes: Numbers represent severe offenses, e.g., those with penetration, multiple incidents

CHART SHOWS TOTAL NUMBER OF PRIESTS AND NUMBERS

OF DIOCESAN AND RELIGIOUS PRIESTS, 1950-2010

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Total Priests | Diocesan Priests | Religious Priests |
| 1950 | 42,970 |  |  |
| 1953 \* | 45,222 | 28,386 (62.8%) | 16,836 (37.2%) |
| 1960 | 53,796 | 32,569 (60.5%) | 21,227 (39.5%) |
| 1967 | 59,892 | 36,871 (61.6%) | 23,021 (38.4%) |
| 1970 | 59,192 | 37,272 (63.0%) | 21,920 (37.0%) |
| 1980 | 58,621 | 35,418 (60.4%) | 23,203 (39.6%) |
| 1985 | 57,317 | 35,052 (61.2%) | 22,265 (38.8%) |
| 1990 | 53,112 | 34,553 (65.1%) | 18,559 (34.9%) |
| 2000 | 46,405 | 30,940 (66.7%) | 15,465 (33.3%) |
| 2010 | 40,788 | 27,614 (67.7%) | 13,175 (32.3%) |

\* First year divide between diocesan and religious priests is reported; *Nature and Scope*, p. 39

A-13: Decline in Incidence,

A-14: Mainstream Seminary Training

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 46

A-15: Sexual Abuse and Civil Authorities

Notes: *Nature and Scope*, p. 39

A-16: National Patterns of Accusations: Extent of the Problem

Notes: *Causes and Context*, pp. 10, 27

Number of New Abuse Cases Occurring in the Designated Years

1985 – 1989 = 975

1990 – 2011 = 900

1,875 cases from 1985 to 2011

1990 – 1994 = 418

1995 – 1999 = 253

2000 – 2002 = 133

2004 – 2009 = 73

2010 – 2011 = 23

900 cases from 1990 to 2011

Source: For years 1990 – 2009: Causes and Context, p. 10, Figure 1.3

For years 2010 – 2011: CARA 2011 Annual Survey of Allegations and Costs,

Appendices B and C

Data were not collected in 2003. A significant number of events were reported in 1993, and a notable increase took place in 2002.

A-17: Reports and Response, mid-1990s

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 78

A-18: Nature and Scope: Reports of Abuse, by Year Reported

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 9

A-19: Development of the Five Principles

Notes: *Causes and Context*, pp. 82, 84, 86

A-20: “Five Principles” Adopted by the Bishops’ Conference

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 4

A-21: Problems with the Implementation of the Five Principles, 1990-2002

Notes: *Causes and Context*, p. 4

A-22: Diocesan Practices Changed Slowly

A-23: Understanding of Sexual Abuse by Church Leaders

Note: The harm done by sexual abuse of even one person is not to be underestimated.

A-24: Ongoing Concerns about Sexual Abuse

Note: A growing concern is sexual exploitation caused by use of pornography.

A-25: Summary of Background and Responses

A-26: Discussion Questions

**Sources**

This module and others prepared for use in seminaries and schools of theology are based primarily on the two reports presented to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops by the John Jay College Research Team, The City University of New York: *The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States*, 1950-2010, March, 2011 and *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States, 1950-2002*, February 2004.

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