

# Catholics paid \$615 million on abuse claims

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—The U.S. Catholic Church paid out \$615 million in costs related to sexual abuse claims in 2007, even as the number of victims coming forward fell for the third straight year, according to an annual report issued by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

More than \$526 million went to settlements between victims and Catholic dioceses and religious orders last year. That's an increase of 90 percent over 2006 and a new high for the U.S. church.

At the same time, according to the report, dioceses and religious orders received 691 credible reports of sexual abuse from 689 victims in 2007, down from 714 such reports in 2006.

Most of the sex attacks took place decades ago, according to the report, most frequently during the 1970s. Just five new instances of the molestation of a minor by Catholic staff during 2007 were reported.

The 84-page report is part of a yearly review inaugurated after the sexual abuse crisis exploded in the church in 2002. It is produced by the bishops'

National Review Board, with information provided by Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate and audits conducted by the independent Gavin Group Inc. of Boston.

Since 1950, sexual abuse-related costs have reached an estimated \$2.4 billion, and almost 14,000 abuse claims have been lodged, according to church figures.

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