

#### **4-25-08 - Talk about abuse is just the beginning (LETTERS)**

To the editor:

The pope's visit to the United States again brought to the surface the handling of the sex abuse scandal by the Catholic Church. The New York Times editorialized (April 17), "There has been no diocesan resolve to lay bare the hierarchy's guilt É The church faithful still await an accounting of the long years of cover-up."

In 1983 when I was chairman of the board of the National Catholic Reporter, a bishop phoned and said, "Your newspaper is doing a disservice to the Church" by reporting on a sex abuse scandal by a priest in Louisiana. I asked the bishop if he thought the story was true. When he replied, "Probably yes," I asked him what good was it to sweep the problem under a rug. The church, however, covered up the scandal for the next 20 years, with disastrous results to its moral authority.

Not until 2003, did the publicity about the scandals cause the U.S. bishops to form the lay-run National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People. The first report of the board in 2004 identified possible systemic problems that might have lead to the sex scandal and the cover-up: seminary life, celibacy, clericalism, diocesan bankruptcies, reliance upon attorneys, lack of episcopal accountability, diocesan councils, U.S. Conference of Bishops. In the 2005 report of the Review Board the issues were "still under review" and in the 2006 report, the systemic problems were not mentioned at all.

Some critics have blamed Pope Benedict personally

because he served for years as the prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, a Vatican office that oversees complaints against priests.

Now that Pope Benedict has acknowledged that the sex abuse scandal was "poorly handled" and has met with some victims of sexual abuse, perhaps he will address the reasons for the cover-up and take actions against the bishops who participated in the cover-up of priests who abused children.

John B. Caron

Greenwich

