

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

February 4, 2010 at 5:04pm

Just posted: A history of abuse in Bridgeport

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NCR Today

BishopAccountability.org, the Web site that has gathered the most comprehensive documentation available of the clergy sex abuse crisis, has just posted a history of the scandal as it occurred in the Diocese of Bridgeport, Conn.

The history, prepared by lawyers for plaintiffs in a case in 1999, was compiled to show patterns of behavior within the hierarchy as it attempted to deal with abusive priests. It's bias, of course, is that it was done from the plaintiff's point of view. But the history and the documentation (exhibits that include memos, letters, reports and such) are compelling regardless of the subjective nature of some of the narrative.

One can understand why Bishop William Lori fought so hard, up to the Supreme Court, to keep the documents secret. The piece posted on the Web site is but one of thousands released on order of the court. The history compiled here demonstrates once more the value of documentation in getting at the truth of the scandal that otherwise remains buried in diocesan vaults and files. No bishop is going to volunteer this kind of narrative to any review board or bishop-appointed investigators.

Some day in the future, when a courageous investigative writer/historian has the time and the stomach for compiling a comprehensive history of this awful period in the life of the Catholic Church in the United States, BishopAccountability.org will be an invaluable source. It is the work of Co-directors Terry McKiernan and Anne Barrett Doyle, who work in relative obscurity. Someday the church might even thank them for so diligently keeping the record. It ultimately will be vital to the process of learning something from this difficult period.

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