The number of sex abuse claims against Roman Catholic clergy dropped for the third consecutive year, but total payouts to victims nearly doubled to reach their highest level ever, according to a new report for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Dioceses and religious orders received 691 new allegations last year, compared with 714 in 2006. The overwhelming majority of claims date back decades. Settlements with victims increased by 90% over the same period, to more than $526 million — the largest amount for one year.

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