

# AMICUS CURIAE BRIEF FILED; CATHOLICS IN A FRENZY

In response to the Pennsylvania grand jury report on offending priests, the Catholic League filed an *amicus curiae* brief in the Western District of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Represented by the Pittsburgh law firm Porter Wright Morris & Arthur, the brief challenges several aspects of the grand jury report that was released by Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro.

The report has damaged the reputation of several persons and institutions, and has set the table for government officials to misuse the findings. A more complete rendering of the Catholic League brief can be found on pp. 4-5.

We believe that anyone who hurts a minor must be investigated and, when appropriate, prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Such investigations and prosecutions must however be conducted in accordance with the protections required by the United States Constitution and, in this instance, the Pennsylvania Constitution.

There is perhaps no greater threat to liberty than a politically motivated prosecutor. When those motivations extend beyond individuals who have engaged in criminal wrongdoing—targeting an entire religion—the threat is cataclysmic to all faiths.

This is not the first time that Attorney General Shapiro has used the power of his office to single out the Catholic Church in order to impugn its moral integrity, but it is his most egregious effort. We are asking the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to take the necessary steps to ensure a grand jury process grounded in the Constitutional protections of due process, reputation and religious freedom.

This grand jury probe has inspired other states to conduct their own investigations, all the while ignoring the abuse of minors in other religions, never mind in the public schools. It has also triggered a crazed reaction on the part of some lay Catholics, many of whom just want to bring down a bishop, regardless of whether he deserves to be unseated. Cardinal Donald Wuerl is a prime example of this frenzy (see p. 7).

Pope Francis weighed in attempting to put this issue in perspective. "In olden times these things were covered up—but were covered up also in families, when an uncle abused his niece, or a father raped his child; it was covered up because it was a very great shame. That is how people thought in the last century." He asked us not to use today's understanding of this issue to judge past decisions.

The Catholic League will never condone wrongdoing, and wants the guilty to pay. But we are also committed to defending the innocent; this is not an easy task in today's overheated climate. Making critical distinctions is more important now than ever before.