

# BENEDICT HITS A NERVE; CRITICS GO BALLISTIC

On April 11, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI released a 6,000-word essay on the origins of the clergy sexual abuse crisis. While many Catholics praised it—we certainly did—his familiar foes went bonkers.

Who are his familiar foes? Mostly left-wing Catholic intellectuals, pundits, and activists who are in a constant state of rebellion against the Church's teachings on sexuality. That so many of them teach theology at Catholic colleges and universities shows how deep the crisis is.

The critics focused on several issues. They were all united on one thing: Benedict should just shut up. They kept citing his pledge to "remain hidden to the world," and accused him of undercutting the authority of Pope Francis. All of a sudden their professed interest in dialogue withered.

In fact, all that the retired pope did was complement what the February summit in Rome did—he balanced the subject of clergy abuse by addressing its causes; the summit focused on the role of bishops in enabling the scandal. Of course, the sitting pope knew exactly what was about to be published; he was not undercut.

Bill Donohue released an 1,100-word defense of Benedict on April 17, taking on sixteen of the retired pope's critics.

The critics are living in a state of denial. They do not want to even mention the word "homosexual," much less probe the relationship between homosexual priests—who committed 80% of the abuse—and what to do about it.

They also want to negate the effects of the radical changes in our culture, which began in the 1960s. Indeed, they act as

though the scandal happened in a social vacuum. Some argue that sexual abuse occurred before the 1960s, which of course it did, but they fail to mention that its incidence was miniscule—the explosion occurred during the time of the sexual revolution.

Benedict's foes want to focus exclusively on the enabling bishops, and not the abusing priests. That's because it is impossible to dodge the issue of homosexuality when discussing the latter. All they want to do is talk about clericalism, which has never motivated anyone to sexually assault another human being.

Left-wing critics of Benedict also deny that moral theology collapsed in the 1970s. Not only did it happen, it was their ilk who promoted it.

The failure of Benedict's critics to address the spiritual dimension of the scandal is another problem. This is inexcusable. Benedict nicely outlined the diminution of respect for the Eucharist, and other matters.

The attacks on Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI are unfair. We are honored to defend him.