

# The Catholic League's Response to Voice of the Faithful's Criticism of Bishop Murphy

*(For more material related to Bishop Murphy, please go [here](#).)*

*(8/2003)*

## **VOTF CLAIMS:**

According to the [Massachusetts attorney general's] Report, Bishop Murphy played a key role in the failure to protect the children. As a consequence, he has abdicated his moral authority.

With regard to Bishop William Murphy, now of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, the report says:

And, even with undeniable information available to him on the risk of recidivism, Bishop Murphy continued to place a higher priority on preventing scandal and providing support to alleged abusers than on protecting children from sexual abuse. (P.39)

## **IN FACT:**

The above statement excerpted from Attorney General Reilly's report represents an editorial summary of Bishop Murphy's tenure in the Boston Archdiocese, and not a well-supported one. The attorney general's report itself offers virtually no evidence to support this sweeping charge: Bishop Murphy is treated only in a brief blurb on pages 39 and 40 of the report. Surely had the Massachusetts attorney general's office found any damning information about Bishop Murphy, this would be the place to publish it—both in the interest of truth and

in the interest of justifying the attorney general's use of taxpayer money for his grand jury investigation.

Even the book *Betrayal: The Crisis in the Catholic Church*, produced by staff of the *Boston Globe*, contains nothing that casts Bishop Murphy in a poor light. Of the few entries in the index for William F. Murphy, only one is unflattering, and it clearly refers not to Bishop Murphy but to the Rev. William F. Murphy, Delegate to the Cardinal—a different person altogether. In fact, one of the entries even corroborates Bishop Murphy's claim to have supervised John Geoghan's exit from the priesthood. Even the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Boston Globe's* compendium on the crisis has nothing bad to say about Bishop Murphy. But VOTF has already made up its mind about him.

#### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

Bishop Murphy misrepresented his role in the cover-up. In his "Report to the Diocese – Part one," (*Long Island Catholic* 7/2/03) Bishop Murphy says that a Delegate (at one time a priest also named William Murphy) was responsible for handling cases of sex abuse, and that the Delegate reported directly to the Cardinal. However, the Attorney General's Report says that... "Although Cardinal Law delegated responsibility for handling clergy sexual abuse matters, his senior managers [i.e. bishops] kept the Cardinal apprised of such matters either directly or through the Vicar of Administration, who supervised the ... Delegate." (P 31) Bishop Murphy himself became Vicar of Administration in 1993 [to 2001]. (P 38)

#### **IN FACT:**

Yes, Cardinal Law was "apprised of such matters...through the Vicar of Administration," as it is stated on p.31 of Attorney General Reilly's report. But this was not the procedure during Bishop Murphy's tenure. What VOTF leaves out is the following,

which comes from the very same paragraph in Reilly's report:

For the most part, [Cardinal Law's] involvement included the review and approval of recommendations on such matters from his Vicar of Administration...or after the adoption of the 1993 policy, from the Review Board.

As Bishop Murphy said, the 1993 policy was in place when he became Vicar of Administration. His comments are not inconsistent with Reilly's report.

#### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

The Report also says that the "Delegate ... sometimes discussed clergy sexual abuse matters directly with the Cardinal, and on other occasions conveyed information to the Cardinal through Bishop Murphy.(P 38) The report further says that the Delegate "...generally kept both the Cardinal and Bishop Murphy apprised of significant clergy sexual abuse matters." (P 48)

#### **IN FACT:**

Bishop Murphy never claimed that he had no knowledge of abuse cases. In his "Report to the Diocese," he wrote,

The Vicar General did not deal with accused priests, **except for the specific cases described below**, none of which involved a reassignment to a pastoral position [emphasis added].

Bishop Murphy did not issue the blanket denial of involvement that VOTF suggests. Furthermore, Bishop Murphy writes,

While I was not involved in handling priests, allegations against them, evaluations of them or any decision regarding their possible return to pastoral ministry, Cardinal Law did on occasion ask my counsel or gave me some specific tasks that dealt with a few of these priests after they had been removed from pastoral ministry.

One of the few such instances mentioned in the report is Bishop Murphy's role in revoking a Fr. Francis Murphy's appointment to a position because he and Cardinal Law "were concerned that [the abusive priest] could still have contact with children through his assignment" (Attorney General's report, p. 64).

In yet another instance, Bishop Murphy's interaction with a priest who had been removed from the ministry is completely to his credit. Commenting on his efforts to remove John Geoghan from his position at the Office of Senior Priests, Bishop Murphy writes:

I met with John Geoghan several times over five or six months trying to get him to resign. Whether I cajoled him by reference to family or pressed him with strong arguments, he kept refusing to respond to that request. With the Cardinal's permission, I removed him against his will. By that point he was living in his family home. Later I worked with the Cardinal on the petition to the Pope who removed him from the priesthood in response to our report and request.

#### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

**Bishop Murphy abdicated his duty to protect the children by ignoring the criminal nature of child abuse.** In denouncing Bishop Murphy's actions, the Report states:

"The problem was compounded because Bishop Murphy failed to recognize clergy sexual abuse of children as conduct deserving an investigation and prosecution by public authorities. Instead he viewed such crimes committed by priests as conduct deserving an internal pastoral response." (P. 39)

#### **IN FACT:**

Until recently the Commonwealth of Massachusetts did not require clergy to report abuse; and the internal pastoral response was at the time the norm in all religions. That notwithstanding, the comments about Bishop Murphy amount only to bald assertion. If Attorney General Reilly had specific examples of this behavior, presumably he would have included them in such a comprehensive report. However, the evidence simply is not there.

#### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

Bishop Murphy showed a regrettable lapse of judgment when he assigned an alleged abuser to oversee abusers.

In an apparent lapse of judgment, Bishop Murphy was involved in having a priest named Melvin Surette [sic], who had "been accused himself of sexually abusing children, to be Assistant Delegate responsible for arranging suitable job placements for priests found to have engaged in sexual abuse of children." (P.38) The Attorney General's report further comments that, "The Archdiocese documents relating to Surette's [sic] assignment do not show any consideration of the propriety of having a man accused of sexually abusing children significantly involved in finding suitable job placements for other alleged abusers. Further, there appears to have been no appreciation of the inherent conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety in having a priest under investigation by the Delegate working as Assistant to the Delegate."(39)

#### **IN FACT:**

Bishop Murphy wrote in his "Report to the Diocese":

One of the priests, Melvin Surette, made several proposals to the Cardinal seeking to have a nonpastoral ministry in the chancery. One of his proposals was that he would have an

office under the supervision of the Delegate. Working from that office, he would seek out appropriate job opportunities for priests on leave. Such jobs would have to be such that there would be no possibility of contact with minors. The Chancellor and I approved an expenditure of about \$14,000 for him to set up such an office under the supervision of the delegate. That proposal, to my memory, never materialized and the money was never spent.

#### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

**It is our firm conviction that Bishop Murphy is not meeting the spiritual and material needs of our Parishioners. Our diocese is suffering under his rule. We are without a spiritual leader.**

Bishop Murphy has not satisfactorily addressed the needs of the diocese, especially those of the poor. The Bishop's extravagance in the renovation and furnishing of his own lavish quarters has compounded the problem. The Bishop's Appeal is down; Parish collections are down; donations made by Long Island Voice of the Faithful to Catholic Charities have been returned by Bishop Murphy because "it is important to maintain a sense of unity of mission." Could this be a reason why Mass attendance is also down? Bishop Murphy's decisions and policies have hurt those in need and hindered the ability of the diocese to raise funds from the laity.

#### **IN FACT:**

Bringing up the bishop's residence is not only petty; it relies on the gross distortions of the likes of *Newsday's* Jimmy Breslin. As for Bishop Murphy's decision to reject VOTF's donations: this is a sound policy. Few institutions are willing to be bullied by parallel fundraisers who have strings attached to their money and dubious agendas. Complaints like these seem tacked onto VOTF's manifesto for good measure, in

case scandal-related accusations against Bishop Murphy fail.

### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

**Bishop Murphy's credibility has been damaged beyond repair.** On numerous occasions, and in statements published in the Long Island Catholic, Bishop Murphy has downplayed his role in the Boston cover-up. An objective reading of the Attorney General's Report clearly brands our bishop as one of the key wrong doers.

### **IN FACT:**

This is a strong statement, and it is totally unfounded. An objective reading of the Attorney General's Report leaves one with the conclusion that Reilly did not have the evidence to back up his rhetoric about Bishop Murphy. An objective reading of VOTF's interpretation of the report only proves that point: why else would VOTF resort to grasping at straws, misleading logic, and guilt by association?

Furthermore, Bishop Murphy's efforts to clean up the mess he inherited when he became bishop of Rockville Centre were exemplary. The Diocese's statement on the Massachusetts Attorney General's report puts it well:

What is more relevant to Long Islanders is Bishop Murphy's leadership and actions on issues involving sexual abuse since his appointment to the Diocese of Rockville Centre in September, 2001. To start, Bishop Murphy reviewed the files of all priests in the diocese and removed from ministry anyone who had an allegation of sex abuse of a minor in his personnel file. He revamped the diocesan procedures for dealing with sex abuse of minors, established a hot line for reporting incidents of sexual abuse and appointed a Pastoral Intervention Team to report allegations to law enforcement and to work with victims and the priests accused. All of this was in place more than a month before the bishops met in Dallas in

June 2001.

Bishop Murphy's actions in Rockville Centre were swift and responsible, to say the least. He reined in the abusive priests who remained undisciplined by his predecessor, Bishop McGann; in fact, he removed two priests within two months of his arrival. Bishop Murphy was quick to enact policies to protect the people of his diocese.

**VOTF CLAIMS:**

Bishop Murphy's continued presence thwarts the healing our diocese needs. Our diocese is scourged with disunity. Faithful Catholics are disillusioned. Attendance is down, contributions are down. We are in a state of disarray. There is a profound and pervasive distrust for our spiritual leader. Polls overwhelmingly support his resignation. We desperately need new leadership.

**IN FACT:**

*Which* polls overwhelmingly support Bishop Murphy's resignation? Polls of VOTF members, perhaps; those would hardly be representative of the Catholic population in general, especially when the truth is known about Bishop Murphy. Even so, being a bishop is not a popularity contest; to subject episcopal tenure to poll results would unnecessarily politicize the episcopacy. Who would like to see bishops molding their teachings to pander like politicians?

**VOTF CLAIMS:**

Bishop Murphy has contributed to the American Bishops' loss of moral authority. In a wider context, Bishop William Murphy, along with the Bishops of the United States, has lost the moral high ground that used to give weight to statements

concerning issues such as poverty in our country, war, nuclear weapons and the death penalty. Whether or not people agreed with the Bishops' positions on these issues, the statements were debated both within and without the Catholic Church and in the pages of many respected publications. This, unfortunately, seems no longer to be the case.

### **IN FACT:**

It is notable that VOTF concentrates only on the bishops' positions on "poverty in our country, war, nuclear weapons and the death penalty." They are all surely issues worthy of the bishops' attention. But why no mention of such issues as abortion, homosexuality, human cloning, or euthanasia? Indeed, soon after the scandal reached its peak, major newspapers applauded bishops who spoke out against the war. At that time, few used the scandal to silence the Church. However, when the Church recently spoke out on gay marriage, few could resist telling the Church to mind its own business. Only then did commentators claim that the Church should not speak, in light of the sex abuse scandal. The fact that VOTF is unconcerned by efforts to silence the Church on sexual issues is very telling.

William Donohue's comments in the August 3 edition of the *New York Times* sum up the entire matter succinctly:

"I am not interested in someone's editorial opinion," Mr. Donohue said. "I want evidence."

"What we have here is classic McCarthyism, guilt by association," Mr. Donohue said later in the interview. "Simply because Bishop Murphy served in Boston, he is presumed guilty."

---

▪ [Read about the Catholic League's petition drive in](#)

## [support of Bishop Murphy](#)

### More material on Bishop Murphy, Newsday, and Voice of the Faithful

- [LAST-DITCH ATTEMPT TO SMEAR BISHOP MURPHY](#) (2/11/04)
  - [CHECKMATE: NEWSDAY AND VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL](#) (1/12/04)
  - [REPORT ON BISHOPS IS ENCOURAGING](#) (1/6/04)
  - [CATHOLIC MALCONTENTS ATTACK BISHOP MURPHY](#) (12/4/03)
  - [6,000 LONG ISLAND CATHOLICS SIGN PETITION IN SUPPORT OF BISHOP MURPHY](#) (9/25/03)
  - [THE EVIDENCE MOUNTS: BISHOP MURPHY IS INNOCENT](#) (8/7/03)
  - [CATHOLICS RALLY TO SUPPORT BISHOP MURPHY](#) (7/29/03)
  - [PETITION DRIVE TO SUPPORT BISHOP MURPHY BEGINS](#) (7/25/03)
  - [GANGING UP ON BISHOP MURPHY](#) (7/24/03)
  - [LONG ISLAND PASTORS NOTIFIED OF NEWSDAY'S DEFENSE OF BRESLIN'S BIGOTRY AND DISTORTIONS](#) (12/26/02)
- 

# The Catholic League's Response to Voice of the Faithful's Criticism of Bishop Murphy

8/2003)

## VOTF CLAIMS:

According to the [Massachusetts attorney general's] Report, Bishop Murphy played a key role in the failure to protect the children. As a consequence, he has abdicated his moral authority.

With regard to Bishop William Murphy, now of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, the report says:

And, even with undeniable information available to him on the risk of recidivism, Bishop Murphy continued to place a higher priority on preventing scandal and providing support to alleged abusers than on protecting children from sexual abuse. (P.39)

#### **IN FACT:**

The above statement excerpted from Attorney General Reilly's report represents an editorial summary of Bishop Murphy's tenure in the Boston Archdiocese, and not a well-supported one. The attorney general's report itself offers virtually no evidence to support this sweeping charge: Bishop Murphy is treated only in a brief blurb on pages 39 and 40 of the report. Surely had the Massachusetts attorney general's office found any damning information about Bishop Murphy, this would be the place to publish it—both in the interest of truth and in the interest of justifying the attorney general's use of taxpayer money for his grand jury investigation.

Even the book *Betrayal: The Crisis in the Catholic Church*, produced by staff of the *Boston Globe*, contains nothing that casts Bishop Murphy in a poor light. Of the few entries in the index for William F. Murphy, only one is unflattering, and it clearly refers not to Bishop Murphy but to the Rev. William F. Murphy, Delegate to the Cardinal—a different person altogether. In fact, one of the entries even corroborates Bishop Murphy's claim to have supervised John Geoghan's exit from the priesthood. Even the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Boston Globe's* compendium on the crisis has nothing bad to say about Bishop Murphy. But VOTF has already made up its mind about him.

#### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

Bishop Murphy misrepresented his role in the cover-up. In his

“Report to the Diocese – Part one,” (*Long Island Catholic* 7/2/03) Bishop Murphy says that a Delegate (at one time a priest also named William Murphy) was responsible for handling cases of sex abuse, and that the Delegate reported directly to the Cardinal. However, the Attorney General’s Report says that... “Although Cardinal Law delegated responsibility for handling clergy sexual abuse matters, his senior managers [i.e. bishops] kept the Cardinal apprised of such matters either directly or through the Vicar of Administration, who supervised the ... Delegate.” (P 31) Bishop Murphy himself became Vicar of Administration in 1993 [to 2001]. (P 38)

#### **IN FACT:**

Yes, Cardinal Law was “apprised of such matters...through the Vicar of Administration,” as it is stated on p.31 of Attorney General Reilly’s report. But this was not the procedure during Bishop Murphy’s tenure. What VOTF leaves out is the following, which comes from the very same paragraph in Reilly’s report:

For the most part, [Cardinal Law’s] involvement included the review and approval of recommendations on such matters from his Vicar of Administration...or after the adoption of the 1993 policy, from the Review Board.

As Bishop Murphy said, the 1993 policy was in place when he became Vicar of Administration. His comments are not inconsistent with Reilly’s report.

#### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

The Report also says that the “Delegate ... sometimes discussed clergy sexual abuse matters directly with the Cardinal, and on other occasions conveyed information to the Cardinal through Bishop Murphy.(P 38) The report further says that the Delegate “...generally kept both the Cardinal and Bishop Murphy apprised of significant clergy sexual abuse matters.” (P 48)

## **IN FACT:**

Bishop Murphy never claimed that he had no knowledge of abuse cases. In his "Report to the Diocese," he wrote,

The Vicar General did not deal with accused priests, **except for the specific cases described below**, none of which involved a reassignment to a pastoral position [emphasis added].

Bishop Murphy did not issue the blanket denial of involvement that VOTF suggests. Furthermore, Bishop Murphy writes,

While I was not involved in handling priests, allegations against them, evaluations of them or any decision regarding their possible return to pastoral ministry, Cardinal Law did on occasion ask my counsel or gave me some specific tasks that dealt with a few of these priests after they had been removed from pastoral ministry.

One of the few such instances mentioned in the report is Bishop Murphy's role in revoking a Fr. Francis Murphy's appointment to a position because he and Cardinal Law "were concerned that [the abusive priest] could still have contact with children through his assignment" (Attorney General's report, p. 64).

In yet another instance, Bishop Murphy's interaction with a priest who had been removed from the ministry is completely to his credit. Commenting on his efforts to remove John Geoghan from his position at the Office of Senior Priests, Bishop Murphy writes:

I met with John Geoghan several times over five or six months trying to get him to resign. Whether I cajoled him by reference to family or pressed him with strong arguments, he kept refusing to respond to that request. With the Cardinal's permission, I removed him against his will. By that point he was living in his family home. Later I worked with the Cardinal on the petition to the Pope who removed him from the

priesthood in response to our report and request.

**VOTF CLAIMS:**

**Bishop Murphy abdicated his duty to protect the children by ignoring the criminal nature of child abuse.** In denouncing Bishop Murphy's actions, the Report states:

*"The problem was compounded because Bishop Murphy failed to recognize clergy sexual abuse of children as conduct deserving an investigation and prosecution by public authorities. Instead he viewed such crimes committed by priests as conduct deserving an internal pastoral response."*  
(P. 39)

**IN FACT:**

Until recently the Commonwealth of Massachusetts did not require clergy to report abuse; and the internal pastoral response was at the time the norm in all religions. That notwithstanding, the comments about Bishop Murphy amount only to bald assertion. If Attorney General Reilly had specific examples of this behavior, presumably he would have included them in such a comprehensive report. However, the evidence simply is not there.

**VOTF CLAIMS:**

Bishop Murphy showed a regrettable lapse of judgment when he assigned an alleged abuser to oversee abusers.

*In an apparent lapse of judgment, Bishop Murphy was involved in having a priest named Melvin Surette [sic], who had "been accused himself of sexually abusing children, to be Assistant Delegate responsible for arranging suitable job placements for priests found to have engaged in sexual abuse of children." (P.38) The Attorney General's report further comments that, "The Archdiocese documents relating to*

*Surette's [sic] assignment do not show any consideration of the propriety of having a man accused of sexually abusing children significantly involved in finding suitable job placements for other alleged abusers. Further, there appears to have been no appreciation of the inherent conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety in having a priest under investigation by the Delegate working as Assistant to the Delegate.”(39)*

## **IN FACT:**

Bishop Murphy wrote in his “Report to the Diocese”:

One of the priests, Melvin Surette, made several proposals to the Cardinal seeking to have a nonpastoral ministry in the chancery. One of his proposals was that he would have an office under the supervision of the Delegate. Working from that office, he would seek out appropriate job opportunities for priests on leave. Such jobs would have to be such that there would be no possibility of contact with minors. The Chancellor and I approved an expenditure of about \$14,000 for him to set up such an office under the supervision of the delegate. That proposal, to my memory, never materialized and the money was never spent.

## **VOTF CLAIMS:**

**It is our firm conviction that Bishop Murphy is not meeting the spiritual and material needs of our Parishioners. Our diocese is suffering under his rule. We are without a spiritual leader.**

Bishop Murphy has not satisfactorily addressed the needs of the diocese, especially those of the poor. The Bishop's extravagance in the renovation and furnishing of his own lavish quarters has compounded the problem. The Bishop's Appeal is down; Parish collections are down; donations made by Long Island Voice of the Faithful to Catholic Charities have

been returned by Bishop Murphy because "it is important to maintain a sense of unity of mission." Could this be a reason why Mass attendance is also down? Bishop Murphy's decisions and policies have hurt those in need and hindered the ability of the diocese to raise funds from the laity.

#### **IN FACT:**

Bringing up the bishop's residence is not only petty; it relies on the gross distortions of the likes of *Newsday's* Jimmy Breslin. As for Bishop Murphy's decision to reject VOTF's donations: this is a sound policy. Few institutions are willing to be bullied by parallel fundraisers who have strings attached to their money and dubious agendas. Complaints like these seem tacked onto VOTF's manifesto for good measure, in case scandal-related accusations against Bishop Murphy fail.

#### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

**Bishop Murphy's credibility has been damaged beyond repair.** On numerous occasions, and in statements published in the *Long Island Catholic*, Bishop Murphy has downplayed his role in the Boston cover-up. An objective reading of the Attorney General's Report clearly brands our bishop as one of the key wrong doers.

#### **IN FACT:**

This is a strong statement, and it is totally unfounded. An objective reading of the Attorney General's Report leaves one with the conclusion that Reilly did not have the evidence to back up his rhetoric about Bishop Murphy. An objective reading of VOTF's interpretation of the report only proves that point: why else would VOTF resort to grasping at straws, misleading logic, and guilt by association?

Furthermore, Bishop Murphy's efforts to clean up the mess he inherited when he became bishop of Rockville Centre were exemplary. The Diocese's statement on the Massachusetts

Attorney General's report puts it well:

What is more relevant to Long Islanders is Bishop Murphy's leadership and actions on issues involving sexual abuse since his appointment to the Diocese of Rockville Centre in September, 2001. To start, Bishop Murphy reviewed the files of all priests in the diocese and removed from ministry anyone who had an allegation of sex abuse of a minor in his personnel file. He revamped the diocesan procedures for dealing with sex abuse of minors, established a hot line for reporting incidents of sexual abuse and appointed a Pastoral Intervention Team to report allegations to law enforcement and to work with victims and the priests accused. All of this was in place more than a month before the bishops met in Dallas in June 2001.

Bishop Murphy's actions in Rockville Centre were swift and responsible, to say the least. He reined in the abusive priests who remained undisciplined by his predecessor, Bishop McGann; in fact, he removed two priests within two months of his arrival. Bishop Murphy was quick to enact policies to protect the people of his diocese.

#### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

Bishop Murphy's continued presence thwarts the healing our diocese needs. Our diocese is scourged with disunity. Faithful Catholics are disillusioned. Attendance is down, contributions are down. We are in a state of disarray. There is a profound and pervasive distrust for our spiritual leader. Polls overwhelmingly support his resignation. We desperately need new leadership.

#### **IN FACT:**

*Which* polls overwhelmingly support Bishop Murphy's resignation? Polls of VOTF members, perhaps; those would hardly be representative of the Catholic population in general, especially when the truth is known about Bishop

Murphy. Even so, being a bishop is not a popularity contest; to subject episcopal tenure to poll results would unnecessarily politicize the episcopacy. Who would like to see bishops molding their teachings to pander like politicians?

#### **VOTF CLAIMS:**

Bishop Murphy has contributed to the American Bishops' loss of moral authority. In a wider context, Bishop William Murphy, along with the Bishops of the United States, has lost the moral high ground that used to give weight to statements concerning issues such as poverty in our country, war, nuclear weapons and the death penalty. Whether or not people agreed with the Bishops' positions on these issues, the statements were debated both within and without the Catholic Church and in the pages of many respected publications. This, unfortunately, seems no longer to be the case.

#### **IN FACT:**

It is notable that VOTF concentrates only on the bishops' positions on "poverty in our country, war, nuclear weapons and the death penalty." They are all surely issues worthy of the bishops' attention. But why no mention of such issues as abortion, homosexuality, human cloning, or euthanasia? Indeed, soon after the scandal reached its peak, major newspapers applauded bishops who spoke out against the war. At that time, few used the scandal to silence the Church. However, when the Church recently spoke out on gay marriage, few could resist telling the Church to mind its own business. Only then did commentators claim that the Church should not speak, in light of the sex abuse scandal. The fact that VOTF is unconcerned by efforts to silence the Church on sexual issues is very telling.

William Donohue's comments in the August 3 edition of the *New York Times* sum up the entire matter succinctly:

“I am not interested in someone’s editorial opinion,” Mr. Donohue said. “I want evidence.”

“What we have here is classic McCarthyism, guilt by association,” Mr. Donohue said later in the interview. “Simply because Bishop Murphy served in Boston, he is presumed guilty.”

- 
- [Read about the Catholic League’s petition drive in support of Bishop Murphy](#)

## **More material on Bishop Murphy, Newsday, and Voice of the Faithful**

- [LAST-DITCH ATTEMPT TO SMEAR BISHOP MURPHY](#) (2/11/04)
  - [CHECKMATE: NEWSDAY AND VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL](#) (1/12/04)
  - [REPORT ON BISHOPS IS ENCOURAGING](#) (1/6/04)
  - [CATHOLIC MALCONTENTS ATTACK BISHOP MURPHY](#) (12/4/03)
  - [6,000 LONG ISLAND CATHOLICS SIGN PETITION IN SUPPORT OF BISHOP MURPHY](#) (9/25/03)
  - [THE EVIDENCE MOUNTS: BISHOP MURPHY IS INNOCENT](#) (8/7/03)
  - [CATHOLICS RALLY TO SUPPORT BISHOP MURPHY](#) (7/29/03)
  - [PETITION DRIVE TO SUPPORT BISHOP MURPHY BEGINS](#) (7/25/03)
  - [GANGING UP ON BISHOP MURPHY](#) (7/24/03)
  - [LONG ISLAND PASTORS NOTIFIED OF NEWSDAY’S DEFENSE OF BRESLIN’S BIGOTRY AND DISTORTIONS](#) (12/26/02)
-

# Popular Thriller Reprises Pius XII Slanders

*by Kenneth D. Whitehead*

*(Catalyst 7/2003)*

*Daniel Silva, The Confessor,  
New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2003.  
HB; 401 pages. \$29.95.*

What Notre Dame philosophy professor Ralph McInerny has aptly called "the defamation of Pius XII"—in his excellent book with that title—has unfortunately been so widely successful in the culture at large that many people simply take it for granted that Pope Pius XII was guilty of a grave historical wrong in not speaking out more strongly against Adolf Hitler's efforts to exterminate the Jews. The recent film "Amen," by movie director Constantin Costa-Gravas, like the earlier play on which it is based, Rolf Hochhuth's "The Deputy," depicted Pius XII as a virtual accomplice in his willingness to mute public criticism of Hitler and the Nazis. Supposedly, the wartime pope was willing to remain silent both because he was pro-German and because he was acting in the interests of combating Communism through the advance of the German army into the Soviet Union. Pius XII is also severely criticized as well for maintaining Vatican neutrality in the war at a time when, as a moral leader, many say, he should have been more vigorously speaking out against the evil of the Nazis' "final solution." Evil the Nazis' final solution assuredly was. The alleged guilty silence and passivity of Pope Pius XII in the face of it is something else again, however, something a vast contemporary literature has examined in great detail. Far from the case against Pius XII having been proved by the various anti-Pius writers, though, rather the contrary has turned out to be the case: the less highly touted pro-Pius writers really

have the better of the argument, as the present writer among others has shown in a review-article covering the principal recent anti-Pius and pro-Pius books (this review-article is available [here](#)).

The fact that the case against Pius XII does not hold up on the evidence—that the continuing denigration of the wartime pope is a defamation—has not prevented those convinced of the pope's guilt from going ahead to trumpet it to the four winds anyway. Such is the approach of the recent book by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair*. Goldhagen relies on sources whose evidence has been shown to be thin, shaky, biased, unsubstantiated, and even patently false—and then he goes on to accumulate many more errors of fact and judgment of his own. Just as the myths of Aryan racial superiority and Jewish racial pollution drove the Nazi extermination program, so the myth of the supposed complicity of Pius XII in the crimes of the Nazis drives the continuing campaign to vilify the good and honorable pope and man that Pius XII was. A scapegoat is needed to explain the failure of European civilization to counter the murderous ideology of the Nazis, and so the wartime head of the Catholic Church is targeted.

One of the newest entries into the field of Pius XII defamation is a new thriller novel entitled *The Confessor* written by Daniel Silva. It appeared on the New York Times bestseller list almost as soon as it was published. Its author has enjoyed a growing reputation as a writer of popular thrillers, and he is, in fact, a skilled practitioner of the genre. In two recent books of his, *The Kill Artist* and *The English Assassin*, he introduced a superhero operative, Gabriel Allon, who is a talented restorer of fine paintings by day but is also a clandestine Israeli agent who always turns out to be more than a match for the Arab terrorists he encounters preying on Jewish victims. In *The Confessor*, however, the

predators pursuing Jewish and other victims are no longer Arab terrorists; they are traditionalist Catholics operating out of the Vatican in an effort to cover up the evidence of Church collaboration with the Nazis in World War II.

The novel's action is based on the taken-for-granted "fact" of the culpable silence of Pius XII during the Holocaust against the Jews as well as upon the true fact that some individual churchmen were pro-Nazi. It would have been surprising if there had not been a few pro-Nazi churchmen, considering that the mesmerizing Adolf Hitler once held a good part of Europe in his thrall, and for more than just a few years. Probably a majority of Germans continued to consider him the savior of Germany well past the time when it had become pretty clear that what he was bringing about was the ruin of Germany.

That some individual churchmen were pro-Nazi, and a few even actively collaborated in the atrocities of Hitler's so-called New Order, however, in no way establishes that the Vatican's policy was even remotely pro-Nazi. That the contrary, in fact, has conclusively been shown in, e.g., *Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican* by Pierre Blet, S.J., has simply not registered with a writer such as Daniel Silva. He relies on the anti-Pius sources instead. His main plot is based on a supposed secret wartime meeting between an archbishop high up in the Vatican and an official of the German Foreign Office. At this meeting, the Vatican official is depicted as expressly acquiescing in the Nazi plans for the Final Solution. Supposing such a thing ever happened—and there is no evidence for it—it is hard to see why the personal moral guilt of Pius XII would not in fact be diminished if he were shown to be acting on the recommendations of a trusted official who was really, unbeknownst to the pope, working for the Germans.

The novel implies nothing of the kind: Pius XII remains the bad guy, and both the author and his characters from time to time give vent to their feelings about this supposedly flawed

and failed pope. Some of these asides seem lifted almost verbatim from anti-Pius books such as Susan Zuccotti's tendentious *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust*, in which Pius XII is made to be somehow personally responsible for the 1,000-plus Jews who were rounded up in Rome in October, 1943 and deported to Auschwitz. What is not mentioned, either by Zuccotti or by Silva, is the truth recently brought out once again by the Jewish historian, Sir Martin Gilbert, namely, that around 4,000 of Rome's 5,000 Jews were hidden in Roman seminaries and convents—where the breaking of the rule of cloister in the latter institutions would have required papal approval—and were thereby saved from deportation.

The action of this thriller novel revolves around a fictitious new pope, Paul VII, who has just succeeded John Paul II, and who is a "liberal" pope who intends at long last to 'fess up and admit the Church's World War II guilt in failing to save the Jews. A far-right secret society of traditionalist Catholics headed by an ice-cold cardinal character—the kind of person the anti-Pius people seem to imagine Pius himself was—is determined to stop this admission of Church guilt even if it means assassinating the new pope, Paul VII. As the "confessor" of the book's title, this wicked and implacable cardinal sends out assassins with the promise of automatic absolution in the confessional for their deeds.

The nefarious Catholic traditionalists, however, fail to reckon with the Israeli superhero, Gabriel Allon. He is not only instrumental in saving the new pope from assassination, his exposé of the wartime sins of the Church through various acts of derring-do establish the need for the fictitious Paul VII to apologize for these wartime sins. In this regard, John Paul II's actual "apologies," at Rome's synagogue in 1986 and again as recently as February, 2003, at the Wailing Wall several years back, and in his 1998 "We Remember" document, are evidently not enough; the only thing that will ever

satisfy the anti-Pius people, apparently, is a total admission that Pope Pius XII was indeed guilty as charged.

It is dispiriting to realize that this author's skill as a writer of popular thrillers will probably help persuade many readers about the "guilt" of Pius XII, thus expanding and perpetuating the defamation of the wartime pope to an even greater extent than is already the case. Unfortunately, among the sources acknowledged at the end of his book are such "anti-Catholic Catholics" as James Carroll, John Cornwell, and Garry Wills; but relying on such sources in trying to render anything like the proper "feel" of authentic Catholicism and how the Vatican functions is about as reliable as consulting the Jews for Jesus for insights into orthodox Jewish beliefs. These writers are arguably not even Catholic any longer, in spite of their pretence of being legitimate critics operating from "inside" the Catholic Church. With sources like these, Daniel Silva was never likely to get it right about the Church and the pope, and *The Confessor* as a novel has to be added to the already large body of literature perpetuating the defamation of Pius XII.

*Kenneth D. Whitehead is a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education and a member of the Board of Directors of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. His review-article entitled "The Pius XII Controversy" is available [here](#).*

---

# **Daniel Silva: The Confessor**

*by Kenneth D. Whitehead*

*(book review, Catalyst 7/2003)*

*Daniel Silva, The Confessor,*

*New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2003.*

*HB; 401 pages. \$29.95.*

What Notre Dame philosophy professor Ralph McInerny has aptly called "the defamation of Pius XII"—in his excellent book with that title—has unfortunately been so widely successful in the culture at large that many people simply take it for granted that Pope Pius XII was guilty of a grave historical wrong in not speaking out more strongly against Adolf Hitler's efforts to exterminate the Jews. The recent film "Amen," by movie director Constantin Costa-Gravas, like the earlier play on which it is based, Rolf Hochhuth's "The Deputy," depicted Pius XII as a virtual accomplice in his willingness to mute public criticism of Hitler and the Nazis. Supposedly, the wartime pope was willing to remain silent both because he was pro-German and because he was acting in the interests of combating Communism through the advance of the German army into the Soviet Union. Pius XII is also severely criticized as well for maintaining Vatican neutrality in the war at a time when, as a moral leader, many say, he should have been more vigorously speaking out against the evil of the Nazis' "final solution." Evil the Nazis' final solution assuredly was. The alleged guilty silence and passivity of Pope Pius XII in the face of it is something else again, however, something a vast contemporary literature has examined in great detail. Far from the case against Pius XII having been proved by the various anti-Pius writers, though, rather the contrary has turned out to be the case: the less highly touted pro-Pius writers really have the better of the argument, as the present writer among others has shown in a review-article covering the principal recent anti-Pius and pro-Pius books (this review-article is available [here](#)).

The fact that the case against Pius XII does not hold up on the evidence—that the continuing denigration of the wartime pope is a defamation—has not prevented those convinced of the pope's guilt from going ahead to trumpet it to the four winds

anyway. Such is the approach of the recent book by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and Its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair*. Goldhagen relies on sources whose evidence has been shown to be thin, shaky, biased, unsubstantiated, and even patently false—and then he goes on to accumulate many more errors of fact and judgment of his own. Just as the myths of Aryan racial superiority and Jewish racial pollution drove the Nazi extermination program, so the myth of the supposed complicity of Pius XII in the crimes of the Nazis drives the continuing campaign to vilify the good and honorable pope and man that Pius XII was. A scapegoat is needed to explain the failure of European civilization to counter the murderous ideology of the Nazis, and so the wartime head of the Catholic Church is targeted.

One of the newest entries into the field of Pius XII defamation is a new thriller novel entitled *The Confessor* written by Daniel Silva. It appeared on the New York Times bestseller list almost as soon as it was published. Its author has enjoyed a growing reputation as a writer of popular thrillers, and he is, in fact, a skilled practitioner of the genre. In two recent books of his, *The Kill Artist* and *The English Assassin*, he introduced a superhero operative, Gabriel Allon, who is a talented restorer of fine paintings by day but is also a clandestine Israeli agent who always turns out to be more than a match for the Arab terrorists he encounters preying on Jewish victims. In *The Confessor*, however, the predators pursuing Jewish and other victims are no longer Arab terrorists; they are traditionalist Catholics operating out of the Vatican in an effort to cover up the evidence of Church collaboration with the Nazis in World War II.

The novel's action is based on the taken-for-granted "fact" of the culpable silence of Pius XII during the Holocaust against the Jews as well as upon the true fact that some individual churchmen were pro-Nazi. It would have been surprising if

there had not been a few pro-Nazi churchmen, considering that the mesmerizing Adolf Hitler once held a good part of Europe in his thrall, and for more than just a few years. Probably a majority of Germans continued to consider him the savior of Germany well past the time when it had become pretty clear that what he was bringing about was the ruin of Germany.

That some individual churchmen were pro-Nazi, and a few even actively collaborated in the atrocities of Hitler's so-called New Order, however, in no way establishes that the Vatican's policy was even remotely pro-Nazi. That the contrary, in fact, has conclusively been shown in, e.g., *Pius XII and the Second World War: According to the Archives of the Vatican* by Pierre Blet, S.J., has simply not registered with a writer such as Daniel Silva. He relies on the anti-Pius sources instead. His main plot is based on a supposed secret wartime meeting between an archbishop high up in the Vatican and an official of the German Foreign Office. At this meeting, the Vatican official is depicted as expressly acquiescing in the Nazi plans for the Final Solution. Supposing such a thing ever happened—and there is no evidence for it—it is hard to see why the personal moral guilt of Pius XII would not in fact be diminished if he were shown to be acting on the recommendations of a trusted official who was really, unbeknownst to the pope, working for the Germans.

The novel implies nothing of the kind: Pius XII remains the bad guy, and both the author and his characters from time to time give vent to their feelings about this supposedly flawed and failed pope. Some of these asides seem lifted almost verbatim from anti-Pius books such as Susan Zuccotti's tendentious *Under His Very Windows: The Vatican and the Holocaust*, in which Pius XII is made to be somehow personally responsible for the 1,000-plus Jews who were rounded up in Rome in October, 1943 and deported to Auschwitz. What is not mentioned, either by Zuccotti or by Silva, is the truth recently brought out once again by the Jewish historian, Sir

Martin Gilbert, namely, that around 4,000 of Rome's 5,000 Jews were hidden in Roman seminaries and convents—where the breaking of the rule of cloister in the latter institutions would have required papal approval—and were thereby saved from deportation.

The action of this thriller novel revolves around a fictitious new pope, Paul VII, who has just succeeded John Paul II, and who is a “liberal” pope who intends at long last to ‘fess up and admit the Church’s World War II guilt in failing to save the Jews. A far-right secret society of traditionalist Catholics headed by an ice-cold cardinal character—the kind of person the anti-Pius people seem to imagine Pius himself was—is determined to stop this admission of Church guilt even if it means assassinating the new pope, Paul VII. As the “confessor” of the book’s title, this wicked and implacable cardinal sends out assassins with the promise of automatic absolution in the confessional for their deeds.

The nefarious Catholic traditionalists, however, fail to reckon with the Israeli superhero, Gabriel Allon. He is not only instrumental in saving the new pope from assassination, his exposé of the wartime sins of the Church through various acts of derring-do establish the need for the fictitious Paul VII to apologize for these wartime sins. In this regard, John Paul II’s actual “apologies,” at Rome’s synagogue in 1986 and again as recently as February, 2003, at the Wailing Wall several years back, and in his 1998 “We Remember” document, are evidently not enough; the only thing that will ever satisfy the anti-Pius people, apparently, is a total admission that Pope Pius XII was indeed guilty as charged.

It is dispiriting to realize that this author’s skill as a writer of popular thrillers will probably help persuade many readers about the “guilt” of Pius XII, thus expanding and perpetuating the defamation of the wartime pope to an even greater extent than is already the case. Unfortunately, among the sources acknowledged at the end of his book are such

“anti-Catholic Catholics” as James Carroll, John Cornwell, and Garry Wills; but relying on such sources in trying to render anything like the proper “feel” of authentic Catholicism and how the Vatican functions is about as reliable as consulting the Jews for Jesus for insights into orthodox Jewish beliefs. These writers are arguably not even Catholic any longer, in spite of their pretence of being legitimate critics operating from “inside” the Catholic Church. With sources like these, Daniel Silva was never likely to get it right about the Church and the pope, and *The Confessor* as a novel has to be added to the already large body of literature perpetuating the defamation of Pius XII.

*Kenneth D. Whitehead is a former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education and a member of the Board of Directors of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. His review-article entitled “The Pius XII Controversy” is available [here](#).*

---

## The Analysis of a Smear

*by Father Benedict J. Groeschel, C.F.R.*

*(Catalyst 6/2003)*

I have been expecting a smear attack from the anti-Catholic segment of the media for years, and on March 2, 2003, it came. The *Dallas Morning News*, which I had never heard of, carried an article by Brooks Egerton entitled, “Priest plays down abuse crisis while helping clergy keep jobs.” The article began with a charge that I claimed that the sex-abuse scandal was “the stuff of fiction.” The article went on to report that a New Jersey diocese criticized my part in cases involving

priests accused of abuse, and Egerton even quoted one victim as saying that I had "failed a lot of victims."

Egerton also maintained that I had refused to be interviewed by him. In fact, he called my office twice while I was out on the road preaching. I did not refuse to be interviewed. In the case of a smear, you are between a rock and a hard place. It is common enough for the person called by an investigative reporter to become a victim. If you speak to one, prepare to have your remarks twisted, significantly abbreviated in a negative way, or simply turned against you. In this case I later learned a number of things about this investigative reporter that make me grateful to God that I was not at home when he called.

The trick in all this is that if you do not speak to the so-called investigative reporter, he will make you responsible for all inaccuracies in the article. If you do speak, you will be grossly misquoted. The heart of the smear is always a plain old-fashioned distortion, such as saying that I called the scandal a fiction.

A number of recent books and articles have been critical of the media. Ann Coulter's fascinating book *Slander* (Crown Publishers) and Bernard Goldberg's book *Bias* (Harper Perennial) are very good examples of the severe criticism of the media. Several writers as different as Richard Neuhaus and Andrew Greeley, as ideologically diverse as George Weigel and Peter Steinfels, and also of course William Donohue, have criticized the media for their handling of the clergy sex crisis.

When the media are not biased, they are often just inept. I got a taste of this from a small New England newspaper, the *Metro News*. Covering a talk I gave, which was attended by nine hundred people, the reporter indicated that two hundred people were present. I said that in the case of the resignation of the late Archbishop Eugene Marino of Atlanta several years ago, I could testify that about 98 percent of

what was reported in the media about him was not true. The *Metro News* correspondent reported that I had said that 98 percent of the accusations against clergy in the present scandal were untrue. Egerton must have known I did not say this, because he had read at least the first part of my book. If you don't believe me, read the book yourself (*From Scandal to Hope*, OSV 2002).

The victim I referred to above claimed that I had "failed a lot of victims," according to Egerton. The victim later admitted he had never read my book and got his information from Egerton, who based it on the *Metro News* article. This victim was apologetic and friendly when he learned the facts of the case.

If you find all this complicated, welcome to the world of smears. Distortions, sprinkled with partial truths, are stock-in-trade because the average reader gets tired of the whole thing, shrugs his shoulders, and decides that some of the charges must be true. This was the apparent reasoning of Josef Goebbels, Hitler's propagandist, who is reputed to have said, "Never tell a little lie; no one will believe it. Tell a big lie, and they will believe it."

Often those who are involved in smear tactics do some legitimate things. They tell a story, which the media are supposed to do, but they tell it in a way to suit themselves. It is absolutely amazing how the public is unprepared to think even for a moment that the media would not tell the truth. We all think that the media can be sued if they lie. What a denial of reality! It is actually very difficult and expensive to hold the media legally responsible, especially for half-truths and unbalanced reporting.

Obviously investigators, reporters, and their editors are partially motivated by their own causes and opinions. I am very clear in my book that the present scandal is about homosexual incidents with minors; it is not about pedophilia,

which involves prepubescent children. I am critical of the "gay" influences in the churches, and I distinguish gays from those who experience same-sex attractions but who follow the commandments of God and do not try to induce others into a sinful lifestyle. It is interesting to note, for example, that the *Chicago Tribune* (12/9/85) reported that Egerton was in a dispute with the Big Brothers/Big Sisters in Wisconsin who had a homosexual-exclusion policy. Egerton is quoted as saying, "That is deeply offensive to me. I really like kids, but I'm not going into the closet to be a Big Brother."

The *Tribune* also reported several other gay activities Egerton was involved in. He was described as the assistant city editor of the *Dallas Morning News* and chairman of the Texas chapter of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association in 1995. One should not be surprised that he may have a little bias against the Catholic Church, which, along with most other world religions, disapproves of homosexual acts and lifestyles.

It is part of the usual smear campaign to make extraneous charges to undermine the credibility of the individual. This is known as "getting the dirt" on someone. In his article Egerton had me living in a mansion. In fact, I have lived for many years in a garage next to a retreat house. He also makes much of my not having a license as a psychologist. Many professors of psychology (I have been a professor for about forty years) do not get licenses, because they are not paid by insurance companies or other third parties. A license is required for such payment. I actually could charge individuals for my services even without a license, but I have never taken a single cent for my counseling and spiritual direction and never will.

In an original response I made on the friars' website ([www.franciscanfriars.com](http://www.franciscanfriars.com)), I said that I could not discuss the priests whose names Egerton mentioned in the *Dallas Morning News*. Apparently he obtained information on some of

these cases from the public relations person of the Paterson (N.J.) Diocese. How and why did she ever give such information to an investigative reporter? At my insistence, the Paterson Diocese later issued a clarification, which was intended to shed light on the remarks Egerton quoted from the diocesan spokeswoman. The clarification proved inadequate, and the Paterson Diocese refused to send it to the *Dallas Morning News*, limiting it only to the local paper. It makes a juicy part of the smear if a reporter can change the quotations of a public representative who is injudicious enough to give the reporter information that can then be misconstrued.

Since the smear came out, I have obtained permission from the priests involved to indicate that I neither evaluated nor treated them. They were all in well-recognized treatment programs and obtained recommendations from a skilled staff of mental health professionals, including psychologists and psychiatrists. Only one of them was involved in a charge of the abuse of minors, and he is no longer in the priesthood. What I did was to arrange for these priests to receive therapy. The one involved with minors has not been accused of a similar charge since the original accusation in the mid-1980s and the treatment he received.

Smears spread. The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, to which I once gave an anti-Catholic Robey award (named for Robespierre) on television, reprinted Egerton's article, adding the original touch of an even worse headline ("Critic of media had a role in sex-abuse scandals"). I'm waiting for other papers to pick it up, particularly those I have identified publicly as having an anti-Catholic bias.

It's rare that one can do much legally with a smear, but at the insistence of friends of mine, who are well-known lawyers, I am looking into this possibility. You can do one of two things with a smear or unjust attack. You can lie down and play dead and hope that they won't notice you again, or you can come back at them. Most, if not all, of what they say is

lies and distortions. Unfortunately, not to respond appears to give consent to what they say (silence gives consent, as the old legal adage has it), and I think such a policy has proved disastrous in the present clergy scandal situation.

I am deeply grateful to the Catholic League, especially to *Catalyst*, for their excellent defense of Catholicism and for their taking on all the smears possible. I expect other smears, and in fact I will be looking forward to them. They may even help the Church to be purified and spark reform. Since we Franciscan Friars of the Renewal are pro-life, pro-reform, and pro-Catholic, we'd better not be afraid. And there are blessings in being smeared. If it is for the sake of the Gospel, we will receive something much better than a plenary indulgence. Christ Himself has said:

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:11-12).

*Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R., is the Director of the Office for Spiritual Development of the New York Archdiocese and a founding member of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.*

---

**Fr. Benedict Groeschel**

# Responds to his Critics

*(Catalyst 5/2003)*

Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R. is a good friend of the Catholic League. On March 2, the *Dallas Morning News* published an article about him titled, "Priest plays down abuse crisis while helping clergy keep jobs." It was written by Brooks Egerton, a staff writer for the *News*; he is also the past chairman of the Texas chapter of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. The article was reprinted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on March 23. Another article critical of Father Groeschel was written by Maya Kremen; it appeared in the Paterson, NJ *Herald News* on March 4.

Father Groeschel has responded to the articles and we are reprinting his answers point by point to set the record straight. We have taken the liberty of splicing his remarks so that the point-counterpoint context is readily understandable.

***Dallas Morning News:*** *In the world according to Father Benedict Groeschel, the Catholic Church's sexual abuse scandal is largely the stuff of fiction. Reporters "doing the work of Satan" are driven to lie, the New York priest says, because they hate the church's moral teachings.*

**Fr. Benedict:** I do stand by my statement that the secular media have taken the scandal out of proportion, ignored many charges of abuse of minors and committed by others in professional roles, created the impression that this is only a problem of Catholic clergy. Writers as varied as George Weigel, Philip Jenkins, Andrew Greeley, Richard Neuhaus and Peter Steinfels have all been critical of the media coverage of these scandals.

***DMN:*** *The Franciscan friar's base is a mansion on Long Island Sound, where he runs the Archdiocese of New York's spiritual*

*development office and Trinity Retreat Center for clergy.*

**BG:** I have not been the director of Trinity Retreat for ten years. This retreat for priests has never been referred to before as a mansion. In fact, I don't even live in the building. I have lived for years in the garage.

**DMN:** *According to his own written account, he has counseled hundreds of his brethren and "happily, 85 priests have returned to the active ministry."*

**BG:** Egerton mentions that 85 priests have returned to the active ministry through Trinity Retreat, implying that some of these priests had difficulties with minors. These were priests on leaves of absence, not priests who had been accused of any misbehavior at all.

**DMN:** *Father Groeschel... declined interview requests.*

**BG:** I did not decline to be interviewed. I never spoke to Mr. Egerton because I was not at home when he called.

**DMN:** *Dallas Bishop Charles Grahmann has allowed one of his priests, removed from parish work after the diocese concluded he had abused a girl, to help manage the retreat center in recent years. That priest, the Rev. Richard T. Brown, moved to a hermitage a few months ago...*

**BG:** Fr. Richard Brown never assisted in the management of Trinity Retreat. He did typing and recorded reservations for priests coming on retreat. He lived a most prayerful and ascetical life while here and he had done so for many years before as many people have said. He did no pastoral work in the New York Archdiocese, nor did anyone ever request permission for him to do so.

**DMN:** *Leaders of the neighboring Diocese of Paterson, N.J., one of several that sent business to Father Groeschel, blamed*

*three "unfortunate" reassignments on his advice.*

**Letter from Marianna Thompson, Director of Communications, Diocese of Paterson, to the *Herald-News*:** I never used the word "blame" in my conversations with the Dallas Morning News. The diocesan focus in this issue is not to cast blame on others....

**DMN:** *"It just burns me to no end," said Buddy Cotton, who has accused the Rev. James Hanley of abusing him in the Paterson Diocese and recently called Bishop Rodimer to complain about Father Groeschel.*

**BG:** [From a letter to the *Herald News* 3/3/03] I had nothing to do with the reappointment of James Hanley to another parish after he was removed from Mendham as a result of serious accusations of abuse of minors. In fact, I had never heard of the case. I became involved when Hanley came on retreat after he was removed a second time from a new assignment.

**DMN:** *A psychologist who evaluated Father [Morgan] Kuhl for federal prosecutors recommended that he "be enrolled in a program specific to sex offenders," not just in the general psychotherapy and spiritual counseling he was getting.... U.S. District Judge Anne Thompson initially sentenced Father Kuhl to a short prison term followed by house arrest. But she later reduced the penalty, over the objections of prosecutor Donna Krappa, to five years of probation and ordered the priest to "adhere to the program requirements at Trinity Retreat."*

*In advocating probation, Father Groeschel represented himself to the court as a counseling psychologist, Ms. Krappa said in an interview. New York state officials said he has never had the license generally required for use of that title. Using the title without a license is a misdemeanor, state officials said.*

**BG:** I can say Morgan Kuhl never received any treatment from me and was in fact directly enrolled in a formal treatment

program elsewhere. We provided a supervised residence, which the court agreed to continue.

As to the issue of my not having a license: a Doctor of Psychology does not need a license unless he is receiving third part payments for instance from an insurance company or an agency. I never intended to receive any pay doing psychological counseling or spiritual direction, so I never bothered about a license. In fact I have never been paid a cent for my services that Mr. Egerton refers to as "business." It is not uncommon for professors of psychology not to obtain licenses to practice, because clinical practice is not our principal vocation.

**BG:** [To the *Herald News*] I am at a great disadvantage in defending myself because of the right of confidentiality of the people involved. I have worked as a therapist and spiritual director with clergy for 30 years after obtaining a doctorate in Counseling Psychology at Columbia University. I have never charged a fee and have never asked for or received payment. I have seen clergy of various different denominations and faiths. Like any therapist I have made mistakes. People forget that therapists and spiritual directors are neither prosecutors nor defense attorneys. Since I cannot defend myself, I think that any honest person will admit that what has been said against me is unfair and based on misinformation. Being a strong advocate of Church reform does not make you popular—but Jesus did not suggest that we would be popular if we try to follow Him.

#### **CLOSING COMMENTS BY FATHER GROESCHEL:**

Since the accusations came out, I contacted each of the priests involved and obtained their permission to state publicly that I neither evaluated nor treated them. They were all treated in very well-known professional programs and their placements were based on the joint decisions of well-known psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health professionals.

At the suggestion of Cardinal O'Connor, we offered the Trinity Retreat as a place of retreat, prayer, penance and rehabilitation to priests. I often passed on the written recommendation of other mental health professionals.

**WILLIAM DONOHUE OFFERED THESE REMARKS:**

Father Benedict Groeschel is a courageous and brilliant priest who has given his life to the Catholic Church. Only those who seek to undermine Catholicism would ever lash out at him. And when they do, the Catholic League will not hesitate to rush to his defense.

*Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R., is the Director of the Office for Spiritual Development of the New York Archdiocese and a founding member of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.*

---

## **Some Prejudices are More Equal than Others**

*by Philip Jenkins*

*(Catalyst 5/2003)*

For readers of *Catalyst*, expressions of anti-Catholic bigotry scarcely come as a surprise. Over the years, we have come to expect that media treatments of the Church, its clergy and its faithful will be negative, if not highly offensive, and Catholic organizations try to confront the worst manifestations of prejudice. When such controversies erupt, the defenders of the various shows or productions commonly invoke a free speech defense. These productions are just

legitimate commentary, we hear, so offended Catholics should just lighten up, and learn not to be hyper-sensitive. Sometimes, defenders just deny that the allegedly anti-Catholic works are anything like as hostile as they initially seem to be. All these arguments, though, miss one central point, namely that similarly controversial attacks would be tolerated against literally no other group, whether that group is religious, political or ethnic.

The issue should not be whether film X or art exhibit Y is deliberately intending to affront Catholics. We should rather ask whether comparable expressions would be allowed if they caused outrage or offense to any other group, whether or not that degree of offense seems reasonable or understandable to outsiders. If the answer is yes, that our society will indeed tolerate controversial or offensive presentations of other groups—of Muslims and Jews, African-Americans and Latinos, Asian-Americans and Native Americans, gays and lesbians—then Catholics should not protest that they are being singled out for unfair treatment. If, however, controversy is out of bounds for these other groups—as it assuredly is—then we certainly should not lighten up, and the Catholic League is going to be in business for a very long time to come.

It is easy to illustrate the degree of public sensitivity to images or displays that affect other social or religious groups—but how many of us realize how far the law has gone in accommodating the presumed privilege against offense? Witness the legal attempts over the last two decades to regulate so-called “hate speech.” American courts have never accepted that speech should be wholly unrestricted, but since the 1980s, a variety of activists have pressed for expanded laws or codes that would limit or suppress speech directed against particular groups, against women, racial minorities and homosexuals. The most ambitious of these speech codes were implemented on college campuses. Though many such codes have been struck down by the courts, a substantial section of

liberal opinion believes that stringent laws should restrict the right to criticize minorities and other interest groups.

But if these provisions had been upheld in the courts, what would they have meant for recent Catholic controversies? One typical university code defines hate speech "as any verbal speech, harassment, and/or printed statements which can provoke mental and/or emotional anguish for any member of the University community." Nothing in the code demands evidence that the offended person is a normal, average character not over-sensitive to insult. According to the speech codes, the fact of "causing anguish" is sufficient. Since the various codes placed so much emphasis on the likelihood of causing offense, rather than the intent of the act or speech involved, the codes might well have criminalized art exhibits like, oh, just to take a fantastic example, a photograph of a crucifix submerged in a jar of urine.

The element of "causing offense" is central to speech codes. At the University of Michigan a proposed code would have prohibited "any behavior, verbal or physical, that stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap, or Vietnam-era veteran status." "Stigmatization and victimization" are defined entirely by the subjective feelings of the groups who felt threatened. In 1992, the US Supreme Court upheld a local statute that prohibited the display of a symbol that one knows or has reason to know "arouses anger, alarm or resentment in others on the basis of race, color, creed, religion or gender." The implied reference is to a swastika or a burning cross, but as it is written, the criterion is that the symbol causes "anger, alarm or resentment" to some unspecified person. These were precisely the reactions of many Catholic believers who saw or read about the "Piss Christ" photograph, or the controversial displays at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Other recent laws have taken full account of religious

sensibilities, at least where non-Catholics are concerned. Take for instance the treatment of Native American religions, and the presentation of displays that (rightly) outrage Native peoples. In years gone by, museums nonchalantly displayed Indian skeletons in a way that would be unconscionable for any community, but which was all the more offensive for Native peoples, with their keen sensitivity to the treatment of the dead. In 1990, Congress passed NAGPRA, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, which revolutionized the operation of American museums and galleries by requiring that all Indian remains and cultural artifacts should be repatriated to their tribal owners. As a matter of federal criminal law, NAGPRA established the principle that artistic and historical interests must be subordinate to the religious and cultural sensibilities of minority communities.

Even so, museums and cultural institutions have gone far beyond the letter of this strict law. They have systematically withdrawn or destroyed displays that might cause the slightest offense to Indian peoples, including such once-familiar displays as photographs of skeletons or grave-goods. In South-Western museums today, one commonly sees such images replaced with apologetic signs, which explain gaps in the exhibits in terms of new cultural sensitivities. Usually, museums state simply that the authorities of a given tribe have objected to an exhibit because it considers it hurtful or embarrassing, without even giving the grounds for this opinion, yet that is enough to warrant removal. When disputes arise, the viewpoint of the minority group must be treated as authoritative. Just imagine an even milder version of this legal principle being applied to starkly offensive images like those at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. If Native religion deserves respect and restraint on the part of commentators—as it assuredly does—why doesn't Catholicism merit similar safeguards?

Beyond the legal realm, time and again we see that media outlets exercise a powerful self-censorship that suppresses

controversial or offensive images, whether or not that "offense" is intended: and again, this restraint applies to every group, except Catholics. Over the years, the film industry has learned to suppress images or themes that affect an ever-growing number of protected categories. The caution about African-Americans is understandable, given the racist horrors in films of bygone years, but the present degree of sensitivity is astounding. Recall last year's film "Barbershop," in which Black characters exchange disrespectful remarks about such heroic figures as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, and more questionable characters like O. J. Simpson and Jesse Jackson. Though this was clearly not a racist attack, the outcry was ferocious: some things simply cannot be said in public. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton led an intense campaign to delete these touchy references.

And other social groups have learned these lessons about self-censorship. Asian-Americans and Latinos have both made it clear that the once-familiar stereotypes will no longer be tolerated, and Hollywood takes their complaints to heart. By the early 1990s, too, gay groups had achieved a similar immunity. When, in 1998, the film "The Siege" offered a (prescient) view of New York City under assault by Arab terrorists, the producers thought it politic to work closely with Arab-American and Muslim groups in order to minimize charges of stereotyping and negative portrayals. Activists thought that any film depicting how "Arab terrorists methodically lay waste to Manhattan" was not only clearly fantastic in its own right, but also "reinforces historically damaging stereotypes." As everyone knew, Hollywood had a public responsibility not to encourage such labeling.

Yet no such qualms affect the making of films or television series that might offend America's sixty million Catholics. Any suggestion that the makers of such films should consult with Catholic authorities or interest groups would be dismissed as promoting censorship, and a grossly inappropriate

religious interference with artistic self-expression. The fuss over whether a film like “Dogma” or “Stigmata” is intentionally anti-Catholic misses the point. The question is not why American studios release films that will annoy and offend Catholics, but why they do not more regularly deal with subject matter that would be equally uncomfortable or objectionable to other traditions or interest groups. If they did so, American films might be much more interesting, in addition to demonstrating a new consistency.

If works of art are to offend, they should do so on an equal opportunity basis. If we have to tolerate such atrocities as “Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You”—recently revived as a Showtime special—then why should we not have merry satires poking fun at secular icons like Matthew Shepard or Martin Luther King? If, on the other hand, it is ugly and unacceptable even to contemplate an imaginary production of “Matthew Explains It All,” poking fun at victims of gay-bashing, then why should we put up with Sister Mary? Some consistency, please.

Let me end with a suggestion. By all means, let the Catholic League continue to report offensive depictions of Catholics and their church. But to put these in perspective, always remember to record these many other controversies, in which other groups succeed in enforcing their right to be free from offense. Only then can Catholic-bashing be seen for what it is, America’s last acceptable prejudice.

*Philip Jenkins is Distinguished Professor of History and Religious Studies at Pennsylvania State University, and author of the book The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice.*

---

# Frances Kissling Spins Canon Law

*(Catalyst 5/2003)*

Catholics For a Free Choice (CFFC) recently released a new pamphlet, titled, "Catholics and Abortion: Notes on Canon Law." Its aim is to counter "finger-pointing" and "misinformation." No one who is familiar with Frances Kissling's group should be surprised that the only techniques used in the pamphlet are just that—finger-pointing and misinformation.

The introduction whines, "Everyone is an expert, claiming that prochoice Catholics are 'heretics' or have been 'excommunicated' because they have had an abortion or have supported legal abortion." And here's some misinformation: CFFC claims, "We respect the church's law."

The pamphlet focuses on two relevant passages in the 1983 Code of Canon Law—the one prescribing automatic excommunication for those who have a completed abortion (canon 1398), and the passage that stipulates automatic excommunication for "accomplices" without whose help the grave sin could not have been committed (canon 1329 §2).

In the next ten or so pages, the pamphlet's author, Sara Morello, wrangles word-by-word with the passages from Canon Law, attempting to show that mitigating factors can lessen the likelihood that someone who has had an abortion actually incurs excommunication. But any Catholic already knows that there are conditions to be met (grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent) before any sin incurs its full penalty. (Incidentally, the word "sin" appears nowhere in the leaflet.)

In a huge leap of logic, the brochure tells us, "In cases

where it is difficult to argue that the primary actor incurs a penalty, it would also be very difficult to justify punishing accomplices.” In other words, since we cannot say for sure whether the woman undergoing an abortion meets the requirements under Canon Law for responsibility for her actions, then we cannot even begin to judge the actions of accomplices, such as Kissling. Thus “the routine activity of hospital administrators, directors of abortion clinics and prochoice politicians does not make them eligible for punishment under this canon.”

One doesn't have to have a degree in Canon Law to see this is nonsense. Canon 1329 states that anyone who aided in the commission of an offense such that it would not have been committed without their help suffers the penalty attached to that offense. For example: an accomplice to a murder is subject to the same penalty that the actual murderer is, regardless of any mitigating factors operating on the murderer. If the murderer is in a blind rage and acts in the heat of the moment, he may be less culpable; but a man who calmly gives him a knife and leads him to his victim enjoys no such advantages. Each individual is subject to penalties based on his own mental state and actions.

Frances Kissling and other facilitators of abortion are probably not under the emotional pressure of those with unplanned pregnancies. And CFFC is fully aware of the Church's actual teaching; they produced this tract on Canon Law, didn't they? And it even grudgingly acknowledges, “getting an abortion is against the church's law.”

In other words, Frances Kissling and her ilk have no excuse. And whether or not you believe that she has acted directly as an “accomplice” through her work with CFFC and the pro-abortion lobby, there remains the fact that she operated one of the first legal abortion clinics in New York, and ran illegal ones in Mexico and Rome; all of which she still defends. If that's not direct complicity, then the law is

meaningless.

It's not our place to declare people excommunicated, but we will point out their disingenuous reasoning. Kissling's motive in producing the tract is transparent: she hopes to silence her opposition, who place her and her organization outside the Church. But Canon Law is clear on one matter, and the American bishops agree: Catholics For a Free Choice is anything but Catholic. And no glossy pamphlet that butchers Canon Law will convince us otherwise.

---

## **The Church Scandal: Fodder for State Meddling**

*by William A. Donohue*

*(Catalyst 4/2003)*

The sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church is being used by state lawmakers to crack the wall of separation of church and state. Unless this is resisted by the hierarchy of the Church, state meddling in the internal workings of the Church will grow.

One of the more conspicuous examples is the willingness of some state legislators to undermine the confidentiality of the confessional by revoking the traditional priest-penitent privilege. They say this must be done in order to protect children: by breaking the seal of the confessional, it is argued, priests would have to disclose information concerning the sexual abuse of minors. But this is a fatally flawed argument and it is being advanced by hypocrites.

There is no evidence to suggest that by ending the confidentiality of the confessional children will be protected. This is a red herring. To begin, let's put the issue into perspective.

A study by the *Washington Post* revealed that less than 1.5 percent of priests over the past 40 years have been accused of sexually molesting a minor. *The New York Times* did a study as well, covering the years 1950 to 2001: it put the figure at 1.8 percent. Currently, less than one percent of priests nationwide are under investigation. While one priest would be too many, it is important to remember that scholars who have studied this issue (Penn State's Philip Jenkins comes quickly to mind) have determined that the incidence of abuse by priests does not differ from that of the clergy of other religions, and may even be lower.

The overwhelming majority of those abused are postpubescent males—they are not children. Breaking the seal of the confessional could not have saved any of them; nor will it protect anyone in the future. Let's remember a few basic facts.

The seal of the confessional does not apply to the penitent. If someone confesses knowledge of abuse to a priest, there is nothing to stop him from contacting the authorities. Nor is there something that would prevent the priest from asking such a penitent to discuss this further in his office, thereby freeing the priest from his confessional vows. The priest could also withhold absolution until such time as the authorities were notified. In short, there are ways a priest can fulfill his duties without sacrificing anyone.

Another problem with attempts to break the seal of the confessional is the grave implications it has for the First Amendment. Freedom of religion, and the establishment clause which keeps church and state separate, will not mean much if the state is permitted to encroach on the Church's doctrinal

prerogatives. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is not something the state can be allowed to trespass upon without doing irreparable harm to Catholicism. It would be a violation of separation of church and state of grave magnitude, having wide implications for all religions. Nothing would be sacrosanct.

Then there is also the problem of unenforceability. How could the state possibly know whether a priest has learned of sexual abuse in the confessional? The priest is certainly not going to say. In the event the penitent calls the cops after revealing such knowledge, and the priest is questioned about what he knows, he could simply refuse to discuss anything he learned in the confessional. What are they going to do, put him in handcuffs? Will the police wire the confessional? All of this is nonsense.

Hypocrisy is fueling this issue as well. There is no push being made to end the attorney-client privilege, just the priest-penitent privilege. Yet are we to believe that lawyers learn less about the sexual abuse of minors in confidential discussions than do priests? Moreover, the public has little regard for lawyers as a group: a Harris survey in October, 2001 revealed that as a profession, attorneys have "hardly any prestige at all." They finished in a tie for last place with union leaders; doctors were first.

Another hypocritical element in this is the failure of the media to discuss why mandatory sexual abuse reporting bills are being held up in the states. It is not the fault of the bishops. It is the fault of Planned Parenthood and the ACLU.

Planned Parenthood staffers find out about cases of statutory rape on a regular basis, yet they report almost none of them. We know this to be true because a sting operation conducted by a pro-life group recently reported as much. The lobbying arm of Planned Parenthood, Family Planning Advocates, has been trying to ward off any bill that would blanket all professionals equally. What they want to do is keep the

exemption for abortion providers while ending the exemption for the clergy. And their friends in the ACLU are working with them, providing legal cover.

Getting the priests is what this game is all about; it has nothing to do with protecting children. That it is being done without much of an uproar from Catholic circles is disturbing. A happy exception to this is Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington.

When the Maryland legislature was contemplating a bill requiring priests to report cases of suspected child abuse learned in the confessional, Cardinal McCarrick rightly got his back up. He quickly denounced the bill and publicly stated that he would gladly go to jail before ever breaking the seal of the confessional. We immediately supported him, as did others. And the result? The bullies backed off and dropped the bill.

There is another lesson to be learned here. Not only was Cardinal McCarrick's leadership indispensable to this effort, it won the admiration of those not generally in our corner. For example, an editorial in the pages of the *Washington Post* took note of McCarrick's determination. "As one of the most responsible bishops during the sex abuse scandal," the editorial said, "the archbishop of Washington should be taken seriously when he takes such a passionate stand."

What this goes to show is that our side needs to do more than dialogue. Too often dialogue is a recipe for paralysis. There are some things so fundamental—like breaking the confessional seal—that no amount of conversation is going to matter. What matters is playing hardball. That's what wins and that's what earns respect. There is no need to play dirty, but there is every reason to play to win.

Catholics need to check another abuse by lawmakers: far-ranging subpoenas of sensitive documents must end. For

example, there is no doubt that some are using the scandal as a pretext to read internal Church memos, priest personnel files and the like. If there is something specific that is needed, that is one thing. But the mass collection of records is quite another. What is so obscene about this is that no other profession is being treated this way. Why not grab the files on members of the clergy from other religions as well? Why limit it to the clergy? Why not obtain the personnel files of teachers, psychologists, social workers, et al.?

Another way some states are playing fast and loose with the Catholic Church these days is by rescinding laws governing the statute of limitations as it applies to the abuse of a minor. It cannot be said too many times that this long-standing provision in law was formulated to protect the rights of the accused from those with fading memories. Moreover, witnesses may die or cannot be located. No one can really be safe from reckless charges if decades after an alleged offense occurred, the state is going to prosecute alleged offenders.

Impaneling grand juries is another game to watch. What is the purpose of establishing a grand jury knowing that the statute of limitations has run its course? This is what was done on Long Island. Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota impaneled a grand jury knowing full well he could not produce one indictment.

What Spota did was a disgrace. He spent the taxpayers' money on a fishing expedition. He never cross-examined the witnesses, nor did he allow officials from the Diocese of Rockville Centre to testify. He refused to release the names of the jurors and he deliberately leaked a copy of his report to the local newspaper, *Newsday*, before the Diocese of Rockville Centre had a chance to respond. And when I wrote to him asking him to support a bill in New York State that would cover abortion providers, as well as members of the clergy, he failed to respond.

Some of the attorneys involved in bringing the lawsuits against the dioceses are suspect players themselves. Jeffrey Anderson likes to sue the Catholic Church more than anyone in the nation. He aims high—he would like to bring down the Vatican and is not shy about using the infamous RICO law to do so. He has also made quite a living off of this: he has made an estimated \$20 million suing the Catholic Church.

None of this is to say that Church officials have always conducted themselves with honor. Some have not. But it is to say that Catholics would do well to keep their guard up during times like these. There is a lot to exploit at the moment and there is no shortage of mean-spirited persons ready to do so. The role of the Catholic League in all this is to come to the aid of the Church when it is under fire. We have been busy writing to state legislators about many of these issues. We have taken the opportunity to debate these issues on television and radio, informing the public what is at stake. For the most part, we have been received well.

Unless we beat back overly aggressive lawmakers and trial lawyers at this time, we will pay for it down the road. The scandal should never have happened, but it did. What should not be allowed to happen next is for the Church to be hammered by those who seek to meddle in the Church's internal affairs.

---

### **SUPREME COURT AFFIRMS RIGHTS OF PRO-LIFE ACTIVISTS**

It was a great victory for abortion protesters. Thanks to pro-life activist Joe Scheidler, it will now be easier for those opposed to abortion to exercise their First Amendment rights.

On February 26, the U.S. Supreme Court in an 8-1 decision ruled that the federal Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, as well as the Hobbs Act, do not apply to abortion foes who protest outside abortion clinics.

Not only will abortion protesters be free from the threat of future RICO suits, but protesters of all causes will not have to labor under such threats. If there are clear cases of harassment or abuse of women seeking an abortion by abortion protesters, then there are plenty of laws on the books that can be used against them. But to use a remedy like RICO, or the Hobbs Act, both of which were meant to apply to gangsters engaged in extortion, as a way to protect abortion-seeking women from being intimidated by protesters, is outrageous.

“The real story here,” we told the press, “is the extraordinary disrespect that the so-called champions of liberty have for free speech.” The National Organization for Women, which brought the lawsuit, has proven beyond a doubt that it would use any law available as a weapon to beat down pro-life protesters. NARAL and Planned Parenthood have similarly shown their contempt for the First Amendment by previously supporting the use of RICO against anti-abortion demonstrators; even affiliates of the ACLU have used RICO to stop the free speech of abortion foes. We explained our reasoning by saying, “That’s because abortion is their god: they would rather lose our fundamental civil liberties before they would ever lose the right of a woman to abort her baby.”

Pro-life activists, many of whom are Catholic, can be proud of this victory. Even those who are not pro-life but still maintain fidelity to the First Amendment can feel a sigh of relief. “Most important,” we concluded, “for the abortion-rights industry to try to muzzle the free speech of demonstrators by manipulating a law aimed at gangsters shows who the real fanatics are.”

---

### **FAITH-BASED CARE ACT MAKES SENSE**

On January 21, the six Democratic contenders for the presidency appeared at a NARAL Pro-Choice America event

celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*.

The following day, the actual anniversary date of the abortion ruling, NARAL president Kate Michelman and Planned Parenthood president Gloria Feldt held a press conference in Washington on abortion rights. One of the participating organizations at the press conference was Catholics for a Free Choice, headed by Frances Kissling.

We told media that one of the founders of NARAL was Dr. Bernard Nathanson. He converted a number of years ago to the pro-life side and even became a Catholic. Nathanson has admitted in great detail the anti-Catholic roots of NARAL: lying about the Church, fabricating data and demonizing Catholicism were an integral part of NARAL's strategy. Over the years NARAL may have become more careful about expressing its hostility to the Catholic Church, but it is still not to be trusted. Be that as it may, one person who continues to exercise no such caution is Kissling.

Kissling has not shied away from making her anti-Catholicism public. Indeed, she wears it proudly on her sleeve. That is why so many Catholics are outraged by the refusal of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to drop Kissling's group as a link on its website.

Our statement to the media left no doubts about our resolve in dealing with this issue: "There can be no more room for both Catholics and anti-Catholics in the Democratic party than there can be for both African Americans and white supremacists. That is why the Catholic League will not let go of this issue: the DNC must stop its association with anti-Catholicism and Democratic aspirants to the presidency must address this issue."

This is an unseemly coalition—Democratic candidates for the presidency joining with the advocates of partial-birth abortion and anti-Catholicism. We look for some brave voices

in the media to start asking these men some really tough questions about this issue. The public has a right to know their thoughts on the Kissling connection and no one has a right to know more than Catholics.

---

### **BILL O'REILLY GETS IN OVER HIS HEAD**

Many people admire Bill O'Reilly for his aggressive style and his emphasis on "no-spin" reporting. He delights in being a contrarian. It is also well known that O'Reilly is a Catholic, and in discussions of Catholicism he often gets in over his head, as he does while opining on other subjects. Lately O'Reilly has picked up the pace on his criticism of the Church; many members of the league have complained, and we have been monitoring the situation.

Initially, O'Reilly lashed out but covered himself, often by distancing himself from his commentary or by withdrawing some of his barbs. For example, the following remarks are excerpted from the March 5 broadcast of the "Radio Factor" on Westwood 1. O'Reilly criticized the Church for its stance on the conflict with Iraq, and attempted to discredit the Church's position by referring to the recent sex abuse crisis. While we have taken issue with such tactics before, O'Reilly was quick to soften the blow of one statement by lamenting the fact: "The Catholic Church in America has no question lost its moral authority. And that is, I hate to say it, that is the truth." In addition, he put criticism of the Church in other people's mouths: "So, you know, people who aren't Catholic are saying, well, you know, 'Look—you're letting little kids get brutalized, and you're not doing anything about it. Why should we listen to you about anything?'" And again, he toned down the comment by noting his own regret: "And that's unfortunately the prevailing wisdom."

O'Reilly was quick to point out that his point of view is not

that of someone outside the Church: "Now the day of prayer and fasting on Ash Wednesday, I'm for that." He quotes from the Catechism and cites it as a valid source of guidance. But he tried to refute the pope's position by comparing it to that of Pope Pius XII, what he called a "very eerie parallel." Although he claimed to have "investigated this fairly extensively," his history was not quite accurate. O'Reilly said that the Vatican "at that time basically didn't do anything either... And so the pope at that time came under a tremendous amount of criticism for basically allowing Hitler to basically be aggressive without the Catholic Church taking a stand against the Third Reich."

Catholic League members know that this is a canard, and O'Reilly backed down from his statement a moment later, admitting that the pope "did criticize Hitler; it's on the record." O'Reilly offered further defense of Pius XII's position: "If Pope Pius had done anything aggressive, Mussolini would have shut him down." And he admitted that Pius XII did good work during the war, for instance, by providing safe houses for refugees.

Speaking on the current pope, he blurted out, "I have never liked this pope. I have always felt he was an autocrat who had no vision about how people live in the real world"; but he quickly noted that John Paul II "survived the Nazis," and later stated self-deprecatingly, "I couldn't really even clean the restroom of the pope."

O'Reilly often overshot his mark, only to cover himself by semi-retractions; he could then point to his moderating comments when people criticize his more uncontrolled statements. His very deliberate style is frustrating. This is not to say that O'Reilly is free from blame; his "no-spin zone" doesn't always live up to the name.

The final straw came on the March 15 broadcast of the Fox News Network's "The O'Reilly Factor." O'Reilly criticized Pope John

Paul II for not having “a position on Saddam [Hussein].” After commenting on the brutality of Saddam Hussein’s regime, O’Reilly said, “And then the pope sits in Rome and says, gee, this is terrible, but does not throw his moral authority behind removing this dictator.” At this point the league could no longer ignore O’Reilly’s rhetoric and so issued the following news release:

“Bill O’Reilly has made no secret about his contempt for Pope John Paul II. On his radio show on March 5 he explicitly said, ‘I have never liked this pope. I have always felt he was an autocrat who had no vision about how people live in the real world.’ Now he is implying that the Holy Father is giving a wink and a nod to Saddam Hussein.

“O’Reilly’s ramblings about the pope do not make him an anti-Catholic. But it does make him an ignoramus. The pope does not have a ‘position’ on Saddam Hussein anymore than he has one on George W. Bush. But he does have a position on the culture of death and all that it represents. Indeed, there is no one in the world who has more forthrightly addressed issues like genocide, torture, abortion and the like than Pope John Paul II. For O’Reilly to suggest that the pope is soft on Saddam is scurrilous.

“Just last Saturday Fidel Castro presided over the inauguration of a new convent of nuns in Cuba. He did so as a fitting tribute to the fifth anniversary of Pope John Paul II’s visit to Cuba. Now it will no doubt come as a tremendous shock to Bill O’Reilly to learn that the pope was able to accomplish this without ever having a position on Fidel Castro. Come to think of it, the pope never had a position on any of the Soviet Union’s officials, yet even Gorbachev credited the Holy Father with bringing about the implosion of the U.S.S.R.

“It’s time O’Reilly took a deep breath and stopped with the hyperbole. It’s also time he learned a little more about his

own religion.”

---

## **CONTROVERSY MARKS ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE (AGAIN)**

It would not be St. Patrick's Day without controversy, and this year was no exception. This time the controversy swirled around New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and the Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick. The Catholic League, not surprisingly, had a hand in the turmoil.

The problem began when Spitzer was chosen to address the Friendly Sons on the evening of St. Patrick's Day at their annual dinner. Spitzer is not popular with practicing Catholics in New York because of his ill-fated attempt to shut down the crisis pregnancy centers in the state. As soon as members of the Friendly Sons received their invitation to the dinner—with Spitzer as a featured speaker—they began calling the Catholic League for help.

We immediately issued a news release informing people that Spitzer has never marched in New York City's St. Patrick's Day Parade. Indeed, in 2000, when asked if he would march in the parade, he told the New York Post, “No.” When pressed, he replied, “It's more a scheduling thing than anything else. I'm not going to march in it. I'll just leave it at that.”

Well, the Catholic League did not just leave it at that. It was quite obvious that Spitzer had previously refused to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade because parade officials bar gays from having their own contingent (note: gays have never been barred from marching any more than pro-life Catholics have—it's just that neither group is permitted to have its own unit).

On February 24, we called Spitzer's office to learn whether the Attorney General was planning to march this year. We were told that Spitzer hadn't decided yet and will let us know in a

few weeks. It didn't take long before officials of Friendly Sons, under mounting pressure from the rank and file, revoked Spitzer's invitation. That, however, wasn't enough for the Catholic League.

We still wanted to know whether Spitzer was prepared to address a major dinner on St. Patrick's Day yet not march in the very parade that honors the patron saint of the Archdiocese of New York. So on March 13, we called his office for an answer. We were told the event was never on his calendar. "In other words," we told the media, "he had every intention of going to the dinner but not marching in the parade. Which means he's decided to stiff Catholics."

One more item of interest: when we called the Friendly Sons after Spitzer's invitation was pulled and asked why he wasn't speaking, we were told he was never scheduled to speak in the first place. This is a lie. We have a copy of the invitation.

Despite this unfortunate incident, this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade was as much fun as it always is.

---

### **SOUTH DAKOTA RESOLVES BUSING DISPUTE**

With short notice, parents of Catholic school students in South Dakota were told the state would no longer provide busing for their children. But the controversy came to a quick end when lawmakers found a compromise measure.

It all began when public schools that provide busing to parochial school students were told they can no longer do so and still be covered by insurance. Citing a South Dakota law and an attorney general's opinion from 1992, school authorities said they had no choice but to curtail service to Catholic students.

In 1992, then-Attorney General Mark Barnett said that the

South Dakota constitution does not permit funds for any sectarian or religious institution. And the reason it doesn't is due to the bigoted Blaine Amendment provisions that are built into the state's constitution; these amendments, all aimed at prohibiting any funding for Catholic institutions, are based on 19th century anti-Catholic legislation. The state recently moved to enforce this provision, and the sitting Attorney General, Larry Long, backed the decision.

But it appears that there was more at stake than the bigoted Blaine Amendment clause in the South Dakota constitution. They instituted a new formula for public school funding: instead of providing money based on how many public school children lived in the school district, the new formula followed a strict head count of children in the public schools. Because public school enrollment in the rural areas of the state has been declining, the new formula was designed to pressure private school students into their schools.

Lawmakers, however, quickly came up with a compromise. Busing for parochial school students could be continued as long as the school districts do not spend any extra money as a result. So far, so good, as Catholic school students are being bused to school again.

The Catholic League pledged to join the fight but did not have to do so given the compromise measure. But it just goes to show that until the Blaine Amendments in the states are jettisoned, the residue of anti-Catholic legislation will continue to be a problem.

---

### **ANTI-RELIGIOUS FANATICS**

Despite all the talk about how religious Americans have become since 9-11, anti-religious fanatics abound these days. Here are three fast examples.

It is hardly surprising to learn that the logo for a city in New Mexico by the name Las Cruces, which means "the crosses," features—you guessed it—multiple crosses. But to the good-humored folks at the local chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, this is an abomination. So they've sued. The complaint? The logo means the state is promoting religion. If so, it certainly hasn't had any effect on Americans United.

The educrats at Varela High School in Florida have no problem with pictures of most student clubs appearing in the school's yearbook. The Animal Rights Club and the Gay-Straight Alliance Club are perfectly welcome to submit pictures of their members. But not the Choose Life Bible Club. That would be unconstitutional—it might suggest the school is promoting religion. That the school might be promoting sodomy is one thing, but it is quite another to go so far as to promote religion. There are times when a man, or even a transgendered type, needs to draw a line in the sand. High Noon has arrived.

What makes this case so interesting is the comment made by the principal: he said the term "Choose Life" might offend students who support abortion. He is, of course, correct. But what apparently escaped him was a compromise—the offended students should be free to adopt signs saying, "Choose Death"; then everyone could be happy. In any event, the ever-sensitive principal folded when threatened with a lawsuit.

Then there was the unassuming dentist from Pagosa Springs, Colorado, who got himself a fast lesson on what the First Amendment will not tolerate these days. All he wanted to do was pay for an advertisement on a local National Public Radio (NPR) station saying, "Gently Restoring the Health God Created." When the free speech advocates at NPR heard this, they went nuts. "God." That was it. The word "God." Now, had the dentist decided to use the name of God in vain, he no doubt would have been defended for exercising freedom of expression.

If you think it's hard to write this stuff without being cynical, you're right.

---

### **CANDY CANE CONTROVERSY**

Passing out colored condoms on high school grounds is less controversial than religious-themed candy canes. That's what we've concluded after examining the controversy at Westfield High School in western Massachusetts.

Last December, six students from Westfield distributed 450 pieces of candy to fellow classmates. The candy canes contained notes declaring the J shape stood for Jesus and red and white stripes symbolized Christ's blood and purity. They were immediately threatened with suspension, and on January 2 were told they had to serve a one-day suspension. Their crime? Violating separation of church and state. Their response? A lawsuit.

The candy-cane distributing students got a boost recently when a new regulation issued by the U.S. Department of Education provided a list of students' rights that the authorities must respect. Among those rights is the right to pray in school, etc. Lawyers for the students were heartened by the news. They are invoking it in their brief, which seeks to get the U.S. District Court in Springfield to throw out their suspensions and allow them to distribute religious material on school grounds.

Things are looking up for the students as the U.S. Department of Justice has filed a friend-of-the-court brief on their side. Now had the students only settled for distributing condoms, the anti-religious cops wouldn't have uttered a word. Such is the state of freedom and morality in America today.

---

## CENSURE GRANTED

In last month's *Catalyst*, there was a story on the antics of Hightstown, New Jersey councilman Eugene Sarafin. Twice Sarafin had used obscenities to describe his Catholic critics. We called for his censure and on March 3 it was granted.

After writing to all of Sarafin's colleagues urging censure, Council President Nancy Walker-Laudenberger introduced a resolution publicly censuring Sarafin's remarks. The motion passed 5-1; Sarafin was the lone dissenter.

We are pleased that these lawmakers took their responsibilities seriously, and we hope to never hear about Sarafin ever again.

---

## AP SHOWS CLASS

It really rubs us the wrong way whenever we experience anti-Catholic bias of a gratuitous nature. And we see a lot of this kind of needless and care-free expressions of Catholic bashing. A story we recently read is a case in point.

The story revolved around a series of strip joints down south called Sammy's strip clubs. It provided all sorts of detail about the multi-million dollar enterprise, including one piece of information that hardly seemed to fit: the identification of the strip club owner's religion.

"The naked truth is surprising: A chain of Deep South strip joints is run by a one-time Catholic schoolgirl from Alabama." That's the way reporter Leigh Anne Monitor began her story in the *Birmingham Post-Herald*, a prominent Alabama newspaper. This little nugget of info had absolutely nothing to do with the story, yet it was gratuitously cited anyway.

What bothered the Catholic League most of all was the fact that the Associated Press (AP) picked up the story and ran it on the Alabama state wire for use in other newspapers in the state. William Donohue promptly registered a complaint with an AP official, Mike Silverman, asking him to explain why it was necessary for AP to report that the woman went to a Catholic school. Donohue asked, "How is this fact relevant to an article about a strip club?"

We are happy to say that Mr. Silverman acted responsibly by agreeing that the reference to Catholic school was gratuitous. He regretted that AP let this get by and explained that it was actually in violation of AP policy to do this. Donohue then commended Silverman for his response by saying this decision proves that "AP is a class organization."

---

### **KISSLING ON CAMPUS**

A pro-abortion group at Williams College, an elite institution in Massachusetts, has invited Catholics for a Free Choice president Frances Kissling to speak during Holy Week. William Donohue wrote a letter to Williams College President Morton Owen Shapiro expressing his concerns.

Donohue identified Kissling as an anti-Catholic who fraudulently uses the term "Catholic" as a cover for her bigotry. Donohue's request of the president was to denounce Kissling for the bigot she is. We are awaiting a response and may consider other avenues to protest her presence on campus.

---

### **NO REPLY**

There's a club in Washington D.C. called "Between Friends" that likes to host after-hours dance parties for homosexuals. It recently decided to throw a party called "Sunday Mass." An

advertisement for the event showed a picture of Christ with the inscription, "Get on your knees, say your prayers, and beg because, boi...God has spoken."

We wrote the proprietor wanting to know whether he has plans to host a Jewish or Muslim service, but he hasn't replied. Somehow we think we'll never hear from this guy. We just hope he got our point.

---

### **WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...**

Call to Action bills itself as a progressive lay Catholic organization. It rejects the Church's teachings on sexuality and other matters, but it nonetheless maintains it is a loyal Catholic group. Though it has the support of some bishops, it would not be surprising if Cardinal Adam Maida, Archbishop of Detroit, and Bishop Paul S. Loverde of Arlington, Virginia, are wondering, "with friends like these who needs enemies?"

The Detroit chapter of Call to Action is planning many protests this spring. All the demonstrations will protest the exclusion of women from the priesthood. Among its ventures, there will be a demonstration at the rededication of Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. The blessing of the Church's oils will also be an occasion for a demonstration, as will the ordination of the next class of seminarians. A billboard advocating women's ordination will be posted just a few blocks away from the renovated cathedral, the home church of Cardinal Maida.

Call to Action in Arlington, Virginia, is seeking to bankrupt the diocese. It is urging a boycott of the Arlington Diocese's annual Lenten appeal. It says it is not satisfied with Bishop Loverde's reaction to the sex abuse scandal. Call to Action wants area Catholics to clip a coupon that says "Zero Dollars" and mail it to the diocese's Lenten appeal.

Catholics for a Free Choice is not a Catholic organization and it has twice been condemned by the bishops as a fraud. But this hasn't stopped its leader, Frances Kissling, from selling herself as a Catholic. What is striking about Kissling these days is that she has finally said something nice about Pope John Paul II, though her insincerity is obvious.

Kissling, like most on the left of the political spectrum, is opposed to the war against Iraq. More than that, Kissling and her ilk find it much more difficult to say anything bad about Saddam Hussein than about George W. Bush. That she has taken to praising Pope John Paul II for failing to support the war shows how utterly shameless the woman is.

On CNN's "Crossfire," Kissling said, "I think the Vatican tends to see things in humanitarian ways." How sweet. Maybe now she'll begin to discover the humanity of unborn babies and start protesting child abuse in the womb.

It was nice to hear Kissling say "the Vatican is a voice for peace." Too bad she doesn't agree with Mother Teresa that nothing destroys peace more than abortion. It was also fun listening to her discover the wisdom of papal authority. In a defense of the pope, she offered, "Religious authority also has legitimate authority." Now if only she meant what she said, we might have cause to celebrate.

The Interfaith Alliance is a rag-tag bunch of religious leaders that have a problem with religion. Their latest target is "In God We Trust." They are incensed that some lawmakers in Colorado want to see our national motto on plaques in every public school in the state. One of those objecting to this initiative is Sister Maureen McCormack of the Sisters of Loretto. "I want to know in whose God we are trusting," she said. One is tempted to say, "Yours," but that would no doubt be rejected as hopelessly chauvinistic. Better to have the god of some indigenous band of tribal warriors—that might win Sister Maureen over.

Another group that makes us wonder is Voice of the Faithful. Those who belong to the group are Catholics upset with the sex abuse scandal; they seek a greater voice for the laity. What made us sit up and take notice recently was the reaction of some of their Long Island members to a miscreant priest. They defended him and blasted those Catholics who exposed him.

It seems that Rev. Charles Papa has visited hundreds of pornographic websites. He has been accused of accessing child pornography, though he disputes this. In any event, when some parishioners found out about his porn hobby, in textbook Voice of the Faithful fashion, they contacted the authorities. And who rushed to his defense? Why the high priests of "zero tolerance," Voice of the Faithful.

As one of its most active members put it, "he [Father Papa] is a human being and a loving, sharing, giving, kind priest. Although porn is not how we want priests to spend their time, let the one without sin throw the first stone."

To understand the behavior of Voice of the Faithful, it is important to know that Rev. Papa supported church members for founding a local chapter of the group last summer. He has also been criticized by parishioners for his dissidence and rejection of certain Church practices. Had he been orthodox, his defenders might have taken a different tact. So much for Voice of the Faithful's commitment to principles.

One more example of this group's affinity for politics was demonstrated in March when the Greater Philadelphia chapter admitted lobbying the papal nuncio to the U.S., Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, on the right of the laity to help select the next bishop of Philadelphia (Cardinal Bevilacqua will soon be retiring). It would be neater, and surely a lot quicker, if Voice simply detailed those areas of ecclesiastical life it isn't interested in controlling.

So if these are some of our friends these days, we don't look

forward to meeting our enemies.

---

## JUST DESERTS

It's not the first time we've read about trouble coming to those who have previously offended us, but this time it's big news: both Disney/Miramax and WNEW are experiencing their share of difficulties these days. We say it's just deserts.

Miramax, a Disney subsidiary, has produced several anti-Catholic movies over the years— so much so that we've pressed Disney chief Michael Eisner to dump Miramax head Harvey Weinstein. Now it seems it's Weinstein who wants to dump Eisner.

Miramax is in its glory these days as one movie after another has done extremely well at the box office. Weinstein's operation is said to be worth \$3 billion. On the other hand, Disney has been going through some rough times for years. Weinstein has brought in 40 of Disney's 44 Oscar nominations this year and he wants out. He says Eisner is gypping him out of his fair share of the profits. An attempt by Weinstein to buy out Disney's Miramax share was rejected by Eisner.

WNEW is the New York radio station that made national news when it broadcast a live sex romp from St. Patrick's Cathedral last summer. The Catholic League led a major protest and the result was that the show's hosts, Opie and Anthony, were fired. This, however, was only the beginning: the station has been floundering ever since.

The station was once known as the nation's number-one carrier of rock music. According to an article in posted on CNN.com, "The venerable station has gone from free-form to free fall, barely registering an Arbitron rating and dumping its most recent format—talk—last month." In short, with Opie and Anthony off the air, WNEW hasn't figured out a way to keep

what's left of its audience.

Disney/Miramax and WNEW both tangled with the Catholic League and lost. Maybe that's because we're getting a little help from a source unknown to these guys.

---

### **PHIL DONAHUE AND ROSIE O'DONNELL ON DISPLAY**

The February 24 edition of "Donahue" (MSNBC) featured an interview of Rosie O'Donnell by host Phil Donahue. The segment ended with an extended conversation on Catholicism.

In discussing the sex abuse scandal in the Church, O'Donnell said: "And you know what? It needs to be out in the forefront. I really hope that the Catholic Church gets sued until the end of time. Maybe, you know, we can melt down some of the gold toilets in the pope's Vatican and pay off some of the lawsuits because, you know, frankly, the whole tenet of Christianity, of being pious, of living a Christ-like life, has been lost in Catholicism, I believe."

William Donohue couldn't resist offering his own analysis to the media. Here it is:

"Well, you know, there is something about two aging and embittered Irish Catholics that is so, well, you know, embarrassing.

"We learned a lot from Rosie last night and none of it was endearing. Here is a grown woman crediting Oprah Winfrey with 'teaching America how to have feelings and how to grieve.' Prior to Oprah we just sulked. Now we all bleed. Then there was the exchange she had with Phil laughing heartily about those times of yesteryear when their parents scrubbed the house before the Monsignor popped by for a visit. Now their houses are a filthy mess as not even a deacon will drop by.

"To hear Rosie proclaim that the Church should not be exempt

'from the laws of nature and God' was quite a treat, especially given that her ideas on the subject strike some as being intrinsically disordered these days. Equally perverse is her comment on the gold toilets in the Vatican: she must be thinking about where she last sat when visiting her grieving friends in Hollywood."

"Well, you know, it's a shame that this close to St. Patrick's Day two deracinated Irish Catholics should find the need to vent on national television. Talk about reality TV—these two are not to be believed."

As it turned out, this was the very last show Phil Donahue did. MSNBC cancelled the show due to poor ratings.

---

## LETTERS

*Vanity Fair*

April 2003

**The Great Debate, Continued: Christopher Hitchens, Catholic League hero?...**

Rarely is there an article on abortion worth reading anymore. That's because both sides are so utterly predictable that it's a waste of time. Christopher Hitchens's contribution, however, is the exception to the rule ["Fetal Distraction," February]. As one who has sparred with him before, I commend Hitchens for his courage and honesty in dealing with this most divisive of issues.

William A. Donohue

President, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

New York, New York

---

*Newsday*

February 21, 2003

## **Murphy's Not to Blame**

There is not a single Catholic I know who is not angry, hurt and dismayed by the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. There is never an excuse for molesting minors and it is even worse when those in positions of authority turn a blind eye to it. But it is also true that nothing justifies unfair accusations.

Closer to home, the reaction against Bishop William Murphy of the Rockville Centre Diocese has been incredibly unfair. The problem on Long Island must be put squarely on the doorstep of Bishop John McGann. Murphy is to blame for none of the problem: 100 percent of it goes to McGann. And that is why it is so obscene to hear people calling for Murphy to resign. He may still have to defend his record in Boston, but on Long Island the verdict is in: He's innocent.

Not only is Murphy innocent, he moved with dispatch to get rid of problem priests. Let me be specific. We all know now that the Rev. Brian McKeon was a serial molester. Under McGann, he was promoted to pastor of St. Anne's in Garden City. Under Murphy, he was bounced: Murphy took over in September 2001 and, in November, McKeon was gone.

No doubt McGann had his reasons for keeping such priests and it is not my intention to impugn his motives. It is my intention to say that whatever good reasons he had, he, like some other bishops, exercised flawed judgment in this regard.

To blame Murphy for any of this is irresponsible. If anything, he put in place a team of professionals led by an exemplary priest, Father Bob Batule, to deal squarely with this issue.

Finally, it is not the bishops of New York who are holding up a mandatory reporting law in New York State—it is Family Planning Advocates (the lobbying arm of Planned Parenthood)

and the New York Civil Liberties Union. They are opposed to blanketing everyone because they are interested in shielding abortion providers from reporting cases of statutory rape. Would that Suffolk District Attorney Thomas Spota would get on board with the bishops in insisting that there be no exemptions; instead, he wants the law to apply only to the clergy.

There are lots of reasons to be angry but no amount of it justifies trashing the innocent. The evidence shows that almost all priests have had absolutely nothing to do with the scandal; it also shows that Murphy's role on Long Island has been to tackle what he inherited.

In short, before anyone further hyperventilates over the "crisis," let's not forget that most of our priests are good men and that Long Island's bishop is doing what he can to move forward.

William A. Donohue

*Editor's note: The writer is president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. Manhattan*

---

*The American Conservative*

March 10, 2003

### **Drawing Distinctions**

Jeremy Lott (Feb. 10) claims that the Catholic League uses the same tactics as CAIR. That may be true in some instances but the examples he cited are poor. The Catholic League does not issue "frequent alerts to elicit comments and money from supporters." Six times a year we ask our members for a donation to pay for a specific project.

Do we "demonize" our opponents? We fight back against those

who bash the Church, but it is not easy to see how this amounts to “demonizing.” Regarding the charge of our “slipshod use of polling,” we don’t poll. Finally, do we “elevate small tiffs into a national outrage”? That’s quite subjective: when we got “Opie and Anthony” fired for broadcasting a description of a couple having sex in St. Patrick’s Cathedral, we weren’t elevating anything—we were simply responding to an outrageous condition.

In short, it is tricky business to lump all anti-defamation organizations together.

William Donohue

President, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights  
New York, NY

---

*Reason*

March 2003

### **E Pluribus Umbrage**

Tim Cavanaugh, author of “E Pluribus Umbrage” (December), finds it amusing that in the midst of the church’s priest scandal, the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights “alerted its 300,000 members to a grave threat to the faith: a King of the Hill episode in which cartoon housewife Peggy impersonates a nun.”

This makes it sound as if we object to Sister Act portrayals, but anyone who has really followed the Catholic League knows this is bunk. Our objection to this episode was the vile way in which the Eucharist was treated. Cavanaugh omits this because it would interfere with the point he wants to make.

On a more important note, Cavanaugh says that our petition to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) protesting Opie and Anthony shows we really do believe in censorship. This is

nonsense. Congress long ago established the FCC, and no one has ever ruled it to be a censorial body. Indeed, when we succeeded in getting the show kicked off the air, we immediately requested the FCC not to go through with yanking the license of the station.

Perhaps the most telling comment by Cavanaugh is his remark that “the most endearing thing about Bill Donohue is that he genuinely seems to enjoy hurting people.” It would be more accurate to say I enjoy giving it to intellectual jackasses. Cavanaugh will escape my wrath because he is no intellectual.

William A. Donohue  
President, Catholic League for Religious and  
Civil Rights

---

*America*  
March 3, 2003

### **Accurate**

The Rev. Andrew M. Greeley’s conclusion that *The New York Times*’s coverage of the sexual abuse scandal in the church constitutes “virulent anti-Catholicism” is irresponsible (“*The Times* and Sexual Abuse by Priests” 2/10). The *Times*, like most major newspapers that covered the scandal, never implied that most priests were predators. And this is especially true of Laurie Goodstein, whom Father Greeley attacks. Never have I found her to be anything but professional and accurate in her reporting.

It does no good to blame the messenger for bringing bad news.

William A. Donohue  
President, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights  
New York, N.Y.

---

# Bigotry's New Low: The New Republic's Taunt

by Michael Novak

(Catalyst 3/2002)

*The government of the United States, George Washington wrote to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport in 1790, "gives to bigotry no sanction." But now The New Republic does.*

"The anti-Semitism of the intellectuals," Peter Vierek once shrewdly remarked, "is anti-Catholicism." In its January 21 issue, *The New Republic* has sunk into the swamp of bigotry as low as it could go. It gave 25 pages to Daniel Jonah Goldhagen so that he could offer Catholics a theological interpretation of what their faith entails, and hint broadly that the Church deserves destruction as an ally of the anti-Christ and enemy of humankind.

In Goldhagen's fevered view, the startling uniqueness of Adolf Hitler's totalitarian racial hatred, a uniqueness that preoccupied a generation of philosophers of history, has been diminished until Hitler for him is only a later "chapter" in the long history of Catholic perfidy and nefariousness toward the Jews.

The calm and objective assessment of wrong—with due regard for every circumstance—was not Goldhagen's aim, neither as moral judge nor as historian. His tirade is theological in form, making an argument about the theological nature of Catholicism, its doctrines, its criteria for martyrdom and for sainthood, its proper relation to Judaism, its conception of what its mission as Church is (its ecclesiology), its relation

to truth and its ideal relation to other religions.

In its title (chosen perhaps by his editors, but well justified by his closing questions), Goldhagen opens with a theological taunt: "What would Jesus do?" There is no evidence in Goldhagen's work, nor in the recent history of *The New Republic*, that such a question is one he himself or the magazine for which he writes takes seriously. Nor is there any sign that he, or the magazine, has examined the life, work, and words of Jesus to see just what Jesus in fact did in the circumstances of his day closest to those of today. In other words, not a serious question but a taunt.

Regarding Roman imperialism, the subjection of the Jews, the Roman practices of slavery and torture (such as Jesus was made to suffer himself), according to the New Testament Jesus was, well, silent. "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were of this world, do you doubt that my Father would send legions of angels to my aid?"

His silence infuriated his accusers.

Unlike Jesus, Pius XII was not silent regarding the Jews. As secretary of state to Pius XI, he almost certainly had a determining hand in the letter condemning Hitler, *With Burning Concern* (*Mit Brennender Sorge*). Through the broadcasts of Vatican Radio, regularly amplified for the English-speaking world through *The Tablet* of London and the British intelligence and broadcasting services, Pius XII was the first to tell the world about the sufferings of Jews (by name) and other minorities, including during the war years more millions of Catholics than Jews. Much that the New York Times and the London Times published about the plight of Jews, Poles, and other civilians during the early war years came from the Vatican, through its radio broadcasts, papal statements, and the Pope's newspaper (totally dependent on Mussolini for newsprint and less free than Vatican Radio) *Osservatore Romano*.

Although I have not read them myself, I am told by people I trust that the sworn depositions for the evidentiary process of beatification and canonization of Pius XII contain testimonies by persons well-known for their efforts to help the Jews, who affirm that they received specific instructions from the Pope to do so.

Even those scholars who minimize what the Pope did have had to admit that his personal efforts saved scores of thousands of Jews (in Hungary, Goldhagen admits)—too little, too late, they say. Was not what Schindler and Raul Wallenberg did also too little, too late, and yet altogether noble?

One may argue with Pius XII's principles, but one cannot argue that they marked out the course from which he did not waver: (1) neutrality as between the belligerent powers, in the case that papal mediation might one day be sought; (2) timely and clear enunciation of relevant moral principles (platitudes, as Goldhagen calls them; the timeless moral law); and (3) the denunciation of egregious abuses of moral principles, such as mass murders, the imprisonment of civilians solely for racial or religious or ethnic reasons, and mass bombings from airplanes of civilian populations in cities.

The Pope did not lack courage, and he did not lack clarity of mind. Mistaken he may have been. Open to criticism like any other mortal he certainly is. He prayed much and suffered much internally under the pressure. But he did not waver. After the war, he received immense plaudits from the citizens of Italy, including the Jewish community of Rome, the nation of Israel, the Israeli Philharmonic that traveled to the Vatican in 1955 to give a concert in gratitude, and Jewish and other groups throughout the world. The rabbi of Rome became a Catholic, in large measure through being stirred by the assistance given Jews by the Pope and friendships formed in the process.

Though I am not a professional historian, I have read enough on Pius XII—and have a sizable personal library on the period—that I see the transparent tendentiousness of nearly

every historical point that Goldhagen raises. In every case, he selects accounts or facts that set the Pope in the light he wishes to put popes into, and ignores facts, testimonies, and accounts that sharply contradict his version of events.

Yet let us suppose for a moment that every accusation Goldhagen makes against Pius XII is true. So then we had, as publisher Martin Peretz has it, a "wicked man" as pope. Well, it wouldn't have been the first one. Indeed, Goldhagen says there is a danger in concentrating on Pius XII, because his personal behavior isn't the issue. What is wrong with Christianity runs through all the popes. It infects the core of Christian theology itself. It corrupts the very essence of the Church. What Goldhagen calls for is nothing less than the extermination of the Church as it now is and has been since the beginning. *Ecrasez l'infame.*

The great sin of which Goldhagen accuses the Church is its "supersessionist creed," namely, its clear teaching that the New Covenant supersedes the Old Covenant. Even to speak of "New" and "Old," Goldhagen quotes a soulmate, "is inherently supersessionist."

As John Paul II has made clear, however, the Jewish Testament remains valid; God can no more become unfaithful to His covenant with the Jews than He can to His covenant with Christians. The relation between Jews and Christians, therefore, is asymmetrical. Christians must understand and accept Jewish faith, in order to accept Christian faith. Their God is also the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Apart from the background, principles, and prophecies of the Jewish Testament, the Christian Testament does not make sense. Christians, in order to be Christians, must be Jews in belief (though not in circumcision and ritual), in a way that, in order to be Jews, Jews need not be Christians. That is the asymmetry.

To put this another way, in order to go deeper into their own

faith as Christians, it is both common and altogether necessary for Christians to go deeper into the Jewish Testament and plumb all they can of Judaism, the Judaism of serious reflection today, as well as of yesteryear. For this reason, Christians today need a vital, believing Jewish community that will lead them into the depths of Jewish faith. The reverse can scarcely be said of Jews, many of whom feel no need whatever, in order to be Jews, to study Christian doctrine or history.

The reason Goldhagen is quite guilty of the charge of anti-Catholicism lies in the breadth and passion of the smears he spreads across a broad history, the distortion and hysteria of his tone, the extremity of his rage, and the lack of proportion in his judgments—dwarfing Hitler and making Pius XII a giant of evil, and then diminishing Pius XII so as to indict the whole of Christian theology down the ages. It is disingenuous of him to stop at Christ, the good and gentle Christ of his parody, and at the edges of the Christian Testament, which is our main source for knowledge about the character and teachings of Christ.

Goldhagen went over the top in disqualifying Catholics from any moral standing, so long as they hold to Catholic faith as it is. He wants a new type of Catholicism to supersede the old. In this, he reminds me not a little of Voltaire and other haters of the Church. The Enlightenment, too, was supersessionist in its self-conception, its light triumphing over the darkness of Rome—and not just of Rome, but of Jerusalem as well.

We have all had to learn that we must accept one another's reality as we are, without trying to make others over into our own image of what they ought to be. We can appeal to one another in argument and in debate, in mutual searching, and even in mutual fraternal correction of one another's oversights and errors. But mutual honor and respect are the first preconditions of dialogue. It is sad that The New

Republic went over to the side of a bigotry that makes dialogue impossible. After many centuries of woe, we need every moment of dialogue that we can get.

*Michael Novak holds the Jewett Chair in Religion and Public Policy at the American Enterprise Institute. He also serves on the Catholic League's board of advisors. This is an amended version of an article that first appeared in the National Review and is reprinted here with permission.*