

# CATHOLICS RALLY TO SUPPORT BISHOP MURPHY

Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre has come under attack by Voice of the Faithful (VOTF), a lay Catholic reform group organized in the wake of the sex abuse scandal. On July 24, citing a report by Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly issued on July 23, VOTF said the time has come for Bishop Murphy to resign. On July 25, the Catholic League came to the defense of Bishop Murphy and organized a [petition drive](#) on his behalf.

“The decision by Voice of the Faithful demanding that Bishop Murphy resign,” William Donohue said, “has now ignited a battle with the Catholic League.” In announcing the petition drive, Donohue said, “this will settle the issue of who really speaks for Long Island Catholics.” The Catholic League has approximately 15,000 members in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, a number that represents half of Voice of the Faithful’s numbers nationwide.

The principal reason why the Catholic League is so strongly supporting Bishop Murphy is because there is *no evidence* of wrongdoing on his part when he was in Boston. And in the two years he has been bishop to Catholics on Long Island, he has made many important changes, including decisions to remove molesters from the priesthood. Indeed, it took him exactly two months before the first two priests were thrown out.

The report issued by Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly was specific regarding the culpability of some bishops who worked in the Boston Archdiocese. Not included in that list was Bishop Murphy. Less than two pages of the report even mention him and the worst that can be said about him is that he “supervised” the infamous John Geoghan. What the report did not say is that Bishop Murphy supervised *his dismissal from*

*ministry and ultimately from the priesthood.* Not to mention this, Donohue said, “smacks of corruption.”

No one has ever charged Bishop Murphy with moving molesting priests from parish to parish or anything like that. That is why the report has nothing incriminating to say about him. If, in fact, he were guilty, the Catholic League would not defend him.

“It is tempting for activist organizations that are angry at the Church to steamroll their way to justice,” Donohue said. “But justice demands that innocent people not be run over,” he added. The *New York Times* quoted Donohue as saying, “What we have here is classic McCarthyism, guilt by association. Simply because Bishop Murphy served in Boston, he is presumed guilty.”

The petition was mailed to every Catholic League member in Nassau and Suffolk (those who may not have received it can print one here and return it to us at 450 7th Ave., New York, NY 10123). It was also mailed to every pastor on Long Island asking him to get parishioners to sign it. But this was called off when Bishop Murphy thought it unwise to involve the pastors in a fight between two lay groups. For the record, Bishop Murphy called Donohue to extend his sincere thanks for the league’s support. So did Cardinal William Baum.

Immediately joining the petition drive was the Long Island councils of the Knights of Columbus. Denis Dillon, the Nassau County District Attorney, lent his support as well.

In a radio debate that Donohue had with Patricia Zirkel, co-director of the Long Island chapter of VOTF, he asked her to be specific regarding the evidence that Bishop Murphy was guilty of wrongdoing while in Boston. She could not provide a single instance. Her entire complaint is that because he served where there was corruption, he must resign. Donohue likened this to demanding that everyone in the *New York*

*Times* who knew of the corruption surrounding rogue reporter Jayson Blair ought to resign.

More evidence that Bishop Murphy is innocent can be found by reading the book *Betrayal: The Crisis in the Catholic Church*. The book is the work of the Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporters from the *Boston Globe*. In the book, many bishops who served in Boston are mentioned unfavorably. Not among them is Bishop Murphy.

There are precisely five pages in the 266-page volume on Monsignor William F. Murphy: the first three pages where he is mentioned the reference is to Bishop Murphy of Rockville Centre; the last two pages are in reference to another priest of the same name. Regarding the entries on Bishop Murphy, not only is there nothing incriminating, he is credited with removing serial molester John Geoghan!

VOTF published on its website a report trying to show Bishop Murphy's culpability. To show how utterly fallacious it is, read the response by Catholic League policy analyst Joseph De Feo; it is available [here](#).

It is important to note that throughout the scandal, the Catholic League has not involved itself in fights over whether a particular bishop should resign. Until now. And that is because the evidence is in—Bishop Murphy is innocent.