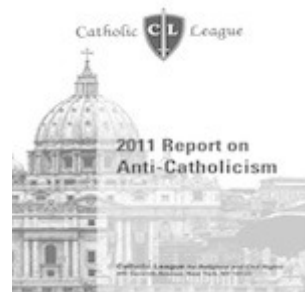


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When 2011 began, we did not expect that we would spend a disproportionate amount of time addressing attacks on the Catholic Church stemming from charges of clergy sexual abuse. But we did. Consider how this unfolded.



At the beginning of 2002, the *Boston Globe* published a series of articles on priestly sexual abuse in the Boston Archdiocese. This led the bishops to pass a charter in June of that year that spelled out the reforms. The years that followed were predictably tough, but then everything settled down. There was evidence in 2010 that this issue was resurfacing, but it was not until 2011 that things began to boil again.

Like many Catholics, we were aghast at the revelations that emerged in 2002. Indeed, I was quoted in the *New York Times* saying, "I am not the church's water boy. I am not here to defend the indefensible." Moreover, we applauded the *Boston Globe* for reporting on rogue priests. Yet in 2011, we were highly critical of the media, including the *Globe*. What changed?

In a nutshell, what changed was this: in 2011, unlike what happened in 2002, virtually all the stories were about accusations against priests dating back decades, sometimes as long as a half-century ago. Keep in mind that not only were most of these priests old and infirm, many were dead; thus, only one side of the story could be told. Adding to our anger was the fact that no other institution, religious or secular, was being targeted for old allegations.

I refer to these events as Scandal I and Scandal II: the first was internal, the result of indefensible decisions by the clergy that led to the abuse scandal; the second was external, the result of indefensible cherry-picking of old cases by lawyers, victims' groups and the media.

In 2011, it seemed as if "repressed memories" surfaced with alacrity, but only among those who claimed they were abused by a priest. That there was no similar explosion of "repressed memories" on the part of those who were molested by ministers, rabbis, teachers, psychologists, athletic coaches, and others, made us wonder what was going on. Nothing has happened since to shake our skepticism.

What accounts for the new wave of lawsuits and attacks on the Catholic Church? That's not hard to figure out. Quite frankly, there are so few plausible cases of abuse these days that only by trotting out old cases can the game clock keep moving. As has been well documented, the scandal peaked between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s, the years of the sexual revolution (AIDS effectively put an end to it when it was uncovered in 1981). Additionally, the reforms that have taken place in the last decade have also led to a sharp decline in cases. This would seem to make the issue moot, yet it hasn't gone away.

Quite frankly, there are those who are motivated by revenge, not justice, and for them the best way to continue the scandal is to resurrect old cases of alleged abuse. This cannot happen unless state legislatures suspend the statute of limitations for such offenses. And this is exactly what these activists and attorneys have been doing—finding sympathetic lawmakers to introduce new legislation.

By going to state legislatures looking to suspend the statute of limitations, lawyers bent on "getting the priests" can keep the clock ticking. It must be said that when these changes in law are sought, *no one seeks to blanket public institutions.*

In other words, the public school establishment has no skin in this game, even though most of the abuse takes place in the public schools. That's another reason why Scandal II is so different from the initial scandal—it's intellectually dishonest.

The Catholic League did a lot more than protest Scandal II: we took out full-page ads in newspapers exposing the players. For instance, on April 11 the *New York Times* published an ad I had written that addressed the issue of the sexual abuse of minors forthrightly; it was chock full of information and data on the subject that the average reader was not likely to know. The response to the ad, ranging from bishops to the laity, was so encouraging that a Catholic League member from the Chicago area stepped forward to pay for the same statement to run on April 17 in the *Chicago Tribune*. The word was out—Scandal II was contrived.

One of the most notorious Church-suing lawyers in the nation is Jeffrey Anderson, a man who has made hundreds of millions bilking the Church. Ever since Cardinal Timothy Dolan was the archbishop of Milwaukee, the Minnesota-based Anderson has had a particular hatred of the New York archbishop. We responded to Anderson's attacks on March 13 with an ad in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, "Jeffrey Anderson's Vendetta."

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia was also in the hot seat in 2011. It had previously been the subject of grand juries, processes that served only to smear the Church—they led to no indictments—so when another was convened, we knew what would happen.

By singling out the Philadelphia archdiocese again in 2011, it was a sure bet that it would garner plenty of negative media coverage. Of course, old accusations made against priests are hard to prove, but at the end of the day they had already been convicted in the mind of the public.

Voice of the Faithful is a loose band of aging and bitter Catholics with little money and even less clout. The Philadelphia branch came out of retirement to “survey” the 900-plus priests in the archdiocese, asking loaded questions designed to force them to either agree with Voice or to be painted as insensitive. But the activists weren’t counting on the Catholic League to throw a monkey wrench into their plan: we wrote to all the priests encouraging them to ignore the survey. They did. Thus, the entire caper proved to be an utter failure.

Philadelphia Archbishop Justin Rigali resigned in 2011; he was replaced by Archbishop Charles Chaput from Denver. We knew that the forces which had worked against Rigali would continue their attacks on Chaput, so we were ready for the fight. What we did not count on, however, was an unusually vicious attack on the archdiocese in the pages of *Rolling Stone*, the pop music magazine. I wrote a long article rebutting the smears, attempting to set the record straight. It’s a disgrace that *Rolling Stone* would publish such an ignorant rant.

In the spring, the John Jay College of Criminal Justice released its report on the “Causes and Consequences” of priestly sexual abuse. We took a balanced view of it, praising the report when it merited such a response, and questioning its logic when it deserved criticism. We did not raise questions about its data collection, but we did point out serious omissions.

Most important, we called attention to the report’s conclusions that were not supported by its own data. In particular, we showed how inventive the authors were in skirting the obvious: because homosexual practices were involved in most of the abuse allegations, it appeared obvious that homosexual priests did most of the damage. But to say this requires courage in our society today, and the John Jay authors were sorely lacking in this quality.

I responded to the John Jay study with a report of my own; it was sent to all the bishops, as well as to many in the media. No one issued a rational rebuttal. Yes, it was greeted with the usual cat-calls and other irrational comments, but no one published a professional rejoinder. When something like this happens, it says a great deal about the motives of those who simply resort to vitriol.

One of the prime movers and shakers in the war on the Catholic Church is the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP). At one time, there was reason to believe that SNAP was genuinely concerned about the plight of victims. But it has become increasingly evident that its real goal is to discredit the moral authority of the Catholic Church. In short, it wants to “get the priests.” Here’s the proof.

When I learned that SNAP was planning a conference just outside of Washington, D.C. in July, I arranged for two trusted sources to attend, and to report back. What they witnessed was a weekend of unrelieved hostility directed at the Catholic Church. The Church was not an organization that had made some serious mistakes—it was an “evil institution.” Miscreant priests were not seen as wayward souls; they were cast as part-and-parcel of a systematic abuse of power, all emanating from Rome. This kind of paranoia went unchallenged for days.

The good news is that the report I wrote, which was based on the information provided to me by our confederates, also went unchallenged. In other words, none of the participants at this Church-bashing conference disputed a single statement from the report, *SNAP Exposed*.

Toward the end of the year, SNAP and its lawyer friends took aim at Kansas City-St. Joseph Bishop Robert Finn. This time they were joined at the hip by the *Kansas City Star*, a newspaper with a history of treating the Catholic Church unfairly. At the turn of the millennium, the *Star* conducted a

wholly unscientific survey of priests looking to see how many had contracted AIDS; no other segment of the population was “surveyed.” When the results proved disconcerting to them, they were not too happy. Now they were back looking to take down the local bishop.

What got the anti-Finn crowd going was the revelation that a priest in the diocese had taken some inappropriate pictures of girls. (It must be noted that it was the diocese that went public with the information—otherwise no one would have known about it.) Although none of the pictures were pornographic, they were disturbing. When the priest learned that his superiors were on to his sick habit, he attempted suicide. After receiving therapy, he was placed under restrictions. When he violated those strictures, the diocese called the police and asked for an independent investigation.

SNAP went ballistic. But the real news was the role played by the *Star*: it sought to clobber Bishop Finn. There was scant evidence that the bishop had done anything illegal, and indeed he was not under any legal mandate to report the offending priest to the authorities. Moreover, there was no complainant. But this didn’t matter to those who saw an opening, and after a rush of negative publicity, local county prosecutors took aim at Finn.

The *Star* was so thoroughly biased in its reporting that we decided to inform the Kansas City community of what really happened: we sought to take out a full-page ad exposing the SNAP-driven crusade against Bishop Finn. Though initially we were told that our ad would run, we were turned down at the last minute. There was no explanation. This was unprecedented—never have we had one of ads turned down before by any newspaper. What made this so striking was the precarious financial condition of the *Star*; it laid off over 1,000 employees in the last ten years. That it turned down \$25,000 tells us how desperately it wanted to keep the public in the dark about SNAP’s real agenda.

This didn't stop us. If anything, it emboldened us. We had the ad published in the *Northeast News*, a weekly suburban newspaper, and we posted it on our website. We didn't stop there: we sent copies of the ad that the *Star* did not want the people of Kansas City to read to every Catholic parish, Protestant church, synagogue, mosque, school, civic association and college in the area. We also hit over 150 local businesses, including the Chamber of Commerce, every major government official, and an array of bars, barbers shops and beauty salons.

In November, the Catholic League held a press conference outside the headquarters of the *Star*. Four of us traveled to Kansas City to make the point that Bishop Finn was unjustly being attacked by SNAP, and the *Star* was covering for them. We also wanted to gin up support for Finn, which clearly we did. When we were finished, few in Kansas City were unaware of how thoroughly politicized SNAP is, and how ideologically tainted the *Star* is.

We were busy on other fronts as well in 2011. Government, at all levels, created some problems for us, though the most serious offenses took place at the federal level. The refusal of the Obama administration to defend the Defense of Marriage Act was a shot across the bow at people of faith, not just Catholics. Where the Catholic bishops felt the pinch the most was in their dealings with Kathleen Sebelius, the Secretary of Health and Human Services; she has had more run-ins with the Catholic hierarchy than any Catholic public servant alive today.

Things came to a head when the administration's "Obamacare" legislation was being considered for implementation. Yes, there was a religious exemption, but it was functionally meaningless: in order not to provide sterilization and contraceptive services (including abortifacients), Catholic institutions had to employ and service mostly Catholics. Of course, one of the great strengths of the Catholic Church

historically has been its record of not discriminating against people on the basis of religion. But now this asset was being treated as a liability.

The Catholic community was astounded when it learned that a program that the bishops' conference had been running for years—an outreach program to the victims of human trafficking—was not going to receive its usual funding. As it turned out, the process was rigged: even though the proposal submitted by the bishops scored highly in an internal review of applications, it was rejected because the Church does not see abortion as a legitimate way to “help” women in need. The animus against Catholicism was palpable.

Sexual politics was at work in the states, as well. Because the Catholic Church does not accept homosexuals in its adoptive and foster care programs, states like Illinois followed the lead of Massachusetts in denying Catholic agencies funding. So much for all the talk about diversity, tolerance, religious liberty, and conscience rights; it came to a screeching halt when the interests of the gay lobby were in play.

At the local level, New York City Michael Bloomberg showed how contemptuous he is of religious rights when he summarily denied the right of the clergy to speak at the 9/11 commemorative events. His gag order had nothing to do with fidelity to the First Amendment—it had everything to do with his secular orientation and hostility to the public expression of religion.

Celebrities always get into the act by taking cheap shots at the Catholic Church, and 2011 was no exception. Jay Leno continued his tirade against priests, though he pulled back noticeably when we did a mass mailing to all the top officials at NBC detailing his sordid history. Lady Gaga showed her ugly side several times, and another “raised Catholic” superstar, Susan Sarandon, showed what she is made of when she took a low

blow at the pope. Even after Sarandon was denounced by the Catholic League and the ADL for calling the pope a “Nazi,” she refused to apologize (I specifically did not ask for one, knowing full well that she meant it—she repeated the slur a second time at a tony Hamptons event).

Fortunately, the proverbial “War on Christmas” was less intense in 2011 than we’ve seen in many years. Not only were there less untoward acts of vandalism reported in 2011, there were many signs that Christians have had it. Christmas celebrations that had previously been banned resurfaced; nativity scenes that hadn’t been erected on public property in years were displayed again; and obstinate local officials who sided with the radical secularists were the object of protests.

Fighting anti-Catholicism yields uneven results. In 2011, we made progress combating bigotry in the media, but we had less success fighting the onslaught of attacks emanating from government. The battle against the “get the priests” crowd of lawyers, activists and reporters was mostly positive, although there were setbacks. One thing is clear: we have a lot of Catholics on our side, to say nothing of the priests who are counting on us to even the playing field.

The Catholic League is not a big organization, but there is no other entity that accomplishes so much with so little. That is something all our supporters can be proud of—it certainly energizes us.

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President