

FBI PROBE OF CATHOLICS STILL UNRESOLVED

[Bill Donohue](#)

On Thursday, April 18, 2024, the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Inspector General (IG) Michael E. Horowitz released his report on the FBI's leaked memo targeting Catholics, and once again the loyal sons and daughters of the Catholic Church have been slapped in the face.

While the IG's report notes that the memo "improperly conflated religious beliefs of activists with the likelihood they would engage in domestic terrorism," it goes on to say that there was no evidence that "anyone ordered or directed" an investigation of Catholics because of their religious beliefs.

To say that no one ordered an investigation of Catholics because of their religion is about as persuasive as saying no one ordered an investigation of blacks because of their race.

Frankly, the IG's report does little to bring this issue to a close. It is overly vague, ambiguous, and littered with contradictions. Catholics deserve a better accounting of the FBI's and DOJ's actions.

The IG insists that the memo grew out of the FBI's investigation of alleged domestic terrorists. But if the intent of this investigation was to focus on right-wing nationalists, how did Catholics become the focus of the leaked FBI memo last year? Why did the FBI look into establishing sources and other contacts in the Church, instead of focusing on the stomping grounds unique to right-wing nationalists? The IG's report has nothing to clarify these questions.

Further, the IG's report admits that one of the authors of the

leaked memo says she was “really interested in this resurgence of interest in the Catholic Church” by what the FBI claim are domestic terrorists. This statement alone contradicts the claim in the IG’s report that Catholics were just tangentially connected to the FBI’s investigation of genuine targets. From the jump, the authors clearly were “interested” in the Catholic Church.

Ultimately, the IG’s report does not put this matter to rest. Certain elements within the FBI and DOJ went rogue and have not been held accountable for their actions. For a year, they could have taken proactive steps to assure Catholics across the country that these renegades faced serious consequences; however, they have admitted they were “aghast” and even “appalled” by the leaked memo but took no substantive actions to resolve the matter.

Therefore, I call upon the Congress, a co-equal branch of government, to exercise its oversight authority to get to the bottom of this once and for all. Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) has rightfully pointed out that the IG’s report glosses over the fact that critical files associated with the memo were deleted. This is a serious breach. These files are federal records and bureaucrats cannot just destroy them on a whim.

Additionally, Representative Jim Jordan (R-OH) has shown great tenacity in taking on the FBI. I would encourage him in the strongest terms possible to call for new hearings on this matter so we can hear directly from IG Horowitz to clear up the vagueness and ambiguities in his written report.

Last year, I sent several letters to Rep. Jordan with direct questions that would help allay the fears of Catholics regarding the FBI’s memo. Many of them remain unanswered. It is paramount we get the answers to these questions:

Was it someone from outside the FBI that crafted this egregious abuse of power?

Has there been a broader internal investigation of the FBI seeking to learn if other agents have also been spying on Catholics?

How common is it for FBI agents to infiltrate houses of worship—of any religion—employing “tripwire sources”?

What did they intend to do with the information once they completed their probe?

Without new hearings and concrete efforts not only to resolve the lingering questions but also to hold these rogue agents accountable, Catholics will rightly remain skeptical of the FBI and DOJ. We are not walking away from this, and I will have more to say on this in the future.