

FBI'S PROBE OF CATHOLICS: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The following letter by Bill Donohue is in response to the Inspector General's report on the FBI probe of Catholics:

April 24, 2024

Hon. Jim Jordan
Chairman
House Committee on the Judiciary
2056 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-3504

Dear Chairman Jordan:

After issuing a news release on April 19, the day after news stories broke on the FBI's internal probe of Analysts involved in the investigation of Catholics, I had a chance to read Inspector General Michael Horowitz's report on this issue. While he satisfied some of our concerns, serious issues remain.

Horowitz begins by noting that the Richmond Field Office examined "a purported link between Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists (RMVEs) and 'Radical Traditionalist Catholic (RTC)' ideology." He then cites the conclusion reached by the FBI Inspection Division.

While there was no evidence of malice, it was determined that the probe of Catholics "lacked sufficient evidence" to establish a relationship between the aforementioned extremists and RTC ideology. The report also concluded that the FBI Analysts "incorrectly conflated the subjects' religious views with their RMVE activities..."

This begs the question: Why did the Analysts think there was a

relationship in the first place? It is one thing to concede that there are racial and ethnic extremists in every religious *and* secular organization; it is quite another to assume a nexus between a mainstream religious organization and violence, especially when the grounds for making such an assumption are spurious.

It is as revealing as it is disturbing to note that the probe of Catholics was based on *one* person, namely, Defendant A. That he is clearly a violent, bigoted thug—he hates everyone from Jews to cops—is uncontested. But where are the others? There isn't even a Defendant B.

More disturbing is the admission that Defendant A does not attend a Catholic church. The report admits that he attended a church “with an international religious society that advocates traditional Catholic theology and liturgy *but it is not considered by the Vatican to be in full communion with the Catholic Church* (my italics).”

Later in the report we learn that “there was no evidence that Defendant A was being radicalized” at the church he attended, and that “he had been on the radar ‘as an unstable, dangerous individual’ before ‘any association with any Catholic related entity whatsoever.’” That being the case, why was it necessary to investigate his fellow churchgoers? Since when does the FBI conduct an investigation of a world religion on the basis of one miscreant whom they admit was not radicalized by it?

To make matters worse, the report says that when those who attended church with Defendant A were questioned about him, they confessed that he “displayed ‘unusual’ and ‘concerning’ behavior.” In fact, the report does not note a single person who attended church with him who found him persuasive—they knew he was odd. Thus does this admission undercut the rationale for a further probe of Catholics.

We know from previous disclosures that “mainline Catholic

parishes” were targeted by the FBI. Yet we now know that the Analysts couldn’t even identify radicals within this breakaway Catholic entity, never mind rank-and-file Catholic men and women.

The judgment of both Analysts was more than flawed—it was totally irresponsible. Even more mind-boggling is what the FBI HQ Analyst had to say.

Analyst 1 voiced the opinion that the probe had a “national application.” Analyst 2 admitted that she was “going to take a look at other RMVE actors that are rad-trads” (radical traditionalists). To top things off, the FBI HQ Analyst said she was “really interested in this resurgence of interest in the [C]atholic [C]hurch from our [DVEs]. The latter refers to Domestic Violence Extremists.

What occasioned this “resurgence of interest” in the Catholic Church? Was it something that someone did? Or does this reflect the ideological predilections of the Analyst? Notice she wasn’t referring to a “resurgence of interest” in breakaway Catholic entities. She was referring to the Roman Catholic Church.

There are many issues left outstanding. Moreover, if we are to believe that what happened was nothing of a serious nature, why was it necessary for the FBI to delete files? That suggests a cover up.

Thank you for your continued interest in this matter. When the Catholic Church is subjected to scrutiny by the FBI because of the beliefs and behavior of one maladjusted individual—who does not attend a Catholic church—it cries out for a much more detailed response than what the Horowitz report affords.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President

cc: FBI Director Christopher Wray