

# GRAND JURY PROBES EMERGE; CHURCH SINGLED OUT

Following the publication of a Pennsylvania grand jury report on clergy sexual abuse, many states are considering launching a grand jury of their own.

Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey and New York have announced investigations, and other states are weighing doing the same. Radical activist groups like the Center for Constitutional Rights are asking for a federal probe, though there appears to be no congressional interest in that effort.

The Catholic League position is clear and concise: there should be no grand jury investigation of the Catholic Church *unless all other private and public sector institutions are included*. To single out the Church smacks of bigotry.

Where are the calls for grand jury investigations of Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, and Protestant organizations? Wherever adults intermingle with minors on a regular basis, there is the possibility of abuse. Most important, why is no one calling for an investigation of the public schools?

The identity of the victimizer should not matter: what should matter are the victims. Moreover, given the great strides that have been made in this country since the Dallas reforms of 2002, it makes it all the more unjust to examine only the Catholic Church.

Bill Donohue wrote a letter to the attorneys general in all 50 states, and it was copied to thousands of state lawmakers across the nation, asking them to include all religious organizations, private non-sectarian entities, and the public schools in their probes. It was a big undertaking, but it was necessary. See p. 4.

We need to know who knew what and when about the predatory behavior of Theodore McCarrick, and we need assurances that the seminaries are not gay enclaves. What we don't need are endless panels and investigations of what happened decades ago. We already have a good grip on that.

Catholics are angry about what has happened, and who can blame them? However, it is important not to be played.

To be specific, we should not let all other institutions off the hook—we should demand that they be investigated—otherwise we wind up playing right into the hands of our adversaries. That's what they want: they want us to do their bidding for them. Remember, most of the cases surfacing now are about offenses committed decades ago, and most of the offenders are either dead or no longer in the priesthood.

Our job is to defend the Church against wrongdoing; we are not here to defend wrongdoing by the clergy. It is also our job to insist that priests and bishops are entitled to the same due process afforded everyone else. Sadly, that needs to be emphasized today.