

INDIANA PRIEST ASSAULTED AT THE ALTAR

Father Basil Hutsko was getting ready to say Mass on a recent Monday morning at St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church in Merrillville, Indiana (he was praying at the altar) when a man came up behind him and assaulted him.

The priest was grabbed by the neck, choked, thrown to the floor, and beaten mercilessly. His head was pounded against the floor, leaving him unconscious. The attacker was yelling, "This is for all the kids!" The police are investigating this as a hate crime.

While the primary blame for this attack belongs to the assailant, secondary blame must be shared by (a) those who have embarked on a torrent of hate speech against the Catholic Church, and (b) those Catholics so angered by recent news stories that they are assigning collective guilt to all the clergy. Failing to distinguish between the innocent and guilty creates situations like this.

These two types of responses, the former from the left and the latter from the right, have created a milieu that invites hate-filled persons to engage in violence. By blaming all the priests, and all the bishops, for the deeds of a few enablers and a few offenders in their ranks, they have crafted an environment where acts like this are bound to happen.

Pray for Father Hutsko, and for those who share primary and secondary responsibility for what happened.