

MICHIGAN AG NESSEL'S WAR ON CATHOLICS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue addresses Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel's war on Catholics:

Why is Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel continuing her harassment of the Catholic Church? That is what her [latest investigation](#) of clergy sexual abuse amounts to, hunting for guilty priests going back over 70 years ago in the Diocese of Marquette. The record shows that this is not an anomaly.

Nessel's animus against Catholics is palpable and well documented.

She wasn't in office for two months before she put Catholics on notice: if they were asked by law enforcement about clergy sexual abuse, they should "ask to see their badge, not their rosary." She couldn't wait to get the Catholic Church and intimidate Catholics.

Even before Nessel took office on January 1, 2019, she started her war on Catholics. She flat out said she would not enforce a religious liberty bill that protected the religious freedom of faith-based foster care and adoption services. In fact, she said those Catholics who disagreed with her were part of a "radical fringe" and were "hate mongers."

Less than three months after she took office, Nessel made good on her anti-Catholic pledge, partnering with the ACLU of Michigan to challenge these Catholic services for children. Indeed, she said she *would not defend* this state law. In a settlement, she decreed that the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services must end state contracts with faith-based agencies.

Nessel got her comeuppance later in the year when a federal

district court judge upheld the religious freedom of St. Vincent Catholic Charities, a foster care and adoption agency. District court judge Robert Jonker explained in his 32-page ruling that in 2015 the Michigan legislature enacted a law upholding the right of faith-based agencies to adhere to the teachings of their Church.

Jonker wrote that Nessel's 2018 campaign, coupled with her statements as attorney general, "create a strong inference that the State's real target is the religious beliefs and confessions of St. Vincent, and not discriminatory conduct."

Moreover, the judge said, she sought to terminate the state's contract "simply because St. Vincent adheres to its sincerely held religious belief that marriage is an institution created by God to join a single man to a single woman." Furthermore, this "strongly suggests that the State's real goal is not to promote non-discriminatory child placements, but to stamp out St. Vincent's religious belief" and replace it "with a State-orthodoxy test that prevents Catholic believers from participating."

"All of this," he concluded, "supports a strong inference that St. Vincent was targeted based on its religious belief, and that it was Defendant Nessel who targeted it."

The judge said Nessel's policy—which would "flout the letter and stated intention of the Michigan legislature"—"actually undermines the state's stated goal of preventing discriminatory conduct and maximizing available placements for children."

"Shuttering St. Vincent would create significant disruption for the children in its care, who already face an unpredictable home life and benefit from stability," Jonker said. "It would also hurt the foster and adoptive parents who rely on St. Vincent for support and would have to find new resources."

It is not just this judge, and the Catholic League, that have noted Nessel's anti-Catholic bigotry. She no sooner took office when Michigan State Rep. Beau LaFave went after her for retweeting a statement citing the hiring of a retired judge by Michigan State University to address sexual abuse. The tweet in question noted his ties to the Catholic Church. LaFave further noted Nessel's previous comments attacking Catholicism.

Nessel's latest attack on the Catholic Church—her vacuous report on the Diocese of Marquette—is a reflection of who she is.

There is no room for bigots in public life.

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