

# MICHIGAN'S VACUOUS REPORT ON CLERGY ABUSE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the release of a report on accused priests in the Diocese of Marquette issued by Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel:

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel has issued the most vacuous report, "Diocese of Marquette: A Complete Accounting," on clergy sexual abuse ever written. We know she has been out to get the Catholic Church, but this effort makes her look incompetent, as well as unethical.

The probe of Catholic dioceses searching for instances of clergy sexual abuse began in 2018 under her predecessor, Bill Schuette; she took the reins in 2019. There has been no attempt to investigate the sexual abuse of minors by ministers, rabbis, imams or school teachers. Just Catholic priests.

This amounts to Catholic profiling. Make no mistake, this is no less invidious than a probe of violent crime would be if it only targeted African Americans. Such a selective approach smacks of bigotry.

After spending a massive amount of the taxpayer's money, here is what Nessel found.

Her report details alleged cases of priestly sexual abuse that began in 1950. That's when Harry Truman was president and the Korean War began.

After receiving 52 tips, 16 of which came from the Diocese of Marquette, lawyers combed through 74,000 documents related to the Diocese. Additionally, they went through nearly 862,000 electronic documents looking for dirt.

What they found was scratch. A grand total of 44 priests had allegations made against them since 1950. While one molesting priest is too many, how many religious or secular institutions—where adults regularly interact with minors—and are roughly the size of the Marquette Diocese, could honestly say they have a better record than this? We don't know because Nessel has no interest in finding out.

It is important to note the limitations of this report as even acknowledged by its authors. [The emphasis is in the original.]

***“The allegations are summarized here, and their inclusion does not reflect a determination by the Department [of the Attorney General] that the allegations are credible or otherwise substantiated.”***

In other words, the accused did not have a chance to rebut the charges. There's a good reason for this—32 of the 44 priests are “known or presumed to be dead.” Moreover only 6 of the 44 cases have been substantiated by the Diocese. We cannot assume that all the others involve guilty priests.

Nessel knew long ago that this was a fishing expedition. She knew full well that most of the bad guys were dead, yet she persisted in her mad search for guilty priests.

In 2002, the U.S. bishops instituted the Dallas Charter, a comprehensive effort to monitor and report on instances of clergy sexual abuse in every diocese and eparchy in the country. It has been a smashing success. As I recounted in my book, *The Truth about Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes*, the number of substantiated cases against the clergy has dropped to the single digits each year.

Further proof that the Church has reformed itself can be seen in reading Nessel's report. It says, “the vast majority of sexual misconduct was alleged to have occurred before 2002.” Indeed, the last alleged case took place in 1997. Importantly,

Nessel's team could find not a single case where miscreant priests are being protected today.

In our evaluation of the report, we found something else that is consistent with previous studies on clergy sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.

Approximately 80% of the victims were male, proving once again that this has been a homosexual-driven problem all along. Yet Nessel never mentions this, thus extending the nationwide cover-up. We cannot correct a problem unless we have an accurate diagnosis.

If Nessel were really interested in combating sexual abuse, she would pursue cases of sexual misconduct in the Michigan government with the same kind of doggedness she has shown in hunting down old cases of priestly abuse.

On December 24, 2019, Nessel suspended an investigation into Michigan State University after the college said it would not waive attorney-client privilege regarding her investigation into Larry Nassar, the notorious serial abuser of USA gymnasts and school athletes. When a probe was warranted of similar cases at the University of Michigan in 2020, the school played the same card and she dropped her investigation again.

Moreover, if Nessel were even-handed, she would launch an investigation into the public schools. In 2016, *USA Today* did a 50-state study of this issue, grading each state on how well they handled this problem. Michigan received an "F" for its failure to adequately address the crisis of sexual abuse in its public schools.

Why hasn't Nessel done a probe? Is it because she is wedded to the teacher unions? What else could be it?

Nessel's report makes plain the need to stop her never-ending

probe of the Catholic Church (she wants to investigate the other six dioceses in Michigan). It's time she started going after institutions that have long gotten away with sexual misconduct. She can begin with those on the Michigan payroll.

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