

NEBRASKA'S TAINTED REPORT ON SEXUAL ABUSE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a Nebraska report on clergy sexual abuse:

Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson recently released a "Report on Clergy Sexual Abuse" that bears scrutiny. There are many aspects to it that are seriously tainted.

In the Executive Summary of the report, it says that in August 2018 Peterson's Department of Justice announced that it was seeking information from "individuals who had suffered sexual abuse at the hands of a member of the clergy or an adult in a position of authority."

Why were the clergy singled out for an investigation and not anyone else? The report offers no explanation. It cannot be that there has been a rash of news stories on current cases of clergy abuse—there has not been.

"Although the news release was not intended to elicit calls about clergy of any specific denomination," the report says, "all the calls received, with one exception, related to individuals associated with the Catholic Church."

As I detail in my new book on this subject, *The Truth about Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes*, sexual abuse of minors is rampant throughout a wide range of institutions. Moreover, given the undeniable progress that the Catholic Church has made, it makes it even more indefensible to focus exclusively on it.

Going after the Catholic Church was no coincidence. According to one media source, the report was launched in 2018 "after several accusers came forward with allegations against the conservative Lincoln Diocese, which for years was the only

U.S. diocese that refused to participate in annual reviews of sexual misconduct.” In other words, a few alleged victims asked the government for a probe, and Peterson dutifully obliged.

Peterson wasted no time zeroing in on the Catholic Church. He waited only two weeks after his August 16 announcement to send letters to the bishops, thus underscoring that it was his plan all along to pursue the Catholic Church, to the exclusion of every other organization in the state.

Virtually every file on priests was the subject of a subpoena, and over 120 calls to a Hotline and Tip Line were examined. In all, nearly 300 pages of documents were retrieved.

Here is what they found. In a span of over 70 years, 51 priests (57 Catholic officials overall) had a credible accusation made against him; there were 258 alleged victims.

Peterson reportedly said he was frustrated that prosecutors could not file charges. He is not believable.

He knew from the get-go that these were mostly old cases of alleged abuse (as always, the 1970s was the worst decade) and it was therefore beyond the statute of limitations. He didn't launch the probe to prosecute, but to score a public relations victory: he wanted to appear tough before his constituents. That they wound up paying the bill for his fishing expedition is the ultimate irony.

Then there is the proverbial cover-up. Boys are mentioned 203 times in the 174-page report; girls are cited 16 times. That's because, as always, boys were the most likely to be victimized.

When the report says that “Many of the victims of clergy sexual abuse were teenage boys,” it is being deceitful. When 91.5% of the victims were teenage boys, that's not “many.” That's almost all.

Why does this matter? Because 92.2 percent were postpubescent. And that means that homosexual priests were responsible for over 90% of the alleged cases of sexual misconduct. Yet never once in the report is the word “homosexuality” mentioned (there are four references to “homosexual” acts).

To be sure, the cover-up of the homosexual scandal in the Catholic Church is not unique to Nebraska—it’s ubiquitous. Now imagine what Peterson would have said, and the media as well, if over 90 percent of the alleged victims were teenage girls. It would have been trumpeted far and wide.

I am calling on Attorney General Peterson to launch a probe of the sexual abuse of minors in Nebraska’s public schools.

In 2016, USA Today published a major study of this problem in all 50 states. What it had to say about Nebraska was troubling. Overall, Nebraska received a “C.”

Its most notorious shortcomings were the poor background checks and the failure to disseminate teachers’ misconduct with other states. The study named Nebraska as one of three states that said their teaching-licensing agencies did not check all applicants against the national clearinghouse that keeps data on such matters.

There are other problems as well. Nebraska has no program in place to teach children about how to recognize sexual abuse, making it one of only 13 states not to do so. A bill on this issue has been stalled in the state legislature for months.

The cherry picking of the Catholic Church, the cover-up of the dominant role played by homosexual priests, and the dismissal of sexual abuse occurring in the public schools—with failing safeguards—does not speak well of those in Nebraska’s government or the education establishment. However, it is not too late to change course.^a

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