

TRUMP WARNS OF DRUGS, DEPRESSION, SUICIDES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks made by President Trump on the social effects of coronavirus:

In his March 29 briefing on coronavirus, President Donald Trump alluded to the social consequences of not taking seriously the threat it poses. He mentioned the “massive” rates of drug use, depression, and suicide that might happen if he took a more relaxed approach to the disease.

Trump’s critics have played their “fact check game,” questioning how accurate his statement is. Even if we allow for hyperbole, Trump is right to call attention to these often neglected side effects associated with the stress and isolation engendered by a pandemic.

What Trump did not say is that one of the greatest tonics guarding against these conditions is religion; it is also true that those most at risk are non-believers. This is not a grey area: the studies are numerous and the findings are impressive. [The evidence is cited in my book *The Catholic Advantage: Why Health, Happiness, and Heaven Await the Faithful*.]

Dr. Harold G. Koenig is the nation’s leading scholar in the study of well-being. He teaches psychiatry and medicine at Duke University, and is the director of Duke’s Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health. He and his associates examined 278 studies on the relationship between religion and alcohol and drug use. They found that 86 percent of the studies concluded that the more religious a person was, the less likely he was to indulge. They also found that of the 185 studies on religion and drug abuse, the inverse relationship between religion and drugs was found 84 percent of the time.

Frank Newport is editor-in-chief of Gallup, and his surveys disclose that “very religious Americans are less likely to report that they have been diagnosed with depression than those who are moderately religious or nonreligious.” Dr. Koenig and associates found that in 61 percent of the studies, religious Americans are less likely to be depressed than nonbelievers, and are more likely to recover at a faster rate from depression. Atheists, they learned, are more likely to be depressed. Worse, the secular care they choose leaves them more likely to be stuck in their condition longer than those who avail themselves of religious care.

Wayne State University sociologist Steven Stack did a study in which he rated twenty-five nations on a scale that measured religious commitment, and then sought to see if there was any relationship with suicide rates. He found that the more religious a person is, the less likely he is to commit suicide. Sociologist Rodney Stark looked at the data in America’s largest metropolitan areas and found that the higher the church membership rate, the lower the suicide rate. Similarly, one review of more than 100 studies found that in 87 percent of them, religion was related to a lower incidence of suicide.

None of this is to suggest that people treat religion as some sort of mental-hygiene drug. Make no mistake about it, the beneficent effects of religious convictions and practice are dependent on their sincere application. But if they are, chances are that in times of stress and isolation such persons will fare much better than their nonbelieving counterparts.

It would be great if President Trump were to call attention to these findings. It might inspire many Americans to reconsider their personal relationship with God.

Catholic League: New York Times Is 'Mainstreaming Paranoia' Against Christians

Bill In The News (Breitbart):

The New York Times is "mainstreaming paranoia" by blaming evangelical Christians for the coronavirus pandemic, Catholic League President Bill Donohue said on Friday.

The Times is playing a "cheap game," Dr. Donohue noted, in trying to whip up anti-Christian sentiment by accusing disciples of Jesus of being "anti-science" and, therefore, responsible for the spread of the coronavirus. [READ MORE HERE](#)

BLAMING CHRISTIANS FOR THE VIRUS IS PARANOID

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an article blaming Christians for the coronavirus:

It is not unusual for authors of a new book to seize opportunities to plug their work. But the March 27 op-ed in the *New York Times* by Katherine Stewart breaks new ground. After inventing a bogey man—"Christian Nationalists"—she then blames them for the coronavirus. Here is some background information.

When George W. Bush won reelection in 2004, no issue brought voters to side with him more than “values.” These “values voters” sent a shock wave through the ranks of the secular elite in the Democratic Party, and they responded by founding rogue lay Catholic groups such as Catholics United and Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good. They also discovered the virtue of “God talk” and an expressed interest in government faith-based social programs (absent the faith element, of course).

Those phony tactics were buttressed by an onslaught of bigoted attacks that branded conservative Christians “theocrats.” It didn’t get them one vote. Now the same crowd is back arguing that “Christian Nationalists” are a threat to the country.

In July 2019, those who hate religious conservatives released a document, “Christians Against Christian Nationalism.” They said this new enemy “demands that Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian.” One wonders why these nefarious Christians settled for *implying* that everyone be a Christian—why didn’t they *demand* it?

Stewart is one of the proponents of this crazed idea. In her op-ed she drops a few anecdotes citing some wild-eyed remarks made by a few pastors, and then unloads by blaming Trump for listening to these people, resulting in an allegedly poor response to the coronavirus.

This is a cheap game. It would be like conservatives blaming left-wing cable television channels for the coronavirus. How so? By suggesting, and in some cases stating, that Trump is a bigot for putting a ban on travel from China. He did that on January 31, ten days after the first case of the virus hit the U.S. This led the Chinese-Communist friendly head of the World Health Organization to label Trump a “racist,” and Joe Biden responded by saying he was fomenting “xenophobia” and “fear-mongering.”

The medical community acknowledges that Trump saved an untold number of lives by making this decision. Would it now be fair to blame his left-wing critics for the coronavirus? No, only a Christian conservative who thinks the way Stewart does would blame them.

Finally, to show how much Stewart hates religious conservatives, consider that she is upset with Trump for saying he hopes we are “just raring to go by Easter.” What’s wrong with that? “He could have said, ‘by mid-April.’” Yup, this is proof that Christian Nationalists are running the country.

This is the level of intellectual scholarship that the *New York Times* fancies these days. The newspaper of record is now mainstreaming paranoia.

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ARE BANS ON CHURCH GATHERINGS KOSHER?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the religious liberty issues involved in coronavirus restrictions:

In Michigan, New York, and Ohio, churches are exempt from bans on large gatherings at this time due to the coronavirus. Indiana, Louisiana, and Virginia have decided to extend the ban to churches. This is definitely a state issue: the Trump administration has wisely stayed out of it.

At the state level, this is a difficult issue. Our first

impulse is to defend religious liberty, but like any freedom, it is not absolute. For example, in New York, it was reasonably decided, after much discussion, not to exempt religious bodies from mandated vaccinations.

Whenever religious liberty collides with public health, the government is obliged to put the least restrictive measures on religion. If that is done, and the motive is purely to protect the public, then in a crisis situation, temporary bans may be legitimate.

Motive counts. Why? Because we must always consider the source of an objection to religious exemptions. If the source is the medical community, and reasonable temporary restrictions are called for in a crisis situation, that is one thing; if the source is a hostile force, that is another. Unfortunately, there are plenty of examples of the latter.

Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Center for Inquiry have all issued statements against allowing religious exemptions for bans on large gatherings at this time. Their motives are not benign.

For example, FFRF opposes the decision by the West Virginia Governor to designate a "day for prayer" at this time of crisis. Americans United opposes a similar measure in Pennsylvania. The Center for Inquiry, an atheist organization, has not weighed in on this issue, but it is so extreme that it forced its founder, Paul Kurtz, off its board of directors because he was deemed too moderate.

We also have the likes of the religion haters at American Atheists blasting Senator Marco Rubio for seeking to allow financial assistance to churches so they can meet payroll and rent bills. But why not? If the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is considered worthy of stimulus funds, why should monies be denied churches to pay their bills (the funds

are not for proselytizing campaigns)? American Atheists surely had no problem supporting efforts to provide funding to Planned Parenthood.

The best way to proceed with this issue is for religious leaders to work with state officials in coming up with a compromise during these difficult times. What we don't need is the advice of those who are anything but religion-friendly.

DOJ DEFENDS WOMEN AGAINST TRANSGENDER SCHEME

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the Trump administration weighing in on an important transgender case:

Title IX is a federal law that bars discrimination on the basis of sex; it was written to protect the rights of women. Yet it has been hijacked by left-wing activists pushing transgender politics, one of the consequences of which is to deny women athletes their rights.

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) discriminates against women by allowing male athletes who think they are women to participate in women's sports. Fortunately, the Department of Justice, led by U.S. Attorney General Bill Barr, has signed a statement defending the rights of [real] women athletes to compete against their peers.

The Catholic Church, which acknowledges the reality of human nature, and, of course, nature's God, is unequivocally opposed to what the CIAC is doing. Last year, the Congregation for Catholic Education published a brilliant document, "Male and Female: He Created Them." It affirmed biblical teachings, as

well as common sense. God not only created man and woman, he did so in a manner that recognizes their complementary natures.

The Vatican document took aim at gender theory, saying it “denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family.” To put it differently, the sexes do not evolve—they are immutable. As for gender, it refers to socially learned roles, most of which pay homage to that which nature has ordained. Furthermore, there is no such thing as an “Intersex” person: it is a figment of the imagination.

No world leader, either secular or religious, has been more vocal in denouncing gender theory than Pope Francis. He has called it “dangerous” and “demonic.” It is dangerous because “it would make everything homogenous, neutral,” and it is demonic because it is “the great enemy of marriage”; it is also part of the “global war against the family.”

If transgender athletes want to have their own sports, let them, though there may not be many takers. But for men to lie about their sex and then shove their way into women’s sports is worse than a fiction—it is patently unjust. Worse, many cultural elites support this insanity, such as the CIAC.

Feminists who have supported the gay agenda must now decide whose side they are on: Do they stand with women, or with men who pretend they are women?

It is perverse to allow biological men to crash women’s sports. It is even more perverse that they can do so by exploiting a federal law written to promote equality between men and women. Fortunately, the Trump administration has come down on the side of women’s equality and common sense.

NEW RULES ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY; DONOHUE WEIGHS IN

Public policy reforms governing religious liberty were recently proposed by the Trump administration. Federal rulemaking directives afford the public 30 days to comment on them after they are posted in the Federal Register. Bill Donohue submitted his statement in favor of the rules on January 21, five days after they were announced.

The Trump administration has provided a much-needed corrective to the draconian directives promulgated by the previous administration: the role of religious liberty under President Obama was diminished to such an extent that it all but neutered the free exercise of religion in public policy programs. Trump has reversed this condition, awarding religious liberty the kind of breathing room it deserves, both morally and legally.

If the rules are adopted, they would end the invidious practices of discriminating against religious institutions and associations that were instituted by the Obama administration. Any institution that does not treat religious institutions as the equal of secular institutions will be faced with the prospect of having federal funds terminated.

Religious autonomy is another feature of these reforms. For instance, the state cannot force religious associations to jettison their religious character as a condition of federal aid. Regrettably, this has been done, the effect of which has been to secularize these entities. What is the sense of having a religious institution if it cannot freely exercise its religious prerogatives?

Donohue limited his remarks to the Catholic League's formal statements objecting to the way the Obama administration handled faith-based institutions. On several occasions, we protested rules that stymied the right of Catholic social service agencies that receive public monies to tailor their employment policies to meet Catholic objectives.

In his statement, Donohue asked, "Why is it considered discrimination for religious social service agencies to insist that their employees follow their doctrinal prerogatives, but it is not considered discrimination when the government tells them to cease and desist? The former is an example of the kinds of religious exercises that are central to the definition and identity of religious institutions; the latter is a discriminatory act that violates the First Amendment."

When it became clear that the Obama administration wanted to take the faith out of faith-based agencies, Donohue declared on June 24, 2011 that they should be shut down. They were doing more harm than good. On August 6, 2015, when it was clear that matters were deteriorating, Donohue reissued his call to close them down.

We hope the new rules pass and we can return to the days when religious institutions are not discriminated against and their autonomy is respected by government agencies. There can be no compromise on this issue.

SCHOOL CHOICE LOOMS

Finally, after almost 150 years, we may rid the law of anti-Catholic legislation. The U.S. Supreme Court recently heard oral arguments on a school choice case of monumental significance. The Catholic League has been fighting for school

choice since Father Virgil Blum founded the organization in 1973.

The case involves a Montana scholarship program that allows individuals and institutions to donate to a private non-profit fund. Those who participate get a tax credit, dollar for dollar, up to \$150. However, the program ran into trouble when the Montana Revenue Department declared that religious schools were excluded. It made its decision based on the state's constitution.

The Montana constitution is one of 37 state constitutions that include what is known as the Blaine Amendment. In 1876, Senator James G. Blaine of Maine tried to pass an amendment that would bar public funds from being spent for any sectarian purpose. It is not a matter of debate that his real target was Catholics: he wanted to marginalize Catholic entities. He failed, but many states accepted his thinking and passed their own Blaine Amendments.

The issue before the Supreme Court is whether a state can pass a neutral program that allows student aid and still exclude parents, who are taxpayers, from sending their children to religious schools.

It is time to put these discriminatory Blaine Amendments to rest. They were born in bigotry and have flourished in bigotry. A decision is expected in the spring.

THE REAL WHITE-BLACK DIVIDE

What separates whites and blacks the most these days is not race or class, it's religion. But don't expect to hear this from commentators or scholars. That's because most of them are

well-educated white people, and they are the most likely to be non-religious. Blacks, on the other hand, are much more religious than whites.

Christianity has a long history with African Americans, but it also has a long history with white Americans. Church-going was common among most Americans of all races and ethnicities until fairly recently. So what's changed?

Belief in God and Church attendance vary considerably by age, race, education, political preference, and region of the country.

Non-believers are heavily concentrated among young white college-educated Democrats from the northeast and the west coast. Blacks are mostly Democrats but when it comes to religion, they have little in common with white Democrats; they are twice as likely to believe in God as white Democrats are.

Signs of this divide are all around us. After basketball superstar Kobe Bryant was killed, it was revealed that his Catholicism played a big part in his life.

After being charged with rape in 2003 (the charges were dropped after a settlement was reached), he told a magazine interviewer, "The one thing that really helped me through the process—I'm Catholic, I grew up Catholic, my kids are Catholic—was talking to a priest." He didn't use his religion as a crutch. He and his 13-year-old daughter, Gianna, attended Mass the morning of the helicopter crash.

The Grammy Awards were held in Los Angeles on the same day that Bryant and eight others were killed. Though it was not widely reported—this was not a mistake—a black artist, Kirk Franklin, who won the award for Best Gospel Performance, gave praise to "Jesus the King, because it is all about Him." Gloria Gaynor, the black singer who won the award for Best Roots/Gospel Album, said, "I want to thank my Lord and Savior,

Christ, Jesus, for the gifts, talents and abilities that I've been given with which to make the strides that I've made in my life..."

Think of it. When white artists and actors win, they often give political speeches that are hate-filled tirades, and if religion is mentioned at all, it is only to bash it.

On May 2, Yankee Stadium will be filled to capacity, but the crowd will not be there to root for the Yanks. Joel Osteen is holding court with Kanye West. Billed as a "Night of Hope," West will no doubt bring many of his fellow African Americans to the event. Media coverage of it will be, well, careful. It most certainly will not be celebratory.

If Christianity is still "relevant" for blacks, why not for whites? Much of the answer has to do with education: the more years spent in school, the more likely one is to be an agnostic or an atheist. And since young whites are much more likely to be college graduates than young blacks are, they are more likely to swing away from God.

In a 2018 Pew poll, it was found that 66 percent of those who have a high school education or less believe in God as described in the Bible (another 25 percent believe in a higher power). For those with some college, 53 percent believe in the Biblical God (36 percent believe in a higher power). Only 45 percent of college graduates believe in God as described in the Bible (an additional 38 percent believe in some other power).

Among those who do not believe in either God or some higher power, this was true of only 6 percent of those with a high school education or less, but it was 16 percent for college graduates.

Why are college educated whites so inclined not to believe in God? Look who's teaching them.

In a recent survey published by the National Association of Scholars (I served on its board of directors for 20 years), it was found that Democrat professors outnumber Republicans by a ratio of 8.5 to 1 (in some fields it is much higher and women professors are more likely to be Democrats than their male counterparts). When it comes to donating to a political party, Democrat professors contribute more than Republicans by a margin of 95-1.

It is not hard to understand why whites and blacks are divided more on religion than any other factor: The professors are largely agnostics or atheists. Some have made a god of the environment, while others are content to settle for self-worship.

Their students eat this up. The idea that there is no such thing as right or wrong is appealing to the self-absorbed. Most blacks, on the other hand, have never shared these experiences. More important, they have yet to be intellectually and spiritually corrupted by the great sages of academia.

Is Kanye West for real? Is he really drawn to Jesus? I have no idea. But I do know that if God is dead for legions of young whites, he is very much alive for blacks of all ages.

ACCUSED PRIESTS DESERVE BETTER

Bill Donohue

There is justified anger on the part of the Catholic laity over the way molesting priests were handled by the bishop.

That anger is still with us today, even though the bishops have made great progress in dealing with clergy sexual abuse. Most cases we hear about today are old cases and the offenders are dead or out of ministry.

There should be more anger today over the rights of accused priests. They are assumed guilty until proven innocent. Many in the media have portrayed all priests as predators, and prosecuting attorneys have acted with a vengeance that is as disturbed as it is dangerous. But don't look to the ACLU or any liberal activist organization to come to their defense. They are treated unfairly, both in the courts and in the court of public opinion.

It is never chic to defend the rights of those accused of sexually abusing anyone. That is understandable. But being chic has nothing to do with virtue, and there are two cardinal virtues that are apropos: justice and fortitude. Accused priests deserve justice as much as alleged victims do, but to do that takes fortitude. There is much to learn from the way the accused are being treated outside the Church.

One does not have to like Bill Cosby or Harvey Weinstein (I fought with the latter for decades) to like what their lawyers are saying in their defense. There are some lines of defense that are not only persuasive, they have direct application to accused priests.

As everyone knows, the #MeToo movement has had its sights set on Cosby and Weinstein from the beginning. Given that both men are high profile celebrities who have been accused of serial sexual offenses, this is understandable. But that doesn't mean that everything done in the name of this cause is justified.

Cosby's lawyers recently appealed his conviction for sexual assault to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. In their filing, his lawyers made a veiled reference to the #MeToo movement. "Cases exist in which the outcomes were deeply influenced by

public panic fueled by the nature of the allegations pledged, the media, and other special interest groups. The criminal justice system teeters on a dangerous precipice in such cases.”

Andrew Wyatt, Cosby’s spokesman, was more specific. He raised concerns about “the impact of #MeToo hysteria on the bedrock principles of our criminal justice system.”

The “public panic” cited by the lawyers is what sociologists call a “moral panic.” It refers to an irrational reaction to alleged offenses, one that yields a poisoned environment in which to adjudicate them. There is little doubt that the #MeToo movement has set off alarms that threaten to allow emotion to override reason in dealing with alleged sexual offenses, the result of which compromises the due process rights of the accused.

Donna Rotunno is Weinstein’s defense lawyer. She was asked about the #MeToo movement.

“If we have 500 positives that come from a movement, but the one negative is that it strips you of your right to due process and a fair trial, and the presumption of innocence, then to me, not one of those things can outweigh the one bad,” she said. “We can have movements that strip us of our fundamental rights.” Similarly, she said that this movement “allows the court of public opinion to take over the narrative” and “puts you in a position where you’re stripped of your rights.”

What about the women accusers? “Yes, he’s a powerful guy. But I think that because he’s a powerful guy, they would use him and use him and use him for anything they could.” When asked if all women accusers should be believed, Rotunno answered, “I believe women who I believe the facts and evidence support their cases, but I think it’s very dangerous to believe all women without looking at the back story—the rest of the

evidence.”

Everything that these lawyers have said about their clients is true of accused priests these days. Even more so.

A moral panic has indeed arisen in cases of clergy sexual abuse. It is fed by a hostile media, late-night talk-show hosts on TV, cable outlets like HBO, and others. Old cases of abuse are presented as if they are new, leaving the false impression that the scandal is ongoing. Pernicious generalizations about priests—and sick jokes—are made with abandon. Movies spread lies about the Catholic hierarchy. And so on.

This has less to do with the #MeToo movement than it does with vintage anti-Catholicism. It is no secret that the cultural elites harbor an animus against Catholicism. These kinds of atmospherics make it difficult for accused priests to get a fair trial. Add to this the cherry picking of accused priests by state attorney generals, and the table is set for conviction.

What Weinstein’s lawyer says about women accusers is certainly applicable to priest accusers. Some are telling the truth but others are lying through their teeth, seeking revenge against an institution they despise. And just as Weinstein is a “powerful guy” who is easily exploited because of who he is, the Catholic Church is a “powerful” institution that is also easily exploited.

Rotunno is also right to say that “it’s dangerous to believe all women” accusers. Similarly it is dangerous to believe the accounts of all those who claim to have been victimized by a priest. If someone has been truly molested, the evidence should support his claim. If the evidence is solid, he is entitled to justice, however that plays out in court.

The bishops are leery about appearing insensitive to victims, and their fears are realistic. But when there is good reason

not to believe a word the accuser says, there is no virtue in remaining silent. Patently bogus charges need to be rebutted with vigor. At stake are the due process rights of accused priests.

It would do the Catholic Church wonders if more aggressive attorneys such as those employed by Cosby and Weinstein were hired. No priest should be a sitting duck for rapacious victims' lawyers. I might add that Rotunno is a Chicago lawyer who went to a Catholic college.

It is not certain how many priests have been victimized by vindictive accusers and their lawyers. Some of them are high profile priests.

In February we learned that Msgr. William Lynn, who was sentenced in 2012 for child endangerment when he was secretary for the clergy at the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, will be retried again—his conviction was twice overturned—on March 16. But it is an open question whether his accuser, Danny Gallagher, a.k.a, Billy Doe, will be called to testify.

Gallagher is one of many priest accusers who are of suspect character, yet this has mattered little to the courts or the media. Ralph Cipriano, who has done the best work of any journalist on this case, rightfully described Gallagher as “a former drug addict, heroin dealer, habitual liar, third-rate conman and thief,” who nonetheless was able to shake down the Church for \$5 million in a civil settlement.

How could this have happened? Gallagher told two social workers for the archdiocese what allegedly happened to him at the hands of priests and a layman. Cipriano says that the details he offered—“the anal rapes, the punches, the threats, the claims about being tied up naked with altar sashes, strangled with a seatbelt, and forced to suck blood off a priest's penis—all those graphic details were dropped from his story” when he spoke to the police.

Worse, the defense lawyers were kept in the dark about this and also never learned of the explosive affidavit by detective Joe Walsh; he questioned Gallagher before the trial. He provided many stunning inconsistencies in Gallagher's account, concluding that he was an inveterate liar.

In January we learned that Father Roy T. Herberger from the Buffalo diocese filed a libel suit against his accuser who claimed that the priest abused him in the 1980s. The Diocese of Buffalo put the priest on administrative leave in June 2018, pending an investigation, and then concluded that the allegation was unfounded. He was returned to active ministry in December 2018.

Attorney Scott Riordan, who was hired by the diocese, did a report on the accuser. He found there was no record of him being at the school at the time when he was allegedly molested. The accuser said he was assaulted in the rectory of St. Ann church, but the priest had no key to get in as the parish was run by the Jesuits. The accuser said much of the abuse occurred in the priest's home in Lackawanna, but the priest never owned or rented a house in that neighborhood. And the inside of the home that the accuser described was found completely wrong by the owners.

It is not just in the United States where these travesties of justice are taking place.

Cardinal George Pell, who is in an Australian prison for alleged sexual abuse (awaiting a final appeal) was accused as far back as 1962. The case was dismissed because nothing could be substantiated. His accuser had been convicted 39 times for offenses ranging from assault to drug use. He was a violent drug addict who drove drunk and beat people.

In 1969, Pell was accused of doing nothing to help an abused boy who pleaded for help. But Pell was not in Australia that year—he was in Rome. At a later date he was accused of chasing

away a complainant who informed him of a molesting priest. But Pell did not live where this allegedly happened, and the accuser was later imprisoned for sexually abusing children.

When Pell was accused of joking about a notorious molester priest's sexual assaults at a funeral Mass in Ballarat, it was later found that there was no Mass that day and the priest whom Pell was allegedly joking with was living someplace else when the alleged incident took place.

The occasions that got Pell imprisoned have also been called into question. One of his accusers was an alcoholic, a drug addict, and a thug who beat and stalked his girlfriend. His co-accuser also had a record of violence. As for the two choirboys who claimed Pell abused them, one has since died of a drug overdose, but not before telling his mother, on two occasions, that the alleged incident never happened.

These are three of the most high profile cases where a priest has been accused by men whose characterological profile is seriously impaired.

There is another priest, Father Gordon MacRae, who is still in prison in New Hampshire for crimes he vehemently denies, and whose accuser, Thomas Grover, has a history of theft, drugs, and violence. Even his former wife and stepson call him a "compulsive liar" and a "manipulator."

Lest anyone think that I will defend any accused priest, let me be clear: I will defend the due process rights of any accused priest, but will not exculpate any priest who is guilty of an offense. The Catholic League is here to defend the Catholic Church against wrongdoing: We are not here to defend wrongdoing committed by the Church.

CONFESSIONAL SEAL AT RISK IN UTAH

Utah Rep. Angela Romero, a Democrat, is sponsoring a bill that would gut the seal of Confession. She maintains that it is necessary because priests learn of the sexual abuse of minors in confession and do not report this to the authorities.

In a January 13 letter to Rep. Romero, Bill Donohue wrote:

“I have two questions for you.

“Speaking about the victims of sexual abuse, you have said, ‘Their perpetrators went to confession, confided in a religious leader, and nothing ever happened.’ What evidence do you have for making this remark?

“Last year I asked a state lawmaker in California the same question. He sponsored a similar bill and, like you, he made a comment almost identical to the one you made. He could not offer any evidence. After we waged a vigorous campaign against him, he withdrew his bill.

“The second question is this: Why are you seeking to breach the priest-penitent exemption, but are not seeking to violate the lawyer-client privilege or the exemption afforded psychologists and their patients? Do they not learn of sexual abuse behind closed doors?”

We asked those who receive our emails to contact the Utah Speaker of the House, Rep. Brad Wilson, seeking his help in opposing this bill. Here is how he responded:

“I have serious concerns about this bill and the effects it could have on religious leaders as well as their ability to counsel members of their congregation. I do not support this bill in its current form and—unless significant changes are

made to ensure the protection of religious liberties—I will be voting against this bill.” (His emphasis.)

Rep. Romero, however, doubled down, saying she is going forward with her bill, accusing Donohue of making a “soft threat.” She was obviously referring to the following concluding portion of Donohue’s January 10 letter:

“You are treading on dangerous territory. When the government seeks to police the sacraments of the Catholic Church—or encroach on the tenets and practices of any world religion—it is gearing up for a court fight. The First Amendment secures religious liberty, and that entails separation of church and state.”

Donohue stood by that statement. Regarding her remark, she moved well beyond the “threat” stage when she introduced a bill that attacks a sacrament of the Catholic Church—and there is nothing “soft” about that. Now she is claiming victim status because of a pushback by Catholics. What did she expect? That Catholics would allow an agent of the state to trample on their constitutionally protected rights?

Here is what Romero told the media. “Am I against organized religion? No. I’m Catholic. Maybe this is a little more personal for me. I’ve had victims here in Utah, people who have experienced and sexual abuse and child abuse. Their perpetrators were protected by a religious institutions. I have a problem with that.” [This is exactly the way she was quoted.]

We have a problem with so-called Catholics telling us they are not against the Catholic Church when they seek to destroy one of their sacraments. That gets real personal. As for the perpetrators, there is no evidence—Donohue asked her to give it to him—showing that breaking the seal of Confession would result in prosecuting molesters.

It is a red herring, a contrived pretext that would allow the

government to effectively cause the Sacrament of Reconciliation to implode. No practicing Catholic would ever sponsor such a bill, nor would a member of the faithful from any other religion.