

POPE FRANCIS, R.I.P.

Bill Donohue

Catholics around the globe are mourning the death of Pope Francis. He touched millions of the faithful, including non-Catholics and non-believers.

When Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio assumed the role of Pope Francis, his down-to-earth style captured the plaudits of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. It was his unscripted, and often spontaneous, manner of speaking that made him so authentic and appealing.

It also got him into trouble, especially when speaking to reporters aboard the papal plane following a trip overseas. On many occasions, following a chat with journalists, the Vatican press corps had to clarify what he meant. But no one criticized him for not speaking from the heart.

Unfortunately, the end of his pontificate was troubling. His approval of a Vatican document that allows priests to bless same-sex couples was met with widespread criticism. Indeed, it was so divisive that it seriously undid much of the goodwill he previously earned.

For the most part, the media treated Francis with kindness, though they did not always accurately report what he said. For example, his much publicized remark, "Who am I to judge?", was misquoted by the media. What he actually said was, "Who am I to judge him?" That is not a small difference. He made his comment in response to a question about a particular priest who had been accused of a sexual impropriety; it was not an endorsement of homosexuality.

It spoke well for Pope Francis that he rejected the practice of publishing the names of accused priests, something that is unheard of in every other institution. Regrettably, his

inability to see through the deceitful character of his friend and fellow Jesuit, Bishop Gustavo Zanchetta—he was sentenced to prison by an Argentine court for sexually abusing seminarians—revealed a serious blind spot, one that earlier emerged in his dealings with priestly sexual abuse in Chile. Zanchetta is still a bishop.

More recently, Pope Francis' passivity in dealing with accused serial predator Fr. Marko Rupnik, another friend and fellow Jesuit—he was charged with grave, and indeed sacrilegious, sexual offenses—was another serious error in judgment. Rupnik was finally dismissed from the Society of Jesus in June 2023. After he was excommunicated, he was reinstated! Inexplicably, the pope allowed him to remain a priest in good standing. In fact, he kept a picture of him in his office.

Worse, Pope Francis chose as one of his most senior advisors, Luxembourg Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, a man whose passion for gay rights led him to say that the Church's opposition to gay sex is outdated. The pope knew this yet appointed him the "relator general" of the Church's "Synod on Synodality." The Synod, itself, proved to be a source of great consternation among many bishops.

The pope's strong defense of the rights of the unborn, and his condemnation of gender ideology, sat well with conservative Catholics. But they were not happy when he refused to honor questions regarding his apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*; prominent prelates sought clarification on some doctrinal issues. The Holy Father was clearly more critical of conservative bishops than he was their liberal counterparts.

Even more significant, his attack on traditionalists, especially those who favor the Latin Mass, were frequent and lacking in nuance. Yet at the same time, Francis welcomed known Catholic dissidents, men and women who were previously condemned by officials in Rome and the United States for sabotaging the Church. His embrace of Sister Jeannine Gramick

was the most conspicuous example of this phenomenon.

Pope Francis often spoke about the need to decentralize the Church, yet he did more to centralize the power of the papacy than any of his predecessors in modern times.

He took away the right of bishops to approve new religious communities in their dioceses and changed canon law so he could fire bishops. His decision to essentially take control of the Pontifical Academy of Life, and the former John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, angered many in the U.S. He also took control of the Sovereign Order of Malta, ordering a new constitution and new senior officers.

On foreign affairs, Francis took a soft and conciliatory approach to the Chinese Communist regime, which sought to crush the Catholic Church. The arrest of Cardinal Zen, and the silence with which the Vatican greeted the news, did not sit well with many Catholics.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was condemned by the Vatican, though the Holy Father's statement blaming NATO, and not Putin, was seen as an example of his alleged anti-Western, and anti-American, bias.

In November 2024, the pope stunned Catholics and Jews alike when he called for an international probe of Israel's decision to defend itself from Hamas terrorists; he inquired whether this constituted genocide.

In what proved to be a real eye opener, the pope admitted that as a young man the person who did more to shape his thinking about politics was a female communist atheist, Esther Ballestrino. She introduced him to prominent communist publications.

Pope Francis made his mark on the Church, much as John Paul II and Benedict XVI did. It remains to be seen whether his successor will hew more closely to his stance than that of his

predecessors. May he rest in peace.

EASTER BRINGS SIGNS OF HOPE

[Bill Donohue](#)

Mention the word Easter and what comes to mind is redemption. Ultimately, it's all about salvation. After the darkness of Good Friday comes the light of Easter. It's also a time of hope, and this year the hope is that the early signs of a religious renaissance in the West come to fruition.

New York Times Catholic columnist Ross Douthat is right to observe that it is too early to say we are witnessing a religious revival, but, he says, no one can dispute that there is a growing interest in religion. This includes some notables who are not content with what secularism has wrought.

Until recently, the biggest religion story in the United States was the increase in the "nones," those who answer "none" when asked what religion they belong to. But survey data now indicate that this phenomenon has hit a plateau.

The religiously unaffiliated are comprised of atheists (5 percent), agnostics (6 percent) and "nothing in particular" (19 percent). Seven-in-ten of the latter category—which is roughly two-thirds of the religiously unaffiliated—say they believe in God. This suggests that their status may only be temporary.

In a recent Barna survey, 66 percent of adults say they have made a personal commitment to Jesus. This struck me as odd given that a recent Pew survey found that 62 percent of Americans are Christian. But then I read that Barna

researchers reported that three-in-ten of those who don't identify as Christian have made a personal commitment to Jesus. So religious matters are rather fluid these days. Another sign of hope.

It's not just in the United States where religious stirrings are apparent.

In France, 2025 has seen a record 10,384 adult baptisms; this is an increase of 45 percent over last year. Indeed, adult baptisms have more than doubled since 2015. Importantly, this surge is being led by young Catholics. Another sign of hope is that young Catholics constitute the largest segment of converts.

In the United Kingdom, one study found that church attendance has increased by 55 percent since 2018. It is being led by Catholics, especially young Catholics. Among churchgoers aged 18 to 34, Catholics outnumber Anglicans by more than two to one. This is the first time since Henry VIII initiated the Protestant Reformation that Catholics outnumber Anglicans.

What's going on?

Some say it has to do with social media. They say it is easy to access information about Catholicism in the comfort of their own home, and it is also easy for young people to express themselves. Even if there is some truth to this, it doesn't explain the cultural dynamics that are bringing more young people to religion.

Justin Brierly is an English podcaster who has covered this subject. He believes that our post-Christian society has delivered much "confusion," including a "mental health crisis in the young."

An English Catholic priest, Fr. Daniel of the York Oratory, agrees. "There is a sense of moral chaos and lack of meaning in today's society. If people can find something that makes

sense, provides meaning, and also gives a community, which the Catholic Church does, they are going to be attracted to this, and I think this is particularly true for young men.”

No one can argue that the “confusion” and “moral chaos” that these men describe is not real. When young people are told to follow their feelings, not science [read: the sexes are interchangeable], and they later realize that they have been had, it triggers a reaction that begs for truth and clarity. This is what Catholicism offers—a ready antidote to the meaninglessness and rootlessness of militant secularism.

In short, there is more reason for hope this Easter season than we have witnessed in some time. That’s a net gain for the newcomers and a net gain for society.

COLUMBIA TARGETS CATHOLIC STUDENTS

*Columbia has a problem with Jewish **and** Catholic students.*

April 16, 2025

Ms. Claire Shipman
Acting President
Columbia University
Office of the President
202 Low Library, 535 W. 116 St., MC 4309
New York, New York 10027

Dear Acting President Shipman:

As president of the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization, I was disturbed to read of an anti-Catholic

incident that took place at Columbia. The victim is Daniel Di Martino, Ph.D. candidate in Economics. The victimizer is Columbia University.

Mr. Di Martino was summoned to appear before “investigators” from the Office of Institutional Equity because of his professed belief in Catholic teachings. He was told that by posting on social media comments such as, “God does not teach us that we can change our gender,” he was engaging in “conduct that could be considered discriminatory harassment.” He was also told that what he did could be interpreted as “creating a hostile environment.”

It would be more accurate to say that Columbia is creating a “hostile environment” for Catholic students. Indeed, most practicing Jewish, Muslim and Protestant students would agree with Di Martino’s post.

It must also be said that there is a profound difference between conduct, such as taking over a campus building and stopping Jewish students from going to class—this is not protected under the First Amendment—and speech that in no way threatens public order (this is protected by the First Amendment).

Columbia boasts that it promotes “Inclusion & Belonging,” saying they “are essential elements of a welcoming campus. At Columbia, all members of the community—students, faculty and staff—are expected to participate in creating a culture of inclusion.”

That culture of inclusion was violated when staff members created a “hostile environment” for Daniel Di Martino, and others like him. To be specific, interrogating Catholics for publicly supporting their religion creates a “chilling effect” on their speech. Therefore, I respectfully ask that this incident be investigated by agents from outside the Columbia community.

I noticed that in the “Inclusion & Belonging” section under “University Life” that it lists support for students who are Arab and Palestinian, Asian and Asian American, Black, Jewish, Latinx/e/a/o, LGBTQIA+, Muslim, Native American and Indigenous, and People with Disabilities. Why is there no support for Catholic students at Columbia? There is obviously a need.

In 2002, Columbia President Lee Bollinger personally apologized to me after a bigoted incident on campus. It involved an obscene anti-Catholic stunt committed by a band announcer at a football game against Fordham. This is more serious—it gets to the issue of thought control. Please take the necessary steps to rectify this problem.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President

cc: Laura Kirschstein, Vice Provost for the Office of Institutional Equity
Daniel Di Martino
Erin Mersino, Esq., Thomas More Law Center
Linda McMahon, U.S. Secretary of Education

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RELIGIOUS LEFT OKAYS ANTI-CHRISTIAN BIAS

[Bill Donohue](#)

The difference between left-wing religious groups and left-wing secularist groups is miniscule. Both are more worried about bias against midgets than Christians, and that is not an exaggeration. In fact, when left-wing religious groups speak about anti-Christian bias, they can't help but write about "so-called 'anti-Christian bias.'"

That's exactly the way the Interfaith Alliance characterizes President Trump's directive to Pam Bondi, who heads the Department of Justice. She is in charge of a task force to root out anti-Christian bias in the federal government; the Catholic League is proud to assist her in that effort.

The Interfaith Alliance is a hodgepodge of left-wing activists, spread across a variety of religions. It needs to be asked: Why would a group of professed religious people be against efforts to combat anti-Christian bias? Indeed, this is the only bias they appear to be okay with. To be exact, they deny it even exists.

Earlier in the year, after Trump made his announcement about establishing a Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty, and the task force on anti-Christian bias, the Interfaith Alliance issued a statement saying, "There is no evidence of widespread anti-Christian bias in the United States...."

If that were the case, the Catholic League would not exist. We don't create bigotry, we respond to it. But in the minds of those affiliated with the Interfaith Alliance, the very fact

we fight anti-Christian speech and behavior means *we are a threat to liberty*. Read what they say.

“While this effort may appear to address certain forms of stigma against Christians, particularly against Catholics, in reality it will weaponize a narrow understanding of religious freedom to legitimize discrimination against marginalized groups like the LGBTQ community, infringe on our reproductive freedom, and hurt our society’s most vulnerable.”

In other words, those who fight anti-Christian bigotry are actually advancing discrimination against gay and transgender activists. How so? By objecting to “Drag Queen Story Hours” for children? By opposing genital mutilation for minors? Moreover, by opposing those who infringe on the health of unborn babies, how are we the guilty ones?

The guy who runs the Interfaith Alliance, Paul Raushenbush, is a homosexual Baptist minister who insists he is married to a man; he and his partner are raising children (who are obviously not their own). He is so extreme that he says efforts to combat anti-Christian deeds are actually expressions of “Christian nationalism.” Got it? Christians who object to intolerance are agents of intolerance.

A statement of the Interfaith Alliance’s vision is available on its website. It says it believes in “freedom, not extremism.” It lists three examples: LGBTQ freedom, reproductive freedom and countering hate. Regarding the latter, it names “antisemitism and Islamophobia” as a problem. What about anti-Christian bigotry? Nope. But it does mention the scourge of “Christian Nationalism.”

The Interfaith Alliance was founded in 1994, and in 1996, when I was in this job for only a few years, the Catholic League was named to its “Enemies List.” I issued a statement at that time, boasting of our inclusion. I also noted that the Interfaith Alliance accepted \$25,000 in start-up funds from

the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Some things never change.

In 2010, the Interfaith Alliance joined with GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) and Call to Action (a defunct group of mostly ex-Catholics) in demanding the media “ignore Bill Donohue.” Looks like they lost.

Ironically, the Interfaith Alliance’s opposition to fighting anti-Christian bigotry validates the very reason why President Trump formalized efforts to combat it. For that they are to be commended—their contribution will not go unnoticed.

Why Do Leftists Still Love Masks?

Bill in the News (American Spectator): Today, four percent of Americans still wear masks when going to stores and other businesses. Who are they? A recent Pew Research survey revealed that they are mostly Democrats. This explains why the majority of Republicans (62 percent) said that during the pandemic, there should have been fewer restrictions, but only a few Democrats (15 percent) agree. The conclusion is inescapable: those on the left like masks. [READ MORE HERE](#)

LIBERALS HAVE A BIG PROBLEM WITH FREE SPEECH

[Bill Donohue](#)

Few Americans will publicly admit that they don't believe in free speech, yet attacks on it are commonplace. How can this be? While some are simply lying, others entertain a notion of free speech that allows them to be censorious while professing allegiance to it. This is true of Republicans, conservatives, Democrats and liberals, though recent evidence shows that the latter two categories are the most guilty.

Two years ago, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) released a survey of 45,000 college students from 201 colleges. It found that liberals were the most intolerant of free speech.

That same year Real Clear Opinion released a survey on this topic and found that Democrats were the least supportive of free speech and the most supportive of censoring speech they found disagreeable. In fact, a third said Americans have "too much freedom." The figure for Republicans was 14.6 percent.

Two events occurred this month that shed light on this issue.

On April 8, former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett spoke at Princeton University. At least he tried to.

About 150 people showed up outside the building where he was to speak, chanting anti-Semitic slogans. After he spoke for about 15 minutes, some 20 people, most of whom were students, shouted him down, accusing him of genocide. Shortly after they were escorted out, a pro-Hamas activist started screaming at him, stopping his address. Ten minutes later the fire alarm went off, shutting down all the microphones.

Princeton is an elite school, but it has little respect for free speech. In the 2025 survey by FIRE of 251 colleges, Princeton ranked 223, meriting a rating of "below average" on the free speech scale. The situation is so bad on campus, especially with regard to stifling the speech of Jewish students, that the Trump administration has halted dozens of research grants to the Ivy League school.

The other event was held on April 3 at Hamilton College.

Former President Barack Obama sat down for an interview, answering lots of questions. No one interrupted him. He questioned the nation's allegiance to free speech, asking, "Do we stand up for freedom of speech when the other person talking is saying stuff that infuriates us and is wrong and hurtful?"

The right answer is, "No, we don't." And that is because it is *almost always* left-wing students, faculty, administrators and activists who censor speech on campus, and elsewhere. It is the elites who allow the muzzling of free speech, not rednecks.

Obama knows this to be true, yet in his discussion he never mentioned who the offenders are. Had they been the Proud Boys, it's a sure bet he would have noted it. But he did complain about the denial of funding to colleges that show contempt for free speech, as if somehow they are entitled to it.

The former president should be very careful pointing the finger at anyone. When he was in office, he was known for disrespecting the conscience rights of Catholic healthcare workers and grant recipients who disagreed with his policies on abortion, marriage and the family. If they voiced their objections, they were candidates for sanctions.

Obama is hardly the only Democrat with a free speech problem.

Last fall, when former Secretary of State John Kerry spoke to

the globalists at the World Economic Forum, he decried what he called “disinformation” efforts [the intentional distortion of information], saying, “our First Amendment stands as a major block to the ability to be able to hammer [it] out of existence.” In other words, the First Amendment is a problem because it stymies attempts to stop speech that John Kerry claims is disinformation.

Hillary Clinton, champ of Russian dossier propaganda, said last year that Americans should be “criminally charged” if they engage in speech that she deems “propaganda,” or what she calls “Russian talking points.” Also last year, Minnesota Governor (and failed vice president candidate) Tim Walz said, “There’s no guarantee of free speech on misinformation [mistaken information] or hate speech.” Got that? So if someone errs in reporting the news, his speech is not protected by the First Amendment.

The Biden administration went further and invoked a new category of unworthy speech, namely “malinformation.” This is information that is “based on fact, but used out of context to mislead, harm, or manipulate.”

To cite one example, when this linguistic weapon was invented in 2023, it was used against Jacob Sullum, a noted libertarian, after he said that the CDC had repeatedly exaggerated the scientific evidence upon which the mask mandate was formulated. Facebook attached a warning to his article, saying it was “missing context” and “could mislead people.”

In a poll of voters taken in November, it was found that a majority of those who voted for Donald Trump rated “the future of free speech in this country” as “the single most important factor” affecting their vote. Only a minority of those who voted for Kamala Harris felt this way.

In short, liberals have a big problem with free speech.

NASHVILLE REPORT ON MASS SHOOTER SHOWS BIAS

[Michael P. McDonald](#)

On March 27, 2023, Audrey Hale, a woman who falsely claimed to be a man, attacked the Covenant Presbyterian Church and School in Nashville killing six innocent people, three of whom were children. Over two years later, the Metro Nashville Police Department released its report into the deadly assault.

Given that the report acknowledges that “the amount of information Hale left behind was far more than is usually available in a criminal investigation,” one might expect that the nearly 50-page document would leave no stone unturned. But instead of providing a comprehensive overview of this tragedy, the report protects secular-liberal biases ignoring Hale’s violent commentaries on sex, race, and religion.

Indeed, the report gives little mind to any of these. For instance, it only mentions twice that Hale was a lesbian. Similarly, the report almost entirely ignores that Hale misidentified as a male. There are only two instances that this is brought up, and one of these times was to explain why the report would use pronouns that reflect biological reality and proper grammar. The other was to note that although Hale “made statements about wanting to transition genders” and used “the name ‘Aiden Williams’” and “male pronouns,” she was “not undergoing any transition at the time of her death.”

In addition to the subject of sex, the report downplays Hale’s views on race. The report reveals that in December of 2018, Hale began planning to attack a school. Initially, she wanted to target Creswell Middle School, a magnet school for arts

which she attended. However, by March of 2020, Hale decided against the attack because Creswell had a large minority student body, and she did not want to be seen as racist. At this point, she turned her focus on Covenant because more white children attended the school.

In fact, Hale's race consciousness played a significant role in her life. The report briefly discusses that Hale's writings were full of what she dubbed "rage storms," essentially unhinged and violent rants. At first, these "rage storms" focused on how she felt rejected by society. In time, the report notes that these would expand to other issues such as "being ostracized by black culture despite her longing for acceptance" and "white privilege."

Another bias that the report glosses over was Hale's attitudes about Christians. The report notes that when Hale first decided to attack a school she also began writing about how she resented living at home and the control her mother had over her. Of particular interest, the report notes that Hale "feared to open up to her mother about her being a lesbian, believing her mother's 'traditional Christian' values would make her incapable of understanding, if not derisive towards her daughter's orientation." Indeed, "Hale considered this a wedge between them."

Further, the report goes on to say that Hale "believed the Christian faith of those within [Covenant] would make them meek and afraid."

Yet despite this evidence that the report clearly cites, its authors disregard these factors to make the final assessment. Chiefly among these concerns is an attempt to demonstrate that Hale did not specifically choose to target white Christian children.

While the primary evidence that the report relies on to make this claim is statements by Hale "that the race, religion,

gender, or other demographic categories of her victims would not matter,” the evidence above clearly show that these factors featured significantly in her writings and planning of the assault. It would seem as though the report twists logic to avoid drawing a certain conclusion that runs contrary to the predominant secular-liberal narrative.

Even in the section of the report dedicated to debunking the claim that “Hale selected this location [Covenant] for racial, religious or economic reasons,” the report undermines this claim, and as a result, the report trips over its own arguments and undercuts its own conclusions.

But then again, the authors of this report love playing these games. There is an entire page dedicated to what is and is not a manifesto. Rather than obscuring the facts of this tragedy with mental gymnastics, it would be nice if the authors of the report would get their secular-liberal biases out of the way so they could provide an unvarnished version of the story.

COLORADO’S SICK WAR ON PARENTAL RIGHTS

[Bill Donohue](#)

It is hard to know what is sicker—a Colorado bill that would gut parental rights or the basis upon which it rests.

The bill would punish parents who do not align themselves with the wishes of their transgender children. Indeed, it grants the government the right to take them away from them. All they have to do to trigger this brazen denial of parental rights is to refer to their children in terms that reflect their nature-

determined sex.

That's right, the authorities can seize your son, Sam, if he wants to be called Sally and you call him Sam. The bill would make this illegal. It's called "Deadnaming." Your child can also be taken from you if you refer to Sam as "he" or "him," instead of "she" or "her," or "they" or "them." This is called "misgendering."

In other words, the rights of mentally challenged children—who are contemplating, or have completed, a regiment of puberty blockers and genital mutilation—trump the rights of parents who want to help them. Parents who violate these provisions are deemed guilty of "coercive control" under the law. The bill also says that the courts do not have to respect laws in other states that make it illegal for parents to allow their child to "transition" to the other sex.

In an unusual move, the bill passed the mostly Democratic Colorado House of Representatives on Sunday, April 6. In doing so, it clearly stuck it to Christians who opposed it. Indeed, they were told by the bill's sponsors that parental rights should not even be discussed!

It will now be heard by the mostly Democratic Colorado Senate Judiciary Committee. If it passes, it will go to the mostly Democratic Colorado Senate. The Democratic governor, Jared Polis, is a homosexual fan of radical gay and transgender rights. Perhaps he will wait until Good Friday to sign it.

No state has anything like this on the books. Even Democratic California Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed a similar bill.

The Colorado bill that passed, HB 1312, explicitly refers to the legislation as the "Kelly Loving Act."

Kelly Loving was murdered in 2022 at a nightclub in Colorado Springs. Five were killed and 25 injured when a madman opened up on them with an AR-15 rifle. But it wasn't an ordinary

club—it was an LGBTQ hot spot. And Kelly was no ordinary person: he falsely claimed to be a woman. It appears Kelly was named Jonathan Ray Loving, and later adopted a female name after becoming confused about his sex.

After the massacre, President Joe Biden denounced it as an attack on LGBTQ people, saying, “We cannot and must not tolerate hate.” The mayor in Colorado Springs said the shooting “has all the appearances of being a hate crime.”

But is it a “hate crime” when transgender people kill transgender people? People of the same race kill people of the same race all the time, and no one calls such acts a “hate crime.” [Yet as we have shown before](#), transgender-on-transgender crime is commonplace.

The person who killed Kelly Loving was Nicholas Franklin Brink. But he later changed his name to Anderson Lee Aldrich because he did not want to be associated with his father. When he went on his killing spree, he was a 22-year-old sexually confused person who falsely claimed to be neither a man nor a woman. He called himself “non-binary” (there is no such thing) and wanted others to falsely refer to him as “they” or “them.”

The killer’s father was a porn actor, and after his parents divorced—he was one-year-old—he grew up mentally disturbed and was arrested several times (a SWAT team had to be sent to his house when he threatened to blow it up). In 2021, he told his grand-aunt he wanted to kill Christians.

Colorado Democrat Rep. Yara Zokaie, who co-sponsored the bill in the House, credits the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) with justifying excluding parental rights from discussion on the bill.

SPLC is a well-funded hate group that is cited by the media as a specialist in identifying hate groups. Following suit, Zokaie censored those who sought to speak against her bill, saying, “we don’t ask someone passing civil rights legislation

to go ask the KKK for their opinion.”

A search of the website of SPLC found that the first eleven posts under the banner “parental rights” are all about race, poverty, neo-Nazis, migrants and LGBTQ rights. In short, they have absolutely nothing to do with parental rights. The twelfth post is on parental rights. However it does not mean what is traditionally understood: it defends the right of parents to keep obscene books in elementary school libraries, not the right of parents who object.

Recent elections and surveys prove that attacks on the rights of women and parents is a losing game. But for some reason many Democrats are not listening, and nowhere is this more evident than in Colorado.

Contact the Chairman of the Colorado Senate Judiciary Committee: julie.gonzales.senate@coleg.gov

FAILED ATTEMPT TO MALIGN OPUS DEI

[Bill Donohue](#)

This is an abbreviated version of a longer article, “Why The Need To Bash Opus Dei?”, that appears in the April edition of “Catalyst,” our monthly journal that is available to members.

Opus Dei is loved by millions of Catholics all over the world for its yeoman efforts in getting Catholics to practice their religion more seriously. Founded in 1928 by a Spanish priest, Josemaria Escrivá, it is a spiritual home to lay Catholics and clerics who are com

mitted to living the faith on a daily basis; most are laypersons. Escrivá was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2002.

Militant secularists, and many so-called progressive Catholics, hate Opus Dei. Why? It symbolizes everything they detest: it is unashamedly Catholic, orthodox, and wildly successful.

The latest effort to trash Opus Dei is a book by Gareth Gore, *Opus*. Like so many who hate the organization, he is caught up in the mystique of Opus Dei. He can't understand why men and women are drawn to an entity that is so deeply religious, especially given the decidedly secular bent of western civilization. On top of that, he is a sloppy writer.

His book is strewn with hyperbole, innuendo and out-and-out falsehoods. Yet he had the audacity to say in an interview that his book is "100 percent correct." Here are a few examples of his inattention to detail.

"During a trip to Nicaragua, the pope refused to let one cardinal kiss his ring because he had disobeyed a papal order." But Ernesto Cardenal was not a cardinal—he was a priest. More important, he was Minister of Culture who worked for the communist dictator, Daniel Ortega, the Sandinista thug who has impoverished and enslaved the people of Nicaragua (he is still doing this today). With good reason did Saint John Paul II rebuke him.

Gore says that Mother Teresa of Calcutta attended the beatification of Saint Josemaria—she did not. Also, when he died the servants did not have to be awakened in the middle of the night to make preparations—he died in the middle of the day.

The well respected Catholic Information Center in Washington, D.C. has not been staffed by an Opus Dei priest for the past forty years; that didn't happen until 1992. Gore also says

that there are “hundreds of similar centers around the world.” In fact, there are only two.

Gore can't get over how financially successful Opus Dei is. So what? Does anyone complain about Harvard's outsized endowment? It has well over \$50 billion. To show how truly sloppy he is—his editors are just as remiss—he writes that “millions of dollars were spent on a huge school-building program across Spain.” Yet his footnote refers exclusively to summer camps!

It is to be expected that Gore would not pass up the chance to trot out a case of the sexual abuse of minors. But when he cites the case of a married layman who was guilty of molestation, accusing Opus Dei of never reporting it, he is showcasing his sophomoric research. The abuse occurred in the man's home and Opus Dei never knew about it.

Malice, not ignorance, is at work when Gore portrays the late Cardinal George Pell as a pedophile. As anyone who knows anything about this issue, the fabricated charges against Pell were thrown out of court. Indeed, he was unanimously acquitted. I have personally written a great deal about this subject, and I find mindboggling that Gore's editors would allow him to promote this invidious falsehood.

It is so typical of left-wing writers to malign the Catholic Church for reaching out to young people, depicting such efforts as something nefarious. Gore does the same to Opus Dei.

We learn that young people are not attracted to Opus Dei because of what it stands for; they are “recruited” and “captured” by its adult members. Gore must be thinking of the way left-wing college professors manipulate and recruit unsuspecting students, indoctrinating them in the latest Marxist iteration.

It is important to note that even fair-minded liberal reviewers of Gore's book see right through his agenda. That is

why Matt Murray, the executive editor of the *Washington Post*, took issue with his “rather partisan” approach, saying it sometimes comes across as a “slog.” Indeed, Murray says that “Gore can’t hide his disdain for the founder.” This accounts for his “snarky” style and his “tone of snideness.” Gore’s disdain also extends to questioning “truths,” which is why he puts the word in quotes.

When this review was published, Gore went ballistic, invoking obscenities. Instead of defending his work, he chose to berate Murray for taking “time out of his busy schedule to basically say that my book doesn’t include enough positive stuff about Opus Dei.”

With good reason does Murray say that “some chapters read more like a prosecutor’s brief” than a fair assessment of Opus Dei. This leads him to conclude that the book lacks a “nuanced understanding of the organization.” Gore greets this criticism with indignance, but that doesn’t prove Murray wrong.

It is said that education can conquer ignorance. Not if it is willed. Ideologues are not persuaded by empirical evidence, data, and logic. They are informed by a set of tightly woven ideas that are impervious to reason.