

THE QUEST TO SCALP A BISHOP

This is a special report which was originally published in the September 2014 issue of Catalyst.

The Catholic Church has many enemies these days, some of whom are ex-Catholics who left the Church a long time ago. They are joined by the disaffected, those who pretend (even convincing themselves) that they are Catholics in good standing. Most of these malcontents are lay men and women, but some are priests, and a few are nuns. All of them are animated by a strong rejection of the Church's teachings on sexuality. Because they have the support of the secular media, they comprise a formidable group.

What motivates them today is the debased desire to take down a bishop. Not any bishop: They want to drop a bishop who is an outspoken defender of the faith. They really get excited when they learn of a diocese that was riddled with dissidents and is now almost dissident free.

Geopolitics is at work, as well. While they will work overtime to disable a bishop anywhere in the nation, they prefer to scalp a bishop from the Mid-West. Why? Because that's where many of them live. It's also because it is easier for activists to dominate the news in mid-size cities, as opposed to larger ones where it is much more difficult. Their attacks are orchestrated and well-coordinated: lawyers feed the activists and they feed the media.

Cardinal Raymond Burke, formerly the Archbishop of St. Louis and now the prefect of the Vatican's highest court, has drawn the enmity of Mid-Western dissidents for years. He is despised because of his denunciations of Catholic public figures who reject the Church's teachings that bear on public policy issues. Burke's critics have no problem with the Nancy Pelosi who continually claim their Catholic status while doing

everything they can to undermine the Church. They have a problem with him.

New York Archbishop Timothy Cardinal Dolan hails from St. Louis and was the Milwaukee archbishop before coming to the Big Apple. He is hated because he cleaned up after his disgraced predecessor, Archbishop Rembert Weakland. Though Weakland embarrassed himself and the Church, he is still revered in left-wing Catholic quarters. He is liked because his views are similar to theirs.

They tried to take Dolan down because he moved the perpetual care fund, which was part of the regular archdiocesan accounts, to a cemetery trust fund. It did not matter that he was following the advice of his Financial Council; what mattered was that his enemies could play fast-and-loose with a contrived controversy. When Dolan moved to New York, they stayed on his trail. Terence McKiernan, the founder of BishopAccountability, pledged a few years ago to "stick it" to Dolan, and has accused him of "keeping the lid on 55 priests." Several attempts by me challenging McKiernan to release the names have failed. It's a lie and he knows it.

When Bishop John Myers of Peoria took over the Newark archdiocese, his enemies followed him. They went wild when it was learned that a priest was not being properly supervised after he had an encounter with a teenager 12 years earlier; he grabbed the boy while wrestling with him (in front of the boy's mother). In fact, what was really bothering his critics were Myers' strong positions on sexuality. The editorial page editor of the *Newark Star-Ledger*, an angry ex-Catholic, specifically took umbrage with Myers for his defense of "marriage and life."

Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph inherited a mess made by dissidents and cleaned it up. That made him a target. His enemies seized on the antics of a disturbed priest who took crotch-shot pictures of kids. It is important to note

that the review board was contacted, the authorities were notified, and an independent investigation was ordered. But because much more offensive photos were later taken, Finn was found guilty of one misdemeanor for not reporting suspected child abuse. Had he done nothing, no one would have known about the priest because there was no complainant. No matter, they wanted his head and are still after him.

St. Louis Archbishop Robert Carlson was recently the victim of a campaign by anti-Catholics who tried to frame him. Their goal was to promote the pernicious idea that he did not know that child abuse was against the law. It failed, but what counts is that they tried. Because Carlson fought back, and because he rejects the libertine ideas of his critics, they sought to bring him down.

No one has endured a more vicious assault on his character than John Nienstedt, Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis. Before examining his case, it is time to disclose who the principal players are in this quest to scalp a bishop.

Attorney Jeffrey Anderson, the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP), and the *National Catholic Reporter* are leading the charge. Anderson is from St. Paul, SNAP honcho David Clohessy lives in St. Louis, and the *Reporter's* home is Kansas City, Missouri. All of them find a sympathetic ear with the media.

The *Kansas City Star*, the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* are their biggest fans. Outside of the Mid-West, they have friends at the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, National Public Radio and *Commonweal* magazine; the latter has become increasingly strident.

Anderson is a tiny man with a big ego. A recovering alcoholic, he once described himself as a "dedicated atheist." His goal, he has admitted, is to "sue the s*** out of them" [the Catholic Church]. He has made good on his pledge; he is one of

the richest lawyers in the nation. While he likes to sue Mid-Western bishops, the big prize for him remains the pope; several attempts to implicate the Vatican have failed.

In August, SNAP gave Anderson an award for his work. Or was it for his money? It is a matter of record that Anderson has lavishly greased Clohessy's efforts. David Clohessy, who indicts bishops for not reporting the slightest boundary violation to the authorities, never called the cops when he learned that his brother, a priest, was accused of molesting a minor. He also admits to lying to the media, though that has cost him nothing.

Four years after the *National Catholic Reporter* was launched, it came under attack by its Ordinary, Bishop Charles Herman Helmsing, for its "poisonous character" and attacks on the Church. He said the paper had no right to claim the title "Catholic," a view that is not uncommon among many bishops today. Indeed, some experts maintain that the use of "Catholic" in its title is canonically illicit. The *Reporter* does not support the Church's teachings on sexuality, and it gives voice to those seeking to undermine the Church's hierarchy.

These are the main protagonists in the war on bishops, and they are the ones who have Archbishop Nienstedt in their sights. Along with Minnesota Public Radio and other media outlets, their pursuit of a bishop's scalp is so transparent that no objective observer could conclude otherwise.

Nienstedt got off on the wrong foot with these people when he took over from Bishop Raymond Lucker in New Ulm. He inherited a cadre of committed *National Catholic Reporter* types and moved with dispatch to restore order. There was much to clean up. Consider that Lucker wrote a book prodding the Church to change its teachings on 15 issues, including homosexuality. When he learned of a priest who had molested a minor, Father Francis Markey, Lucker moved him to another parish and school.

Markey was a drug addict and a homosexual who preyed on teenage boys. By contrast, it took Nienstedt to discipline another miscreant priest soon after he took over from Lucker; he placed him on administrative leave without faculties.

Not surprisingly, Lucker liked the dissident priest character in the ABC-TV show "Nothing Sacred." Indeed, he loved the show so much that he signed a newspaper ad in the late 1990s condemning me for boycotting the show's sponsors. Bishop Thomas Gumbleton, who attends SNAP conferences, also signed the letter. Cardinal Roger Mahony also liked the show: He gave the actor who played Father Ray an award. No media outlet worshipped the show more than the *Reporter*. When we killed the show, a dissident Brooklyn nun held a prayer vigil commemorating her loss.

Bishop Lucker is relevant to the Nienstedt story because those out to get the archbishop never showed any interest in sacking his predecessor. As long as a bishop adopts the right positions, as defined by left-wing haters and angry ex-Catholics, he will get a pass, no matter what his record is. This is the real cover-up.

If there were two triggers that ignited the assault on Nienstedt it was his public defense of marriage, properly understood, and his criticism of the pro-homosexual film, "Brokeback Mountain." Had he said nothing about a ballot initiative recognizing the right of two men to marry, and had he been equally agnostic on the gay cowboy movie, he never would have been targeted by the Church's enemies.

It is against this backdrop that, out-of-the-blue, Nienstedt was accused of touching a boy's behind when posing for a group photo; the archbishop stepped down and called for an investigation. No other leader, religious or secular, would ever do so. Of course, he was exonerated. Then came more accusations, dating back many years ago, that he engaged in improper behavior with seminarians and priests (an ex-priest

surfaced charging that Nienstedt once touched his neck). Again, the archbishop called for a probe, this time hiring a respected law firm.

From my perspective, there were two disturbed priests, both homosexuals, who should have been treated differently; their acting out occurred before Nienstedt took over. Red flags were ignored, and in one case, the fact that the priest was a homosexual actually redounded to his favor (they didn't want to out him). One of these two offending priests was permanently removed from ministry in the fall 2012, and the other was put on a leave of absence in the spring 2013 (he is not involved in ministry pending the completion of an investigation).

In October 2013, Nienstedt said, "There are no offending priests in active ministry in our archdiocese." This was disputed by Jennifer Haselberger, a canon lawyer who resigned from the archdiocese earlier that year. As it turned out, Nienstedt did not lie, but neither was he accurate. He did not know that two priests who had been accused of "boundary violations" were still in ministry. Their inappropriate behavior was not criminal and did not involve sexual abuse. Still, their status became a source of controversy. Two months later they agreed to a leave of absence; this was subsequent to a review by a Los Angeles firm, hired by the archdiocese, to see if there were any active clergy members in ministry with allegations against them.

In 2014, Nienstedt learned of an accused priest who escaped supervision. Though the priest was told not to celebrate Mass, he occasionally did so on weekends. He retired in 1998, and was the subject of allegations made against him in the 1980s about inappropriate behavior dating back to the early 1960s. As soon as Archbishop Nienstedt found out about this priest's violation of trust, he had his faculties removed.

These constitute missteps, but they hardly justify the

hysterical reaction against Nienstedt that has taken place. Media reports would have us believe that Nienstedt was involved in a major cover-up of known child molesters. This is patently false and a disservice to a great man. No, his big sin is his orthodoxy, not his decision-making. It is he who has been victimized: anonymous accusers, angry former employees, and a cadre of militants, are out to level him.

Haselberger is the darling of *Commonweal*, Minnesota Public Radio, and SNAP; she spoke at the latter's conference in August. It is a source of great irony that she was suspended by the archdiocese for failing to deal expeditiously with a complaint, yet her signature complaint against the archdiocese is that it didn't move expeditiously to deal with accused priests.

Over the summer, Haselberger submitted an affidavit to Anderson claiming to have endured "months of harassment, threats, and intimidation"; she pledged to provide examples. In fact, she provided not a single example of being threatened by anyone, and the examples that she offered of being harassed and intimidated are so weak they only work to undermine her credibility. Moreover, even she admits to at least 17 occasions where her version of events differed with that of her co-workers.

A week before Haselberger gave her affidavit, *Commonweal* printed a lengthy article detailing what she told them: the archbishop was under investigation for inappropriate sexual conduct with seminarians and former priests. Nienstedt announced the investigation on the same day, July 1, claiming innocence. She leaked this information after having learned of it from the law firm that was conducting an investigation, a probe initiated by Nienstedt.

Exactly one week after Haselberger's uncontested affidavit was taken, Minnesota Public Radio aired a documentary that featured all the familiar players, complete with piped-in

melodramatic music. For an outlet that prides itself on objectivity, it was nothing but a left-wing hit job. That teed things up for Anderson, who conveniently released Haselberger's statement the next day. The day after that, Laurie Goodstein published her story in the *New York Times*, and two days later her newspaper published a scathing editorial on Nienstedt. On the same day, July 18, two journalists, one from the *National Catholic Reporter*, called for the archbishop to resign. This set the tone for Minnesota newspapers which then called for him to resign.

We decided to do a little investigating of our own: I asked the staff to research the internal policies that these media outlets have on employee misconduct, including violations of the law. A senior PR person from the *Star Tribune* initially got back to us saying we would hear from someone in the editorial office. But no one ever contacted us.

The *St. Cloud Times* is a Gannett paper, and the parent company has a policy on what to do when an employee learns of "violations of the law or Company policy." It says nothing about reporting law violations to the authorities; all they need to do is report illegalities to their supervisor. The *New York Times* is the most shameless of them all.

The *Times* has a Business Ethics Policy that if adopted by the bishops would lead to calls for their mass resignation. "Any employee who becomes aware of any conduct that he or she believes to be prohibited by this Policy *or a violation of the law...is expected to promptly report the facts forming the basis of that belief or knowledge to any supervisor of the legal department.*" (My italics.) In other words, crimes of sexual harassment need not be reported to the authorities. Now what if a false accusation is made against a fellow employee? They are subject "to discipline up to and including termination." The bishops should adopt this policy.

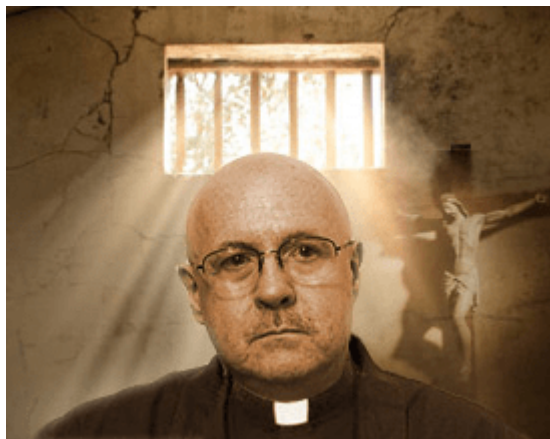
If this isn't hypocritical enough, consider that the former

head honcho of the BBC, Mark Thompson, was made president and CEO of the *New York Times* after it was disclosed that he was told of a cover-up: a scheduled BBC documentary on BBC icon and serial child rapist Jimmy Savile was spiked for political reasons. Thompson wanted nothing to stop his quest to land the coveted *Times* job, so he played dumb. But we subsequently learned that he knew all about the decision to nix the film.

Nienstedt has tried to reach out to the media to tell his side of the story, but what interests them is not his account, it is his sexuality. To be exact, they want to know what he does in bed, and with whom: three media outlets questioned him about his sexual behavior. He told the *Star Tribune*, "No, I'm not gay. And I'm not anti-gay." When asked by the *Pioneer Press* if he had had sex with men since becoming archbishop, he said, "No. Not even before." A homosexual reporter for KMSB, Fox 9 Minneapolis, also asked the archbishop about his sexuality.

Those out to get Nienstedt cannot be shamed, but they can be stopped. Unfortunately, too many Catholic activists and writers who know he is being railroaded have gone mute. This must end. We cannot stand by and watch these anti-Catholic zealots carry the day.

FR. MACRAE'S 20 YEARS IN PRISON



Next week marks the 20th anniversary of Father Gordon MacRae's unjust prison sentence. What happened to him is unbelievable. My account of his ordeal was posted today on his website, www.thesestonewalls.com. To read it, click [here](#).

IRELAND'S "MASS GRAVE" HYSTERIA

To read Bill Donohue's special report exposing Ireland's (Tuam) "mass grave" hoax, click [here](#).

BILL DONOHUE'S LETTER OF COMPLAINT TO THE U.N.

Bill Donohue mailed a formal complaint on May 15, 2014, with documentation, to the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations in Geneva regarding the conduct of Felice Gaer, Vice-Chairperson of the U.N. Committee Against Torture. Donohue charges her with violating specific strictures governing the impartiality of committee members. The basis of his complaint is Gaer's recent exchange with officials from the Holy See, and her compromising relationship with an

external activist organization, the Center for Reproductive Rights. To read the letter, click [here](#).

The Limbaugh Letter, “My Conversation with Bill Donohue”

The following article appeared in the April 2014 edition of *The Limbaugh Letter*.

Reprinted with permission from *The Limbaugh Letter*, ©2014 Premiere Networks, Inc.

For additional information, or to subscribe to *The Limbaugh Letter* please visit www.thelimbaughletter.com

My Conversation with Bill Donohue

by Rush Limbaugh

A privilege to speak with this religious freedom warrior, president of the Catholic League, a bold presence on television, the author of many books, including [Secular Sabotage: How Liberals Are Destroying Religion and Culture in America](#) and [Why Catholicism Matters: How Catholic Virtues Can Reshape Society in the 21st Century](#):

Rush: Dr. Donohue, this is great. I have wanted to talk to you for the longest time, and I’m really appreciative that you’ve

been able to make the time here.

Donohue: Wait, what? For you? What, are you kidding me? You're number one, buddy. [Laughs]

Rush: You intrigue me. I've been watching you for years on tv. Since I've got you here, could you tell me a little bit about the Catholic League? How old is it? What is its purpose?

Donohue: It was founded in 1973 by a man I never got a chance to meet; he died a couple of years before I took over in 1993. Back in 1973 Father Virgil Blum, a Jesuit priest, professor of political science at Marquette University, founded the Catholic League. Even though that was the year of Roe v. Wade, that wasn't his top issue. His top issue was anti-Catholicism. He wanted this organization to be somewhat analogous to the ADL [Anti-Defamation League] in the Jewish community. His driving issue more than anything else back in '73 was actually school vouchers. Then abortion, then other things. But that was it, to defend individual Catholics and the institutional church.

Though he was a priest, he felt the need for a lay organization. I can tell you from my conversations with a lot of bishops and cardinals over the years, they very much feel there is a need for a lay organization because, quite frankly, I can say some things that they may want to say, but they're constrained by the collar. There's a need for Catholics to enter into a more robust debate.

All our money comes from voluntary contributions. We don't get our money from Wall Street; we get our money from Main Street. We have the support of many bishops and priests, obviously, but we don't get a dime from the Catholic Church. I don't report to a bishop. I report to a Board of Directors, mostly attorneys and businessmen and women. We're a 501(c)(3) – basically an anti-defamation organization.

Rush: To my mind, you are the country's foremost Catholic

advocate, but you obviously go way beyond. You're obviously focused on civil liberties as a whole, with an emphasis on religious freedom.

Donohue: I started off teaching in Spanish Harlem and I went on to get my Ph.D. in Sociology from NYU and then went on to be a college professor in Pittsburgh. I wrote a Ph.D. dissertation and two books on the ACLU. I'm the guy who gave Bush 41 everything he used against "the Little Duke" [Michael Dukakis] back in '88.

Rush: Aha!

Donohue: It was the Little Duke who made the ACLU an issue when he said he was a [card-carrying](#) member. I was at The Heritage Foundation then. The ACLU book [[The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union](#)] got me there. I wrote another book about the ACLU [[The Twilight of Liberty: The Legacy of the ACLU](#)], and now I'm writing books about the Catholic Church. I've taught political science and Constitutional law, the latter as a result of tracking the ACLU. I don't address the ACLU as much anymore because I didn't want to turn this into Bill Donohue's anti-ACLU crusade. Quite frankly it has been eclipsed by so many other governmental and cultural forces.

Rush: I don't think there's an advocate who does it better, and you do it in a way that's not overtly devout or religious.

Donohue: Well, you've got to have a sense of humor. I'm Irish. I come from a blue-collar background. My father left me when I was a child. I was raised by my grandparents who were born in Ireland, didn't have any education. My mother was a nurse. I got taught by the Marxists at NYU and The New School for Social Research, but it didn't have any effect on me because I had common sense. I'm fed up with the left in terms of their hypocrisy. I think that's what drove me. I started as a Democrat. I became Republican, but I've been happily

independent over 20 years. I'm proud to be a conservative. I'm a former Bradley Resident Scholar at The Heritage Foundation. But I am not a Republican, I am not a Democrat, and I want to keep that clean so that I can go where the action is.

Rush: Now, you may laugh at the question, but I need to ask it. Are you a devout Catholic? Whatever the Church's teachings are, you support them? You're not in business to establish your own point of view on the religion.

Donohue: There's no question I am a devout Catholic. The Catholic League is not a debating society. We're here to defend the right of the Church to say whatever it wants in the public arena and people are free to agree or disagree. As John Paul II said, "We're not here to impose anything. We're here to propose." Might I have a few teachings that I might wrestle with? Well, yes, which I'm not going to make public because it's not about Bill Donohue. It's about me saying we have this indispensable moral voice and it needs an airing and a respectful hearing instead of catcalls. We don't have our own views. We don't have our own teachings. Whatever the teachings are of the Catholic Church, we're simply saying, "Give it a respectful hearing and then we go our way."

Rush: Okay, I wanted to set the table with that. What is your assessment of the state of religious freedom in the country today, and how has it changed since you took over the Catholic League?

Donohue: When I took over in 1993, quite frankly, I wondered if I would have enough work to do. That's because, like a lot of Catholics, I was not myself a victim of discrimination. That existed in the 18th, 19th, and maybe the first half of the 20th century. I'm not just using JFK as the proverbial example, and it is true that in the 20th century the progress that individual Catholics made was gigantic. But while individual Catholics have made tremendous progress, the denigration and defamation of the institutional Church through

the movies, through TV, what's said in the schools, and artistic exhibitions and the like – it's incredible the double standard, the hate-filled obscene comments that are made and lies about the Catholic Church. I think a lot of Catholics have said: "Well, that's for Father Murphy to take care of." No. We need something like Article 5 of NATO: If there's an attack on my church, it should be viewed as an attack on me.

Rush: Bill, that's one of the reasons why this is so important. I think the flock, if I can term it that way, is somewhat like many in the Republican Party. They're just scared. They're scared of media. They're scared of opposition and they'd rather slink away than engage this defamation of the Church. I remember in 1993 when ACT UP ran through St. Patrick's throwing condoms at Cardinal O'Connor. I wondered, why is it up to the Church to change? The Church is not reaching out and demanding these people be anything. If you don't want to be a Catholic, don't go in. Stay away. What is the threat? Why does the Catholic Church, religion in general, threaten so many on the left?

Donohue: The biggest threats today come from government. They used to come from the media. The biggest change, and this is pernicious, it's not just coming from Hollywood, it's now coming from government which obviously is much scarier. Father Blum, the founder of the Catholic League, said the problem with Catholics is they're "[political eunuchs](#)." That's why we have to have a Catholic League to try and jack these people up and get with it. As I like to say to Senator Schumer – and he gets a kick out of this: "The Catholic League is theologically Catholic, but we are behaviorally Jewish." In other words, we're going to be a little tougher and stand up for our rights.

Now, why the threats? Most of the attacks – not all, but the lion's share of them – have to deal with matters sexual. Evangelicals, Orthodox Jews, Muslims, Mormons, and others share the same idea of sexual ethics, which is what I call

“sexual reticence.” In other words, the necessity of restraint. “Restraint” is not a dirty word. It’s actually good if people practice it. The people who don’t practice it, well, they wind up dead. Physically dead, spiritually dead, morally dead.

Why the Catholic Church? We’re the big fat target. Orthodox Jews are too small, so are the Mormons, so are the Muslims and they fear the Muslims. Evangelicals they don’t like, but they’re kind of scattered. They don’t have that same kind of institutional big target. We’ve been around for 2,000 years. We’ve got the Pope at the top. If your goal is libertinism, which essentially means license to do whatever you want, no holds barred, if the three most dreaded words in the English language are, “Thou shalt not,” no, you’re not going to like the evangelicals, the Orthodox Jews, the Mormons, and the Muslims, but boy, the one you want to get, the big fat target, the bull’s-eye, is the Roman Catholic Church. Because to the extent that you can weaken its moral authority, its moral voice, you will have largely been able to win. That’s what is driving almost all of it.

Rush: Are they afraid that you’re judgmental of them? Are they afraid that you are going to succeed in curtailing their freedom?

Donohue: I think they’re afraid that I would succeed in getting forth the message to enough people that these attacks are malicious, that they’re unfair, and that we need to have a respectful voice for the Catholic Church. I’ll give you one quick example. In the last week I’ve spoken to some very nice liberal guys – Alan Colmes, Joe Piscopo – who were unaware that in the St. Patrick’s Parade we do not bar gays from marching. We bar gays from having their own banners and contingents. We also bar pro-life Catholics from marching in their own contingent with their own banners. If the St. Patrick’s Day Parade is “anti-gay,” then it must logically be anti-life. Nobody believes that. When I get that message out,

fair-minded liberals say, "I'm with you Bill." But our side has been intimidated. I can't tell you the number of the Catholics who have wined and dined me, who are good men and women, but I've just about given up with them. I said to them, "Listen, guys, I can give you the talking points. I can frame the issues. You know what I can't do?" And they ask, "What's that, Bill?" "Courage: it's not transferable." The reason you've made it, Rush, is not just because you're a brilliant commentator, but because you have courage. If you don't have it, forget it.

Rush: Are you worried the Church will succumb? That there might be enough pressure brought to bear that the Church would dramatically alter its position, say, on female priests?

Donohue: No.

Rush: You've never had any doubts about that?

Donohue: No. And I'll tell you why. One, they can't change. We can change meat on Friday; we can change celibacy. That's a man-made rule. That's what they call in the Catholic circles a "discipline." It's not dogma. It wasn't written in Scripture. It was optional for the first thousand years, and then they made it a requirement. They can change that next week if they want. But there are certain things they can't change, such as women priests, positions on abortion and marriage, and the like. So I'm not worried about that.

And there's another reason. When Napoleon told Cardinal Consalvi he was going to destroy the church, Consalvi said, and I'm paraphrasing, "Listen, if we cardinals and bishops with all the people that we've had screwing up for 18 centuries haven't destroyed the Church from within, you're not going to do it from outside either." There is a Holy Spirit. We blunder, we make our mistakes, but no, we're going to be here and I'm not worried about that.

Now, am I concerned that there are some bishops, some priests,

and a whole lot of nuns who have gone off the rails? Oh, yeah. I've named names. There's no question about it. These Catholic dissidents – if I was that unhappy with an organization I am voluntarily staying with, I'd go someplace else. We don't lack for religions in this country that accept pro-abortion positions and gay marriage and everything else. It's mostly the mainline Protestant denominations. I say to people, "If you want to join, don't walk down the street, run. Because they're shutting the doors very quickly." If that were the answer they should be booming, but instead the Catholic Church is holding steady, Orthodox Jews are growing faster than Reformed Jews and Conservative Jews, the evangelicals are growing faster than the mainline Protestants. People don't want to give up something just so they can adopt the editorial policies of *The New York Times*. They want something to put their teeth into. The Catholic seminaries that are the most orthodox are growing. The same is true with orders of nuns. Those orders of nuns that have mistaken their vocation for that of social work are dying out.

Rush: The left worldwide long ago concluded that in the arena of ideas they can't win. They cannot out-argue. Because they're not on the right side of any morality. However, they have attempted to corrupt the institutions that oppose them.

Donohue: That's right.

Rush: You don't worry that the College of Cardinals can somehow be corrupted ten, 20, 30 years from now? What about the priesthood? Some say that the abuse of children thing is the result of infiltration, to create the exact image of the Church that has happened.

Donohue: The sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church was an absolute, utter disgrace. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, not an arm of the Catholic Church, put the timeline as overwhelmingly from the mid-60s to the mid-80s. Mid-60s, the beginning of the sexual revolution. Mid-80s, because I

would argue AIDS was discovered in '81 and that put the brakes on people.

Why did it affect the Catholic Church? When the winds of culture change dramatically, it gets through the military, it gets through the churches, everybody. That's not an excuse. You had two principle actors: the molesting priest and the enabling bishop. Most of the molesting priests, according to John Jay, were men who had sex with men. Now they don't use the word I'm going to use: homosexuality. John Jay said less than five percent were pedophiles. In other words, it was guys hitting on adolescent guys.

Now, I can say this to you because you'll give me a chance to say it. I've said it a million times, but nobody wants to quote me on this. Most gay priests are not molesters, but most of the molesting priests have been gay. Now, I'm Irish. My people have a problem with alcoholism. It doesn't mean if you're born Irish you're going to become an alcoholic. It means that maybe you ought to take a look at certain communities. That's all I'm saying.

Now, the enabling bishop. What drove him? Clericalism. That's the term that's used in Catholic circles. Those who are not Catholic would probably understand it more in terms of elitism, arrogance, pomposity. "The bishop knows best." "Don't worry about that, I'm taking care of things." Yes, you took care of things real well, some of you.

This should never have happened. They were teaching in some of the seminaries in the 1970s that all kinds of sexual expression was okay. As in the 1977 book [Human Sexuality](#), by a former priest, Anthony Kosnik. It's stunning. Everything goes. I'm saying the Catholic Church became corrupt, morally speaking, on matters sexual in the 1970s when the lid blew. Not all seminaries, obviously, but too many of them. So there was this enabling factor, "Send the guy to therapy and he'll be just fine." Well, some people are intractable. I'm not

saying you throw them in the street or lock them up, although some of them certainly should be, but what you can't do is put them back into ministry.

"Give the poor devil therapy" was the zeitgeist. That was the spirit of the times in the 60s and 70s. You could rehabilitate anybody. Therapy was for everybody. People were bragging about their analysts, and too many bishops got advice from the psychiatrists and they accepted it. It was a sad chapter. In the last six years, we have [seven](#) credible accusations made against 40,000 priests. There's a serious problem of child rape going on in other demographic communities about which you will hear nothing. Almost every case you hear today is an old case which is being resurrected. There's no bigger devil in this than the Catholic left and those who claim to be Catholic and have one foot out the door or who have long left and who are angry. Particularly watch out for the ex-priest, the ex-seminarian, and the ex-nun.

Rush: Exactly. You said the government is now the greatest threat. I assume you're talking about government imposition, a policy of violation of religious freedom, such as forcing religious institutions to dispense contraceptives and pay for them. I've often wondered, look at a great Catholic school like Georgetown. Why do they cave? Why do they not stand up when this kind of attack is made on the morality of the Church? Maybe "caving" is the wrong word.

Donohue: No, it isn't. They have caved. They've long caved. They're a disgrace. I've asked Jesuits, "Can you explain to me the difference between George Washington University and Georgetown?" There are two pro-abortion groups on the campus of Georgetown. One of them is Hoyas for Choice and the other was founded by Sandra Fluke. Now, you have good Catholic schools like Catholic University of America run by John Garvey. They're not going to put up with that. But there's a craven need on the part of a lot of Catholics to be liked.

In the late 90s, Cardinal O'Connor asked to see me. But we never got around to what he wanted to see me about because when I got in, I was ticked off. He said, "Sit down, Bill, what's the matter?" I said, "What's wrong with a lot of these priests? They never stand for anything. They're a bunch of wimps." He said, "Bill, you're right. They want to be liked." I said, "I like to be liked too, your Eminence. I'm not a masochist. But I want to be respected first." These people want the acclamation and affirmation of secular liberals. They themselves are liberal and they're almost ashamed to be Catholic. They don't want to be called "parochial." That would be the worst thing in the world. So they will bend over and suck up to the secular left so much that they lose their own identity.

Rush: Not just the Catholic Church, but many religions have thrown in with the left. If you trace it back you find when socialism or Big Government-ism, whatever you want to call it, was translated to mean "charity," it was like a magnet. The Church glommed onto it and ended up supporting socialist politicians and socialist governments because theft and redistribution was called "charity" – which it isn't. I think you have much the same circumstance here with these universities.

Donohue: They also want to be welcomed to parties. They want to get those Park Avenue parties and the ones in Georgetown. They want the recognition of the secular left that they're not like Donohue: "Donohue is a conservative. Donohue still actually believes in these old-fashioned ideas. You're an open-minded guy." It's so open I sometimes wonder where the mind has gone. They've sold out. And they're happy to sell out because in return they get to be a member of the liberal club.

Rush: That's why I asked if you worry something like that could happen down the road in the College of Cardinals. It's clear that it can happen.

Donohue: There's no question about that. Remember what Pope Paul VI said back in 1972, referring to the sexual abuse crisis, the homosexual scandal: "The smoke of Satan is in the Church." Didn't just about every one of the Apostles turn on Jesus?

Rush: Right, yes.

Donohue: But I scratch my head every day about the renegades and heretics: "Why don't you just move on? Why do you camp out where you're no longer wanted?" It's because they know where the power is and if you can change the Catholic Church from within – Gramsci, the Italian Marxist, talked about this. He said, "Marx was wrong to take the economic lever as the path to socialism. The path to socialism is: take command of the cultural centers." Take command of the media, the arts, entertainment, change people's thinking. He did say get into the Catholic Church.

Rush: It wasn't long ago – ten years ago – that most, if not all, major religious groups opposed same-sex marriage, but there's a February [poll](#) by something called the Public Religion Research Institute that says that 58 percent of white Catholics, 56 percent of Hispanic Catholics now favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry. Do you believe polls like that?

Donohue: No. Take the new [Pew](#) poll results. If you take a look at practicing Catholics, those who go to church once a week, the figure of support for gay marriage is 33 percent. There's a difference of 23 percent, which is an enormous margin, between practicing Catholics and non-practicing Catholics, those who almost never go to church. I got my doctorate in this area in sociology. The first thing we've got to do is disaggregate. If I ask someone, "Are you a vegetarian?" and he says, "Yes," but he's eating a hot dog – would I count him in a poll of vegetarians? Quite frankly, what's going on here is a bit of a game. They don't like to disaggregate. When they

do, they find that practicing Catholics, for example, did not vote for Obama in either of the last two elections.

But that said, there has been a softening up. You've got a whole generation of kids who have been reared to believe from K right through graduate school that today's gays are yesterday's blacks. Most blacks take umbrage at that. Where we're winning, fortunately, is on abortion.

Rush: Yes.

Donohue: More young people, not just Catholic, are becoming pro-life. I suspect that's due to two reasons: 1) pictures – sonograms; and 2) nobody wants to talk about it. A lot of these young kids have friends or a brother or sister they've never met. In other words, their mother or their friend's mother had an abortion. That could have been them. Couple that with the sonograms – the picture doesn't lie – and I'm very optimistic. We're not going to change all the laws tomorrow. In New York it will always be legal to kill kids, because it's a very liberal state, but I think Roe could be overturned and it will go back to the states. On gay marriage it's more difficult because the gays have been very successful at taking that value of the American creed called “equality” and selling it.

Rush: I know. Marriage is what it is, except it isn't. [Laughter] Marriage is now something that is discriminatory, and it isn't. It's in the process of being redefined.

Look, since we've ended up here, back on February 27 you were on CNN with Chris Cuomo, who went after you for your support of that vetoed bill in Arizona, the religious liberty bill. The words “gay” or “homosexuality” weren't in it. But few people – you were one – stood up and defended and properly explained that bill. Cuomo said to you, “Nobody's saying that a religious organization has to perform gay marriages because of this.” You said, “Oh, wait a minute...”

Donohue: That's where we're going.

Rush: So clearly you think this bill could lead someday to somebody suing or demanding the Church marry a gay couple. Right?

Donohue: Let me be more specific even. I played a role along with others in killing the nomination of Dawn Johnsen, who in 1988 worked on an ACLU case to strip the Catholic Church of its tax-exempt status because the Church is pro-life. I know where they're going. Which brings me back to HHS. I refer to Obamacare as "the abortion-inducing-drug mandate." Contraception is not exactly a hot-button issue with Catholics, including practicing Catholics, these days. But abortion is a different matter altogether. Why did the HHS mandate try to force contraception, sterilization? Why did they throw in the abortion-inducing drugs? Because that's the camel's nose under the tent. That's where they want to go. The big prize is not contraception. It's abortion.

Rush: Yes. It always circles back to that.

Donohue: The most pernicious thing about the HHS mandate is not even forcing Catholics to pay for abortion-inducing drugs. It goes back to 2000 in California where the Obama Administration picked up the idea from the ACLU that a Catholic organization is not a Catholic organization in terms of exemptions if it hires and serves people who are not Catholic. So we're being punished. This is the most dramatic thing about this and a lot of people don't know about it. The government of the United States wants to redefine what constitutes a Catholic organization. Catholic hospitals don't have signs up saying, "Jews, Muslims, Atheists, Mormons, you're not welcome." We welcome them in. The Little Sisters of the Poor tend to old people who are not Catholic. They don't ask what your religion is as a condition of service.

This Administration, and this is what's so maliciously obscene

about it, it's worse than abortion. They're saying, "You're no longer a Catholic organization because you hire and serve people who are not Catholic." I can't say this enough times to people. Talk about separation of church and state; this is the government redefining what religion is! By the way, when this gets before the Supreme Court, I predict a victory. I think the Obama Administration is in for a sad awakening.

Rush: Before we go I need to ask you something I've observed. The left in this country has traditionally opposed the Pope. They like this one. What is it about Pope Francis that they like? Do they think he's in the process of rejecting Catholic doctrine? He supposedly said, "Who am I to judge gays?" Are leftists looking at that as though the Pope might be malleable?

Donohue: See what they do? The left obviously lusts for power, and they're dishonest. What the Pope actually said was: "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will," two conditions, "who am I to judge?" What the left does, and the Catholic left is the worst, they take that and run with it because they're trying to tell the bishops and the priests and the laypeople in this country, "You've got to get with the program." Cuomo tried to do this with me, "You're out of step with your Pope." But the Pope never said that. They try to create momentum.

Now, it is true that when it comes to socioeconomic issues, he's out of Latin America, he has a different model. People are free to disagree on that. People said to me, "Why didn't you come against Rush Limbaugh for criticizing the Pope on that?" I said, "This is really stunning. Rush Limbaugh didn't say anything. He never used an insulting term like Bill Maher and you people do all day long. He disagreed with the Pope. You're the guys who disagree with the Pope for a living. That's how you make your money at *The National Catholic Reporter*. And you say because Rush disagrees with the Pope, as many, many Catholics do, that's a problem?" How about my

friend [Father Sirico](#) of the Acton Institute and many others who are free marketeers? That doesn't constitute anti-Catholicism. I don't go after anybody for disagreeing with a public policy position of the Catholic Church unless they get insulting.

The left likes this Pope because he does tend to more of the left policies when it comes to the economic area. But look what he says about marriage. Look what he says about abortion. Look what he says about so many other things that matter. The left never quotes those. Here's what I like about Pope Francis. He is very much against clericalism. He is shaking up some of these bishops who have gotten too comfortable. He calls them the "airport bishops." This is where the right and the left can come together: "Stop with your elitism." The Pope is a populist guy. He resonates with the people. That's long overdue. I don't like pompous priests and he certainly has no use for them.

Rush: By the way, thank you for defending me on that and speaking up properly. You nailed that.

Donohue: It was just so unfair. It was so transparent.

Rush: Well, I appreciate it. But you know something else? They look at the Catholic Church like it's a political organization, getting votes. It's not. They're trying to corrupt everything.

Donohue: They are. They know where the power is. It all comes down to sex. The straights want their sex. If a kid comes along, abort them. The gays want their sex. If they get a disease, I should pay for it. It's libertinism, and the Church represents traditional moral values. Which, by the way, in the Pew survey, 81 percent of Catholics – 81 percent, the highest rating – say the Pope is doing an excellent/good job on the defense of traditional moral values. I put that statement out because I know left-wing Catholics won't be trumpeting it.

Rush: Bill, I want to thank you for your time. There is no better advocate for what he believes than you, and I've long admired your work. I wish you all the best and if there is ever anything we can do to help, would you please let me know?

Donohue: I would. Thank you, buddy.

[Back to Top](#)

BISHOPACCOUNTABILITY'S REPORT ON POPE FRANCIS

According to BishopAccountability.org, "He [the pope when he was a bishop in Argentina] released no documents, no names of accused priests, no tallies of accused priests, no policy for handling abuse, not even an apology to victims."

The report excerpts a quote from a 2010 interview where Archbishop Bergoglio was asked about pedophilia. In part, he responded by saying, "in my diocese it never happened to me." What the report left out was his condemnation of pedophilia, and his criticism of the way some bishops handled the problem of sexual abuse.

BishopAccountability highlights five cases where Bergoglio may have had knowledge of abuse allegations, but it is clear that it has no evidence that he knew about any of these cases. Moreover, only one of the priests was an archdiocesan priest from Buenos Aires (more on him below); two were religious order priests and two were from other dioceses.

The report estimates that between 1950 and 2013, "more than 100 Buenos Aires archdiocesan priests offended against

children.” Again, the report cites no evidence for this claim. It further undermines its credibility when it makes a strained analogy: it compares the size of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires to the number of priests accused in the dioceses of Manchester, Providence, and Los Angeles. Even a high school dropout would have chosen a Latin American analogy.

The report tries to sound authoritative by compiling a list of 42 clergy who have been accused of abuse in Argentina. Perhaps it thought that no one would check its own sources. We did. Here is what we found:

- Thirty-four of those priests had no connection to the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires.
- One was acquitted when the allegations could not be proved.
- One was tried in the United States, and the charges were dismissed before he moved to Argentina.
- One priest admitted to abusing a 15-year-old in the Diocese of Quilmes, and was transferred to the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires to live.
- One priest was credibly accused in the United States, and was then assigned to missionary work by his order. He was sent to Buenos Aires in August 2013, after Bergoglio was elected pope.
- One priest was accused of abuse in Uruguay, and was then transferred to Buenos Aires.

Of the three remaining clerics, only one was an archdiocesan priest, Father Carlos Maria Gauna. He was accused of inappropriately touching two girls (he allegedly touched their buttocks) at a Catholic school, and was disciplined as a result. One was a Marianist brother, and there is no evidence that Bergoglio ever heard about, much less failed to report him. Finally, he is accused of commissioning a “secret” study of a Salesian priest, aimed at discrediting the accuser, but absolutely no evidence is provided to support this charge.

This so-called report is the most McCarthyite attack on Pope Francis that we have seen. We will be sure that the bishops learn of it.

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

www.catholicleague.org

DEBUNKING “PHILOMENA”

To read Bill Donohue’s special report on the anti-Catholic film, “Philomena,” click [here](#).

ON THE FRONT LINE OF THE CULTURE WAR: RECENT ATTACKS ON THE BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

To read Bill Donohue’s special report, “On the Front Line of the Culture War: Recent Attacks on the Boy Scouts of America,” Click [here](#).

ON THE FRONT LINE
OF THE CULTURE WAR:
RECENT ATTACKS ON THE
BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

SECOND EDITION

WILLIAM A. DONOHUE

 CENTER for the STUDY
of the NATURAL LAW

THE CLAREMONT INSTITUTE

MYTHS OF THE MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES

Bill Donohue
President

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

Prejudice, as the psychologist Gordon W. Allport stressed, is

always an “unwarranted” attitude. If someone experiences severe discomfort by eating certain foods, there is nothing prejudicial about refusing to eat any more of them. But there is something prejudicial about making sweeping generalizations about an entire category of food, or a community of people, when one’s experiences are limited. One contemporary example of prejudice is the popular perception of the nuns who ran Ireland’s Magdalene Laundries.

From the mid-eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century, the laundries housed “fallen” girls and women in England and Ireland. Though they did not initiate the facilities, most of the operations were carried out by the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, Good Shepherd Sisters, and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity. The first “Magdalene Home” was established in England in 1758; Ireland followed in 1765 (the first asylum being a Protestant-run entity).

The popular perception of the laundries is entirely negative, owing in large part to fictionalized portrayals in the movies. The conventional wisdom has also been shaped by writers who have come to believe the worst about the Catholic Church, and by activists who have their own agenda. So strong is the prejudice that even when evidence to the contrary is presented, the bias continues.

There is a Facebook page dedicated to the laundries titled, “Victims of the Irish Holocaust Unite.” Irish politicians have spoken of “our own Holocaust,” and Irish journalists have referred to the “Irish gulag system.” But the fact is there was no holocaust, and there was no gulag. No one was murdered. No one was imprisoned, nor forced against her will to stay. There was no slave labor. Not a single woman was sexually abused by a nun. Not one. It’s all a lie.

How do we know it’s a lie? The evidence is fully documented in the McAleese Report on the Magdalene Laundries, formally known

as the "Report of the Inter-Developmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalene Laundries." The Report, which was released February 5, 2013, was chaired by Senator Martin McAleese.

An analysis of the McAleese Report will show how utterly false the conventional view of the Magdalene Laundries is. First, however, we need to understand the genesis of the popular mythology. Nothing helped to put a monstrous face on the laundries more than the movie, "The Magdalene Sisters."

"The Magdalene Sisters"

The 2002 movie is often described as a "fictionalized" account of what happened inside the laundries. The *New York Times* prefers to speak of "semifictionalized" stories that have been recounted on the screen. As we will see, the McAleese Report does not validate the cruelties portrayed in the film, but the problem is few have even heard of the Report, much less read it. It's the movie's thesis that is embedded in people's minds, and it is one of unrelieved horror: sadistic nuns who punished young women with impunity, all in the name of Catholicism. Here is a sampling of how the movie was received.

- "Slave Labor in Irish Convents as Terrible as Prison." This was the headline in the *New York Times* story of September 28, 2002. The movie review spoke about "the victims of a stringently moralistic brand of Irish Catholicism," referring to the "religious labor camps" run by the nuns. "Some 30,000 women are thought to have passed through their gates." Whom did they meet? "Most prison movies have a monster authority figure, and so does 'The Magdalene Sisters.'" Specifically, the audience meets the "ogre" head nun, Sister Bridget, "a twisted diabolical autocrat."
- Exactly two months later, the *Times* ran a story, "Irish Recall Sad Homes for 'Fallen' Women." It said the movie

depicted “the casual cruelty and commonplace despair in the homes,” explaining that a host of television documentaries “have revealed an array of abuse and cruelty by institutions run by the Catholic Church, often with the collusion of the state.”

- On August 3, 2003, the *Times* carried a piece by Mary Gordon, a long-time critic of Catholicism. After restating the themes of the two *Times* articles from the previous year, she opined that the “moral horrors” were not examples of mere “sadism”; rather, they reflected the even more pernicious “belief that they were intended for the victims’ own good.”
- In 2003, Roger Ebert took to the pages of the *Chicago Sun-Times* commenting how “these inhuman punishments did not take place in Afghanistan under the Taliban, but in Ireland under the Sisters of Mercy.”
- The first of three articles by the Associated Press in 2003 referred to “the nuns’ deep-seated greed and corruption,” and to Sister Bridget’s “whip to keep the girls in line.”
- The second article said “some 30,000 women were virtually imprisoned,” and that they “sometimes suffer[ed] physical and sexual abuse.”
- The third article cited the 30,000 figure as well, and described the laundries as “forced-labor” establishments.
- An August 15, 2003 review in the *Washington Post* said the laundries were “veritable prison camps” that were run by “an unmovable monster,” Sister Bridget.
- On the same day, in the same newspaper, it said that in watching the film “it’s difficult not to be reminded of a World War II concentration camp.” It spoke of the “30,000 women [who] were incarcerated,” and the “ghastly images” that it “uncomfortably shares with so many fictionalized Holocaust films.” Indeed, “the nuns begin to resemble Nazi guards.”
- A 2003 review in the U.K.’s *Guardian* picked up on the

Nazi angle by speaking of “Dr. Mengele.” It also described “the beatings, the breast-binding, the head-shaving, the forced fasting [and] the weekly mortification sessions, when the women were stripped and laughed at for their vanity.”

- On August 1, 2003, the *New York Daily News* concluded that “the whole system was sadistic and indefensible,” saying “the church” was deserving of all the scorn.
- On the same day, the *San Francisco Chronicle* pulled no punches, saying, “For some, the asylums were like a roach motel—girls checked in, but they never checked out, except 40 or 50 years later, in a pine box.”
- *Newsday* offered its review the same day, speaking of the “moral fascism” of the laundries.
- The *New York Post* also chose August 1 to say, “You’ll walk away amazed at the heartlessness of the people running the asylums and wondering how such a gruesome practice could have existed into the late 20th century.”

Yes, it would be amazing if this heartlessness were tolerated as recently as the late 20th century. What is truly amazing is that so many movie reviewers would come to rock-solid conclusions, believing the worst about the nuns. Indeed, they acted as though the movie portrayed indisputable historical facts. What made it easier for people to believe the movie’s narrative was the news stories coming out of Boston at this time: the priestly sexual abuse scandal, with Boston as the epicenter, erupted as front-page news in 2002.

Regrettably, reviews are still coming in, years later, offering the same conclusion. In 2011, a feminist magazine at Yale put it this way: “The abuse committed by the nuns and priests overseeing the laundries was physical, sexual and psychological. Oftentimes the women had their heads shaved, and were stripped naked to be examined. They were subject to a variety of horrific tortures, beatings for disobedience, and sexual degradation.” In fact, none of this is true.

Peter Mullan

The man behind "The Magdalene Sisters" is Peter Mullan. The Irish writer and director said he got the idea for the movie by watching the 1998 TV film, "Sex in a Cold Climate." That was a 50-minute documentary that described the lives of four women who lived and worked at the laundries. It made a big splash at the time, especially because it featured Phyllis Valentine, a woman who said she was interred in the laundries because she was deemed "too pretty" by the nuns.

If, of course, it were true that the nuns rounded up "pretty girls" for placement in the laundries, that would indeed be a big story. It would also suggest that other such cases must have surfaced by now (unless we are prepared to believe that Valentine was the only "pretty girl" encountered by the nuns). But they haven't: only Valentine has made this claim. In her case, we know that at age 15 she was moved from the orphanage where she was raised to the laundry. Such a transfer was standard practice, whether the girls were homely or pretty. By the way, the laundry was literally next door to the orphanage. It should come as no surprise that not a single nun who worked at either the orphanage or the laundry was asked to verify the "pretty girl" tale.

To say Mullan hates Catholicism would be an understatement. His comment that "There is not much difference between the Catholic Church and the Taliban" is unqualified. Anyone capable of saying the Catholic Church is a terrorist organization can be trusted to portray it that way. So when he says that "The film encapsulates everything that is bad about the Catholic Church," he is simply telling the truth. That was his goal, and he succeeded. He sought to throw as much mud as he could, and hope that at least some of it would stick. Mullan is so riddled with hate that he contends, "The worst thing about the Catholic Church is that it imprisons your soul, your mind and your d***." This is the man whose depiction of the Church is taken at face value by movie

reviewers.

Recently, a writer for the website Decent Films, raised some serious questions about the movie's controversial elements. Steven D. Greydanus noted that "Mullan's black-and-white (or rather black and more black) depiction of clergy and religious is absolute: Not a single character in a wimple or a Roman collar ever manifests even the slightest shred of kindness, compassion, human decency, or genuine spirituality; not one has the briefest instant of guilt, regret or inner conflict over the energetic, sometimes cheerfully brutal sadism and abuse that pervades the film." It should be noted that other reviewers admitted that they actually liked the fact that not one redeeming character was presented in the film.

Perhaps the most maverick statement about the movie was made by Valerio Riva, a member of the administrative board of the arts council that runs the Venice Film Festival (the movie won the festival's top award in 2002). He called Mullan's work "an incorrect propaganda film." In fact, he said "the director is comparable to Leni Riefenstahl," Hitler's favorite director and Nazi propagandist.

Boston College professor James M. Smith is one of the few academics to research the laundries. He is hardly an apologist for the asylums, so what he says bears consideration. In his research, he never met a single woman who lived and worked in the laundries who described the kind of unconscionable conditions that Mullan describes. To be exact, sexual abuse manifestly did not occur. Moreover, none of the women Smith met said they were stripped naked and examined by nuns. Perhaps most important, he charges that Mullan never solicited or incorporated any comments made by the nuns who ran these facilities.

Patricia Burke Brogan backs up Smith's observations. A former novice who wrote a play on this subject, "Eclipsed," she admits she never witnessed any physical beatings. Speaking

specifically about Mullan's movie, she said, "I could not stand it. Some of the parts were really over-the-top. The nuns were monsters." It is not shocking to learn that when Mullan is asked to respond to those who challenge his account, he refuses to offer a specific rebuttal; he simply replies that his movie understated the horrible conditions.

Investigations Launched

Media commentary about the laundries eventually led to an investigation about the treatment of wayward youth in every Irish institution. In 2009, Ireland's Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse published its findings; it became known as the Ryan Report (after the chairman of the Commission, Justice Seán Ryan).

News stories about the Ryan Report quickly emerged maintaining that abuse was rampant in these institutions. Upon closer inspection, however, we learn that the Ryan Commission listed four types of abuse: physical, sexual, neglect and emotional. Most of the evidence showed there were no serious violations. For example, physical abuse included "being kicked"; sexual abuse was considered "kissing," "non-contact including voyeurism" and "inappropriate sexual talk"; neglect included "inadequate heating"; and "lack of attachment and affection" was deemed emotional abuse.

Even by today's standards in the West, these conditions are hardly draconian; in the past they were considered pedestrian. And consider the timeline: fully 82 percent of the incidents reported took place before 1970. As the *New York Times* noted, "many of them [are] now more than 70 years old." Keep in mind that corporal punishment was not uncommon in many homes (and in many parts of the world), never mind in facilities that housed troubled persons.

Nonetheless, Irish commentators (see the website culchie.works) continue to carp, condemning those who say we

need to “place it in the context of the time.” They argue that this leads us down a dangerous road. “Do we excuse Nazi genocide of Jewish and other people because it was ‘just the way things were done then’?” This is exactly the kind of obscene hyperbole that makes a mockery of what happened in Nazi Germany: delinquent Irish women who lived in quarters with inadequate heat are placed on a par with innocent Jews who were baked in ovens.

A year after the release of the Ryan Report, the Irish Human Rights Commission expressed its dissatisfaction with government probes into these institutions. It specifically called for an investigation of the Magdalene Laundries; the Associated Press (AP) labeled them “prison-style Catholic” homes. A year later, in 2011, the United Nations joined the fight: an AP story explained that a U.N. panel urged Ireland to investigate allegations that for decades girls and women were “tortured” in Catholic laundries.

Ironically, of the ten nations on the U.N. Committee against Torture, half of them were guilty of bona-fide instances of torture. In its annual tally of freedom around the world, Freedom House had just accused Morocco of “arbitrary arrest and torture.” The year before, Amnesty International said that “Senegal security forces continue to torture suspects held in custody, sometimes to death.” Human trafficking was cited by a Cyprus news agency as a “huge problem in the north of the island,” adding that “cabaret owners routinely threaten women with torture in chambers beneath their nightclubs.” The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims concluded that “torture and ill-treatment” are “still highly prevalent” in Ecuador. Similarly, Freedom House observed that “torture remains widespread” in China. These were the nations accusing Irish nuns of torturing women in the laundries!

Responding to the growing interest in this subject, Justice for Magdalenes, a non-profit organization, undertook its own investigation; its findings, “State Involvement in the

Magdalene Laundries," represents the work of several researchers, including professor James M. Smith. This document was submitted in 2012 to those working on the McAleese Report.

The word "torture" typically conjures up images of relentless and extraordinarily brutal acts; it is not generally invoked to describe unpleasant conditions. Yet in the 14 instances where "torture" is mentioned in the document, there is not a single instance where a woman used this word to describe how she was treated; there were 11 references to the word as part of the nomenclature, e.g., the United Nations Committee against Torture, and three occasions where it was cited in a very general way.

Even more astounding, on p.10 of the document it says evidence of torture is detailed in an upcoming section. Yet the word never appears again until p.82 where the U.N. Committee against Torture is cited in a footnote.

What follows are the first few sentences of paragraph 6 where "torture" is allegedly described: "Seven (7) female witness reports related to continuous hard physical work in residential laundries, which was generally unpaid. Two (2) witnesses said that the regime was 'like a prison,' that doors were locked all the time and exercise was taken in an enclosed yard. Working conditions were harsh and included standing for long hours, constantly washing laundry in cold water, and using heavy irons for many hours." Drudgery? Yes. But if this is "torture," then it is safe to say that millions have suffered this fate without ever knowing they did.

The McAleese Report

Information garnered for the McAleese Report constitutes the most comprehensive collection of data ever obtained on the Magdalene Laundries. A full statistical analysis of all available data was conducted by the McAleese Committee, with the assistance of the Central Statistics Office. Additionally,

118 women who lived in the asylums were interviewed. Though their accounts reflect their experiences of the past half century, they match up well with what many scholars have previously unearthed about earlier times. Moreover, the size of the sampling is significant, especially in comparison to the few women that were the source of laundry-bashing movies.

The first of many myths to be dispelled is the notion that the laundries were an exclusively Irish or Catholic phenomenon. Not only did they exist throughout the United Kingdom, they were a fixture in many parts of Europe, North America and Australia. In the United States, the first asylum for "fallen women" was founded in Philadelphia in 1800, and spread from there to New York, Boston and Chicago. Depending on the setting, they were run by Catholics, Protestants, and non-denominational lay committees. In Ireland, no new ones were established after the founding of the State in 1922; the last ones were closed in 1996.

The first laundries were run by lay women, though in time they would be taken over by the nuns. It was the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, Good Shepherd Sisters, and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity who played the key role. The first "Magdalene Home" was established in England in 1758; Ireland followed in 1765, the first asylum being a Protestant-run entity.

These were institutions that served prostitutes, and women seen as likely candidates for the "world's oldest profession." Unmarried women, especially those who gave birth out-of-wedlock, were likely candidates. Contrary to what has been reported, the laundries were not imposed on these women: they were a realistic response to a growing social problem. For example, in 1868, it was estimated that there were at least 1,000 prostitutes and 132 brothels in Dublin alone.

Those who sought refuge from the streets found a welcome hand in those who served in the "rescue movements." The nuns soon

took over, offering these women an alternative to exploitative conditions. In her research of seven institutions up to the year 1900, Maria Luddy found that the “majority of women who entered these refuges did so voluntarily...just over 66 percent” and that “entering a refuge was, for the majority of women, a matter of choice.” The other facility available to them, the workhouse, was rejected because of the inferior conditions. Luddy also found that the decision to stay was made by the women, not the nuns.

Not only is it a myth that the laundries were “imposed” on these women, it is equally fatuous to believe that the nuns forced them to stay. They were not held hostage. Frances Finnegan’s analysis of the Magdalene Laundries up to the year 1900 “also confirm a high proportion of both voluntary entries and exits.” The actual figures of voluntary entrance and exit are higher than what Finnegan found. “It should be noted that cases where women left to re-join family or friends,” the Report says, “or who left to take up employment are not included by Finnegan in the figures for voluntary departure...”

James M. Smith concurs with this analysis. “In the nineteenth century,” he writes, “regardless of how they entered these institutions, it was the women themselves who made the decision to stay.” Why? “With little or no social welfare system to fall back on, her choices were limited to entering the county home, begging on the streets, or possibly resorting to prostitution.” So while the laundries were not exactly a hotel, they sure beat the available options. The most common alternative was the workhouse, but as the Report points out, such institutions were explicitly “designed to be grim and foreboding places in order to deter all but the most desperate from seeking refuge there.” Others wound up in the “lunatic” asylums, which were even worse.

Another myth, floated by Mullan and the media, is that the laundries were highly profitable institutions run by greedy nuns. Summarizing Mullan’s comments, a CNN story contended

that "The laundries were quite profitable—helped by the almost slave-labor of the young workers."

The evidence cited in the Report debunks this myth. The analysis of the financial records shows that the laundries "operated on a subsistence or close to break-even basis, rather than on a commercial or highly profitable basis and would have found it difficult to survive financially without other sources of income—donations, bequests and financial support from the State." Now if Mullan's account were accurate, we would have to believe that the donations and bequests were made either by evil persons who sought to keep these women locked in slave-labor camps, or by idiots. That the donors sought to help, not hurt, the women is closer to the truth.

The McAleese Report sought information on all ten Magdalene Laundries that were established prior to the foundation of the State. It looked at five issues, the most controversial being routes of entry, state inspections, and routes of exit. "In each of these areas," the Report concluded, "the Committee found evidence of direct State involvement." So much for the malarkey that the nuns ran institutions parallel to state-run facilities.

The first big myth that was blown to smithereens was the number of girls and women who entered the laundries: it was determined that 10,012—not 30,000—spent time there. So what accounts for the fact that the public has come to believe that there were three times as many women in the laundries? It's what they've been told by Mullan and his sympathetic friends in the media. In other words, the same people who distorted what happened in the asylums distorted the number of those who lived there.

Mullan et al. would have us believe that those who lived in the laundries were forced to stay there in perpetuity. In fact, the average length of stay was seven months; eight in

ten stayed less than three years. The majority had no knowledge of their parental background, and only 12.5 percent said both parents were alive. Almost one in four had previously been institutionalized. By every measure, these were troubled girls and women.

Until the McAleese Report was published, it was widely believed that the nuns did whatever they wanted, free from state oversight. This view is also incorrect. The laundries were subject to the same Factories Acts that governed similar non-religious institutions; they were routinely inspected. The Report found that the laundries “were generally compliant with the requirements of the Factories Acts, and that when minor breaches occurred, they were remedied when brought to the attention of the operating Congregation.”

The majority of women either left on their own, went home, were reclaimed by a family member, or left for employment. Only 7.1 percent were dismissed or “sent away,” and less than two percent ran away. One might have thought that if Mullan’s depiction were accurate, a lot more than 1.9 percent would have run for the hills. That so few did is further testimony of the bogus portrayal he offered.

Living Conditions

The two most serious accusations made against the nuns who operated the Magdalene Laundries were a) they tortured the residents and b) they sexually abused the girls and women. Both are totally inaccurate. Not once in the McAleese Report is the word “torture” even mentioned—the charges are a complete fabrication. Exactly one woman claimed to have been sexually abused, but it was committed by a lay woman auxiliary who decided to stay in the institution for life. *No nun ever sexually abused anyone.*

This is not to say that the women never experienced sexual abuse. They did. But it was in their home, or in the

Industrial School where they came from (the majority of women interviewed were previously housed in an Industrial School, places that housed neglected youths). Not only were these women not abused by a nun, all of them said they never even heard of another woman being molested by any member of the staff.

Physical abuse was uncommon. "A large majority of the women who shared their stories with the Committee said that they had neither experienced nor seen girls or women suffer physical abuse in the Magdalen Laundries," the Report notes. But they did say that in their time in an industrial reformatory school there were instances of brutality. As for the laundries, a typical complaint was, "I don't ever remember anyone being beaten but we did have to work very hard." Another common criticism went like this: "No they never hit you in the laundry. They never hit me, but the nun looked down on me 'cause I had no father."

One of the biggest myths about the laundries contends that the women had their heads shaven by mean-spirited nuns. Here is what the Report found: "None of the women told the Committee that their heads had been shaven, with one exception. The exception occurred where one woman had her head shaved because she had lice."

Besides the testimony of the women, the Report lists many comments made by physicians who worked in the laundries. What they had to say is among the most enlightening aspects of the Report: their experiences completely debunk the horror stories told by Mullan and his ilk. What follows is a selection of their remarks. To offer an accurate picture, statements by all of the doctors in the Report are listed.

Dr. Michael Coughlan:

- "I had expected to find a very unhappy, deprived group who would have significant medical and especially

psychological complaints and special needs. I was, therefore, surprised to encounter a group of ladies who appeared to be quite happy and content with their current environment and who presented with the type of symptoms and problems that reflected those of the wider Practice population.”

- “My expected image of them all looking the same in drab uniform was quickly dissipated when I observed that each one presented dressed in colourful clothes and those who came directly from the Laundry were wearing a type of overlapping protective overall or apron, under which I could notice that they were wearing a variety of more personal choice of clothes.”
- “Whenever I sensed that one of the ladies had something personal or sensitive to discuss, I always asked the Nurse or Nun to leave and afforded them the opportunity to elaborate in confidence. Interestingly, I cannot recall any occasion that the patient complained in any manner about her treatment by the Nuns in the Home, neither recently nor in the distant past...”
- “With respect to the question of any evidence of past injuries, broken bones or any other suggestions of physical or psychological abuse in the past, I cannot remember coming across any patient that presented with symptoms or signs that would or should have alerted me to such maltreatment, apart from one case when a resident got scalded with hot water, which I believe was an accidental injury.”
- “Overall, my experience [with the Magdalene] was a happy and gratifying one. The Residents were a delightful and happy group of ladies, each with their own unique personality and they appeared to me to have a good and friendly relationship with the Mercy Sisters. Equally, my impression was that the Sisters were very caring towards the Residents and I never found any evidence to the contrary.”

Dr. John Ryan:

- “[T]here were a number of incidents of fractures but they were all from falls and usually out in the city, but none were suspicious in any way and I did not come across any evidence of unexplained bruising or scalding etc.”

Dr. Donal Kelly:

- “Many of these ladies were forgotten by their own or orphaned. They were poorly educated and some were mentally retarded. If the Sisters of Charity had not provided them with a home I don’t know who would have cared for them...Never did I witness any evidence of physical or mental abuse.”

Dr. Harry Comber:

- “There was no evidence of any traumatic injuries inflicted during my time, nor did anyone ever show me evidence of any previous injury...The women seemed reasonably happy, although some regretted the loss of opportunity to have a life, families and children of their own...I would be surprised if there was, in the time I was there, any mistreatment of them, either verbal or physical.”

Dr. Malachy Coleman:

- “I always felt that the ladies were well fed and well cared for. Their complaints were routine and normal consistent with those presenting in general practice. I saw no evidence of any traumatic injuries either historically, prior to my taking up the post, or for the time I cared for the ladies.”
- “My overall impression of the Good Shepherd Convent in the main, was of an institute run by caring nuns which contained a number of ladies who were unlikely to be

able to care for themselves.”

- “While the ladies were very deferential to the nuns I did not at any stage get an impression of coercion or fear in the relationship between the ladies and the nuns. If anything I think the nuns did too much for the ladies and so decreased their capacity to care for themselves.”

Post-McAleese

When Peter Mullan is asked if his portrayal of women being raped in slave-labor camps is an exaggeration, he replies, “You ask any woman who was there and they’ll tell you the reality was much worse.” Well, the McAleese Report details the stories of 118 women who lived and worked in the Magdalene Laundries and they say it’s all a lie. The doctors who worked there say it’s all a lie. What needs to be explained is why.

In the case of Mullan, it’s rather easy: he admits that he hates the Roman Catholic Church. But there are others, too, and their motives may not be as easy to uncover.

Let’s begin with press coverage of the McAleese Report. The most striking aspect of media reaction to it was how little there was of it. In most instances, the Report was either ignored or treated lightly. Worse, in some cases it painted a negative picture of the laundries, thus calling into question whether anyone actually read the Report. Sadly, this was true of the Catholic media, as well. *Our Sunday Visitor*, however, was a prime exception; it did a very fair analysis of the Report by Michael Kelly.

It has been my experience that when bad news about the Catholic Church surfaces, it is seen as good news by three groups: hard-left Catholics; hard-right Catholics; and anti-Catholics.

Catholics of a left-wing orientation typically respond to bad news about the Church by saying this proves that Vatican II

did not go far enough; Catholics of a right-wing orientation typically respond to bad news by saying this proves Vatican II went too far (or that it should never have been held in the first place).

In the case of the Magdalene Laundries, of course, it makes no sense to invoke Vatican II (the Council was convened between 1962 and 1965). What brings critics on the left and right together is an abiding tendency to believe the worst about the Church. Why? Because in doing so it validates their position.

For example, hard-core left Catholics are highly critical of the Church's teachings on sexual ethics, which they regard as repressive. They want a more expansive, and tolerant, view of sexuality. They naturally incline, then, to a hypercritical perception of priests and nuns who hold to traditional Church teachings on sexuality. So in their view, it is not hard to believe that the nuns who supervised the women in the laundries were scolds, if not worse.

Hard-core right Catholics look at the Church through the lens of purity, and are aghast whenever they learn of sinful behavior, particularly sexual misconduct, on the part of priests and nuns. Their purist streak accounts for their deep-seated—and wholly justifiable—anger at sexual abuse on the part of the clergy and the religious. Yet this disposition also inclines conservative Catholics to swallow too readily wildly exaggerated, and even totally fabricated, allegations of abuse such as Mullan's moonshine about the Magdalene Laundries. For example, Michael S. Rose, who has chronicled contemporary priestly sexual abuse, was quick to believe Mullan's account.

Left-wing and right-wing Catholics of a strong bent have something else in common: when bad news about the Church breaks, they congratulate themselves for holding to their convictions. At bottom, it is their appalling self-righteousness that unites them; they have more in common than

they know.

Regarding the anti-Catholics, most of those who were unmoved by the McAleese Report either work in the media or are activists who belong to a professional victims' group. As soon as the Report was released, they got a boost from Enda Kenny, Ireland's Prime Minister. He made a public speech lamenting the history of the laundries, stopping just shy of a formal apology. Astonishingly, he gave no evidence he had read a word of the Report. Immediately, professional victims' groups took aim at him, saying his remarks were insufficient.

The *New York Times* was particularly delinquent. The day after the Report was released, February 6, it issued a story on how unsatisfied the activists and the "survivors" were with Kenny's statement. It said practically nothing about the myths that the Report debunked. Instead, it continued the myth by writing about the "virtual slavery" that existed in the laundries. The next day the *Times* wrote again about the "slave labor" that took place. To this day, the *Times* has not written one story on how the Report convincingly disputes the lies that have been told about the Magdalene Laundries. Had the Report verified the worst accounts, it is a sure bet it would have been front-page news. The same is true of the BBC: it ran many stories on the laundries, but had virtually nothing to say about the McAleese Report.

The pressure on Kenny to issue a formal apology—Mullan is the one who should have been pressed to apologize—continued to mount. On February 19, he caved. This, in turn, invited anti-Catholics to focus not on the Report, but on the professional victims. On March 1, John Spain, writing for IrishCentral.com after the Report was released, continued to write about "The 'National Shame' of the Taliban Tabernacle—Ireland's Recent History of the Magdalene Laundries." Instead of quoting from the Report, he simply gave voice to a few women who brand themselves "Magdalene survivors." He couldn't quote from the Report because that would have undermined his agenda.

There is a long history of activists who have lied with alacrity about their cause, and this is especially true of those who claim to represent victims, or survivors, of abuse. In the 1980s, no one championed the cause of the homeless in the U.S. more than Mitch Snyder. Never mind that he never supported his own family: he was treated as a hero because he lectured the nation on its heartless response to the homeless. The truth is Snyder literally lied his way to fame. When he testified in 1984 before a Congressional committee, he was asked how he came up with the figure of three million homeless Americans (this number was cited by everyone who wrote or taught about the subject at the time). He admitted he simply made it up. More recently, David Clohessy, the director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), admitted under oath that he has lied to the media about his work.

There are, of course, honest parties to this discussion, observers who have long been critical of the laundries, but who upon reading the McAleese Report, sought to correct the record. No one has done so with greater valor than Irish writer Brendan O'Neill.

When O'Neill read that the *Irish Times* was trying to look at the good side of exposing abuse, even if it didn't happen, he was taken aback. Worse was a playwright who told the newspaper that even if the stories weren't true, they "served an important function at the time—that is, to raise awareness about the problem of abuse in Catholic life more broadly." To which O'Neill responded, "This sounds dangerously like a Noble Lie defence—the idea that it is okay to make things up, to spread fibs, if one is doing it in service of some greater good."

"Anyone who points out that reports and depictions of abuse in Catholic institutions have been overblown risks being denounced as an abuse apologist or a sinister whitewasher," says O'Neill. He insists, not without reasons, that those "who are genuinely interested in truth and justice should

definitely be concerned that films and news reports may have left the public with the mistaken belief that women in Magdalene Laundries were stripped and beaten and that thousands of Irish and American children were raped by priests.”

What makes O’Neill’s account so persuasive is that he is an atheist; he has no vested interest to serve. His honesty is refreshing. “Catholic-bashers frequently accuse the Catholic religion of promoting a childish narrative of good and evil that is immune to factual evidence. Yet they do precisely the same, in the service of their fashionable and irrational new religion of anti-Catholicism.”

The horror stories associated with the Magdalene Laundries cannot withstand scrutiny, but they will continue to have a life of their own. That’s the way prejudice works. Unwarranted negative attitudes, especially when employed about a familiar whipping boy, are hard to shake. All we can do is pursue the truth and educate fair-minded people about what really happened. We certainly can’t count on the likes of the *New York Times* or the BBC to publish the truth.

STAR-LEDGER’S WAR ON ARCHBISHOP MYERS

**Bill Donohue
President
Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights**

May 2013

On April 28, an editorial in the Newark *Star-Ledger* called on

Newark Archbishop John J. Myers to resign. There should be a resignation, but it should not be limited to one person: the entire editorial board of the newspaper should resign immediately.

The occasion of the editorial is the alleged failure of the Newark Archdiocese to police Father Michael Fugee. In 2001, he was charged with groping a teenager while wrestling. After initially being found guilty, the verdict was overthrown by an appellate panel of judges. Fugee agreed to certain conditions, which the newspaper says have been violated. The *Star-Ledger* wants Archbishop Myers to resign because he allegedly did not hold Fugee to the terms of the agreement. As will soon be disclosed, this accusation is patently false.

Accompanying the editorial was a front-page story on Father Fugee. The Sunday article, which ran over 2,000 words, recounted various aspects of this issue. It did not mention, however, that in addition to being cleared by the civil courts, the archdiocesan review board cleared Fugee of any wrongdoing. Nor did it mention that the case was sent to Rome for review; no charges were brought against him. In other words, Fugee's case was thrice thrown out. Also, the newspaper failed to mention that there has not been one allegation made against this priest in the past 12 years. So why is the *Star-Ledger* going ballistic?

The following two paragraphs from the editorial explain the basis of its complaint:

“Part of the [court] deal was an agreement that Fugee signed, along with the archdiocese, committing all parties to keeping Fugee away from minors. Fugee was not to work in any position involving children, or have any affiliation with youth groups. He could not attend youth retreats, or even hear the confession of minors.

“With the full knowledge and approval of Myers, Fugee

did all of those things. Look at the picture of him clowning around with children [whose faces were obscured] in today's paper, and it makes you want to scream a warning. The agreement was designed to prevent exactly that."

Sounds ominous. But it is a lie. The editorial board intentionally distorted the agreement so it could make its case to hound Archbishop Myers out of office. It also smeared Fugee by suggesting that children are not safe in his company. Here is exactly what the agreement said:

"It is agreed and understood that the Archdiocese shall not assign or otherwise place Michael Fugee in any position within the Archdiocese that allows him to have any *unsupervised contact* with or to supervise or minister to any minor/child under the age of 18 or work in any position in which children are involved." (My italics.) [Note: In the next paragraph, the identical language is used to hold Father Fugee to these terms.]

In other words, the court agreement expressly allowed Father Fugee to have contact with minors, provided he was supervised. Nothing in either the news story or the editorial even suggests that Fugee was at any time unsupervised in his contacts with minors. If the *Star-Ledger* had such evidence, it would have said so.

The news story is equally deceitful. At one point it comes clean by saying that the agreement "explicitly" mentions that "Fugee may not have unsupervised contact with children," but then it immediately maintains that this is a rebuttable proposition. Referring to Archbishop Myers' spokesman, Jim Goodness, it says that "Goodness denied the agreement had been breached, saying the archdiocese *has interpreted* the document to mean Fugee could work with minors as long as he is under the supervision of priests or lay ministers who have knowledge of his past and of the conditions of the agreement." (My emphasis.)

Now, all of a sudden, the plain words of the agreement are seen as open to interpretation. But if the agreement says Fugee was not supposed to have *unsupervised contact*, what other plausible interpretation is there? The newspaper would have the reader believe that the agreement is ambiguous about this condition, when, of course, it is not.

The *Star-Ledger* makes the point that Father Fugee occasionally traveled outside his diocese. So what? Does it have evidence that he was without supervision? It cites his work in a Monmouth County church, St. Mary's in Colts Neck, as a case in point. He was invited there by longtime friends and, more important, the church's pastor, Father Thomas Triggs, knew of Fugee's agreement with the prosecutor and made sure that he was supervised. In short, the agreement was not violated.

What is really going on here is an attempt to sunder Archbishop Myers—Fugee is not the man they want. They want Myers, and that is because they detest what he stands for.

The first editorial on Archbishop Myers was published by the *Star-Ledger* on April 17, 2002; it took him to task for his views on how best to handle allegations of sexual abuse. It said he “apparently still believes the church ought to decide first who is suspect before notifying civil authorities.” Let's hope he always does.

Several years ago I was confronted by a female reporter in my office who challenged me on this very issue. She wanted to know why allegations against a priest were not made instantly available on the diocesan website. When I asked her for her boss' phone number, she balked, wanting to know why. I told her that I was prepared to accuse her of sexually harassing me in my office and would demand that her name be posted on the media outlet's website. She got the point.

Does the *Star-Ledger* get the point? Apparently not: it wants every bishop to call 911 whenever an accusation is made, no

matter how baseless it is. This is its idea of justice—for priests.

In 2003, Archbishop Myers released a set of strict procedures and guidelines that affected every employee in the archdiocese. The “Archdiocese of Newark Policies on Professional and Ministerial Conduct” was a comprehensive code of conduct that should have been welcomed by everyone, including critics of the Catholic Church. Instead, the newspaper made fun of it.

The October 8, 2003 editorial in the *Star-Ledger* provided a good window into the paper’s thinking. John McLaughlin mocked the idea of finding “immoral behavior” offensive, commenting this must mean “no abortions or participation in abortions, euthanasia and homicide.” (Why he objects to punishing murderers he did not say.) He also wanted to know why non-Catholics, who voluntarily agreed to work in the archdiocese, had to abide by these standards. So much for institutional autonomy.

In fact, Myers’ autonomy is a problem for the newspaper. To wit: on May 7, 2004, it took him to task for saying that pro-abortion politicians should refrain from receiving Communion. Does the *Star-Ledger* think it has the right to police Myers, or that he should check in with them before making house rules? If Myers told the newspaper that it should vet all internal policies by him before making them final, they would go off the deep end.

In the last election, the *Star-Ledger* endorsed President Obama, supported gay marriage, ridiculed the “war on religion,” and took umbrage at Myers for encouraging Catholics to defend “marriage and life.” These sentiments are held dear by the editorial page editor, Tom Moran, an angry ex-Catholic. Three years ago he said he cut his “emotional ties to the church long ago.” If only he would.

Not surprisingly, the groups cited by the *Star-Ledger* who are upset with Archbishop Myers are all dissidents. Consider Theresa Padovano, who heads Voice of the Faithful in New Jersey. Voice is described as a “lay reform group.” In fact, it is a small collection of elderly Catholics and ex-Catholics who are at war with the Church over many issues.

Voice supports discriminatory legislation that exclusively targets the Catholic Church: it wants laws that suspend the statute of limitations on sexual abuse cases involving minors, but never pushes for public institutions to be held accountable to the same standard. In Connecticut, it actually sided with those lawmakers who wanted to take over the administrative structure of the parishes. Indeed, it crafted a strategic plan to do just this, thus showing what it thinks about separation of church and state. It lost in its bid to strip the Catholic Church of its First Amendment rights, but it was not for lack of trying. By the way, Theresa Padavano is an ex-nun activist married to Anthony Padavano, an ex-priest activist who is also at odds with Catholicism.

The next group cited is the New Jersey chapter of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP). It is labeled “a national advocacy and support group.” What it advocates is a war on the Catholic Church and what it supports is unlicensed counseling of alleged abuse victims. To be specific, the national leader, David Clohessy, has testified under oath that he has intentionally lied to the media about his work, and has offered numerous counseling sessions in Starbucks, without a license. At a conference attended by Catholic League allies, he bragged how important it is to manipulate the media with pictures of children. He also refused to contact the authorities after he learned that his own brother was a sexual predator, thus violating the very standard he says bishops fail to respect.

Last year, Voice joined with SNAP to protest the “House of Worship Protection Act” in Kansas. Represented by the ACLU,

they challenged a law that would prohibit the intentional disruption of services in a house of worship, something the Brown Shirts were known to do. They lost, but their effort to destroy freedom of religion remains one of their low points.

The third group, bishopaccountability.org, is branded by the newspaper as a “watchdog group.” Attack dog would be more accurate. It posts the names of accused priests on its website, admitting that it “does not confirm the veracity of any actual allegation.” The head of this group, Terence McKiernan, boasted to a SNAP audience, “I hope we can find ways of sticking it to this man.” The man he wants to “stick it to” is Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of New York and the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Without any evidence, McKiernan told the crowd of Catholic bashers that Dolan was “keeping the lid on 55 names.” To this day, McKiernan has never disclosed the names of these priests. He knows it’s a lie.

If the *Star-Ledger* were honestly concerned about the sexual abuse of minors, it wouldn’t play favorites with the public schools. But it does. In 2000, a public school teacher in Teaneck, New Jersey, James Darden, was charged with sexually abusing a minor. The teenage girl contacted the Bergen County Prosecutor’s Office and eventually Darden pled guilty.

The victim then filed a one-count complaint against Darden, and the Board of Education, and others, arguing they were liable under the New Jersey Child Sexual Abuse Act (CSAA). She lost in 2011. That is because the law was conveniently written to apply only to schools which stand *in loco parentis* to the student, and the appellate court held that the public school in that case could not be sued under CSAA because the *in loco parentis* test was not made.

And what did the *Star-Ledger* say about this? Nothing. Not only was there no editorial, there was no news story. If this had been a Catholic school that was able to skirt justice, the

newspaper would have unloaded with both barrels.

At bottom, the *Star-Ledger* has unfairly maligned Archbishop Myers, and has treated Father Fugee like a political football. If Myers strapped a GPS tracking device on Fugee's body, it wouldn't satisfy the newspaper's craving for punitive action. For these reasons, the editorial board should resign with dispatch. The members are a disgrace to the profession of journalism.