

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS THRIVE IN IOWA

[Bill Donohue](#)

The Iowa Senate has passed a bill protecting religious liberty. Every Republican voted for it and every Democrat voted against it. The vote was 31-16.

The bill is based on the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) that was signed into law in 1993 by President Bill Clinton. It prioritizes religious liberty, meaning that if the government is going to encroach on First Amendment rights, it had better have a “compelling” reason for doing so.

The law defines religious liberty as an exercise that is “substantially motivated by one’s sincerely held religious belief, whether or not the exercise is compulsory or central to a larger system of religious belief.” This means that if someone believes his religious rights are being “substantially burdened,” he can take his case to the courts.

The Democrats believe that religious liberty should be a subordinate right to LGBT rights. They claim that religious rights should not be privileged and that the state RFRA law will be used to discriminate against LGBT people. They are historically wrong, and their current fears are based more on conjecture than reality.

As law professor Patrick Garry observes, “Textually, the Constitution provides greater protection for religious practices than for any secular-belief-related activities.” Similarly, there is nothing in our legal history that would afford greater protection for LGBT rights than religious liberty. This does not mean that religious rights are absolute—no right is. But it does mean that religious liberty must be awarded “favored treatment” when it conflicts with

other rights. That was the conclusion reached by the Supreme Court in a religious liberty 2015 case.

We've had a federal RFRA for over 30 years, and many state RFRA laws since then. Where are the horror stories that the Democrats are talking about? Where are LGBT people being persecuted? Who's doing it?

Not only is this nonsense, it is those with sincerely held religious beliefs who are the ones having their fundamental rights being eviscerated these days. Perversely, it is LGBT activists who are largely responsible for this condition.

When it comes to laws protecting the rights of minorities, racial or sexual, none of their advocates say we have enough laws on the books—they can't get enough. But when it comes to the rights of the faithful, these same people say there are plenty of protections already on the books. This is a game, and a dishonest one to boot.

HOW THE MEDIA COVERED ST. PAT'S FIASCO

[Bill Donohue](#)

We did a survey of the electronic and print media coverage of the recent defilement of St. Patrick's Cathedral by trans activists (to read our initial reaction, click [here](#)). We found that most of it was fair. To be specific, roughly equal weight was given to what the Archdiocese of New York said and what members of the family of Cecilia Gentili and his allies had to say; Gentili was a man who falsely claimed to be a woman.

However, there were some notable exceptions.

Over the past few decades, it has been evident that the New York *Daily News* (which is now available for \$3 for one year) evinces an anti-Catholic animus. Thus it was hardly surprising to read that it lied about the Catholic Church when it reported that it “has long condemned queer and transgender people.” Wrong. The Church does not condemn any demographic group. It condemns sinful behavior.

Time.com falsely argued that the Church “has isolated many queer folks from its doors.” The Church doesn’t isolate anyone. If some queers choose to do so—because the Church condemns homosexual behavior (so do most world religions)—that is their choice. So be it.

No media outlet showed its anti-Catholic streak more clearly than the *Washington Post*. Not only did it give short shrift to what the Archdiocese of New York had to say, most of the reporting by Maham Javaid amounted to nothing more than a PR piece for the bigots.

The principal organizer of this demonic event, Ceyenne Doroshow, congratulated the disrupters for making “bold choices.” Another organizer, Katia Perea, lied when he or she said (there is no “they” pronoun for singular individuals), “There was no incident when anyone said anything disrespectful about the church of God or Jesus.”

So we are to consider it acceptable for trans activists, many of whom dressed as hookers, to mock “Ave Maria”? Is it also acceptable to shout “St. Cecilia, Mother Of All Whores”? Or to improvise prayers and lobby for the LGBT agenda from the pulpit? Who do they think they’re kidding, aside from the *Washington Post*?

It was to be expected that the family of the man would rally to his cause and condemn the Catholic Church. It was also expected that the *Washington Post* would give much space to

their vile remarks (there are too many to recite).

People who falsely claim to be of the other sex are still welcome in the Catholic Church. But those who come to profane the Church, whether they are delusional about their sexual identity or not, deserve to be shown the door and stigmatized. If that sounds harsh, let these activists try to pull the same stunt in a mosque.

Contact Sally Buzbee, executive editor, Washington Post:
sally.buzbee@washpost.com

WAS LAKEWOOD CHURCH SHOOTER A TRANS PERSON?

[Bill Donohue](#)

The shooter who was killed after crashing Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston on February 11 has been identified as Genesse Ivonne Moreno. She was a biological woman, but was she also a transman? It matters, because the media have been quick to cover-up such stories.

We have prepared a [timeline](#) of media reports that unfolded.

Notice the fourth entry, the one that says "Moreno had used multiple aliases, including Jeffrey Escalante..." Jeffrey?

The next entry says that according to the Texas Department of Public Safety, Moreno primarily identified as "Jeffrey Escalantemoreno." Why would a person who was not trans do that? It makes no sense. Do people called Jeffrey go around calling themselves Janice?

As a side note, we found that in mug shots taken years ago, as compared to recent ones, Moreno appears to look more feminine than she was at the time of her death.

The next entry cites the Houston NBC affiliate describing her as “transgender.” Two entries later the Houston NBC affiliate once again describes Moreno as “transgender.”

Now look at the entry in between, the one from the Daily Wire. According to arrest records, “Moreno identified as a man named ‘Jeffrey’ in recent years.” This is telling.

Back to the Houston NBC affiliate. We found that it stopped describing Moreno as transgender on February 12 in its evening report (see the last entry on p. 2). But it did mention that the Houston Police Commander said there were some “discrepancies,” including the alias Jeffrey Escalante. [We noted this in our report as well—see the third entry on p. 2.]

It matters greatly if Moreno identified as a man named Jeffrey. Unfortunately, as we have detailed, trans persons have a violent history.

Last year, we provided evidence of this on [March 31](#), [October 11](#) and [October 12](#). [We will release more evidence this spring.] Moreover, on [March 30](#) last year we called attention to the games the media were playing trying to downplay the violent streak in trans persons. Note that NBC News was the most egregious offender.

When the media were covering the clergy sexual abuse scandal, they made sure every miniscule piece of information was made public. But when it comes to trans violence, they do just the opposite.

It has been well established that trans persons have serious mental issues. They need help, not compassionate cover-ups. The sooner they are treated for their psychological disorders, the better they will be and the safer the public will be.

I have [asked](#) Houston Mayor John Whitmire to make public all records that pertain to this issue, sending a copy to Troy Finner, Chief of Police.

Contact Whitmire: mayor@houstontx.gov

New York Cathedral Holds 'Mass of Reparation' After 'Sacrilegious' Trans Event

Bill in the News (Breitbart): "At the service, many of those in attendance dressed as hookers, danced in the aisles, sang 'Ave Cecilia' when 'Ave Maria' was sung, and shouted, 'St. Cecilia, Mother of All Whores,'" noted Catholic League president Bill Donohue. [READ MORE HERE](#)

Archdiocese of New York denounces transgender activist's funeral at St. Patrick's Cathedral

Bill in the News (FOX 5 NY): Bill Donohue, from the more conservative Catholic League writing: "...men dressed as women and women dressed as men ... At the service, many of those in

attendance dressed as hookers, danced in the aisles, sang “Ave Cecilia” when “Ave Maria” was sung...” [READ MORE HERE](#)

TRANS ACTIVISTS DEFILE ST. PATRICK’S CATHEDRAL

[**Bill Donohue**](#)

At a funeral service on February 15 at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City, men dressed as women and women dressed as men turned out to honor Cecilia Gentili. Gentili is a man who falsely claimed to be a woman. He was an illegal alien, a drug addict, prostitute, trans activist and atheist.

At the service, many of those in attendance dressed as hookers, danced in the aisles, sang “Ave Cecilia” when “Ave Maria” was sung, and shouted, “St. Cecilia, Mother Of All Whores.”

The presiding priest, Fr. Edward Dougherty, falsely declared Gentili to be a woman, referring to him as “our sister.” Fr. James Martin, an LGBT advocate, was delighted with the event, saying the trans activists are “as much a part of the church as anyone else.”

Many are wondering how this profane service could have happened. It happened because it was held under false pretenses. The person who made the arrangements, who goes by the name Ceyeye Doroshov, said, “I kept it under wraps.”

The Pastor of St. Patrick’s, the Very Reverend Enrique Salvo, said, “The Cathedral only knew that family and friends were requesting a funeral Mass for a Catholic, and had no idea our

welcome and prayer would be degraded in such a sacrilegious and deceptive way.”

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of New York, has authorized a Mass of Reparation in the wake of this vile event.

Radio and TV coverage in New York has been scant on what actually happened, focusing more on comments from the family of the man. They accuse the Catholic Church of hypocrisy. It would be more accurate to say that those who support defiling St. Patrick’s Cathedral are rank anti-Catholic bigots who look, talk, and act like deranged men and women.

FBI ASKED TO SETTLE CATHOLIC PROBE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue wrote to FBI Director Christopher Wray today about his apparent refusal to settle the agency’s investigation of mainline Catholics.

February 15, 2024

The Honorable Christopher A. Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20535-0001

Dear Director Wray:

On January 31, 2024, the Ranking Member of the Senate Budget Committee, Charles Grassley, and Judiciary Committee Ranking Member, Lindsey Graham, and several other senators, wrote to

you regarding the FBI's probe of Catholics as outlined in the Richmond memo. You were to answer their questions by February 14, but apparently that has not been done.

This issue has been festering for a year. It was in February 2023 that the public learned of a startling memo produced by the Richmond Field Office: it revealed an investigation of traditional Catholics. On February 9, 2023, I made public the concerns of the Catholic League. "What's next? Will it be a war on Catholics who are orthodox?"

My hunch was proven right. The FBI subsequently said that "mainline Catholic parishes" and "local diocesan leadership" were selected for investigation.

On April 11, 2023, I wrote to you asking to make public those documents related to this issue. On July 24, July 26, August 10, September 21 and December 6, I wrote to the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Jim Jordan, asking to get to the bottom of this issue.

It is vitally important that you answer the questions posed by the senators in their letter of January 31. They asked many serious questions that are of interest to Catholics nationwide.

For instance, they wanted to know why "the FBI permanently deleted critical records related to the memo." They asked why the FBI relied on the Southern Poverty Law Center for information in its probe of Catholics; I asked Rep. Jordan to address the same question.

This is not a subject we will ever abandon. Catholics have every right to know what is going on at the FBI and why they have been spied on, without just cause. Not only are First Amendment religious liberty issues at stake, so is the legitimacy of the FBI.

I implore you to cooperate with those government officials who

have contacted you about this issue. Hopefully we can settle this matter once and for all.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President

cc: Sen. Charles Grassley
Sen. Lindsey Graham
Rep. Jim Jordan

Contact the FBI: public.affairs@fbi.gov

LENT ' S COUNTERCULTURAL MESSAGE

Bill Donohue

The Lenten message could not be more countercultural. In a society that prizes self-indulgence—we can't have enough money, drugs and sex—it is difficult to understand, much less appreciate, what Lent stands for: penance, forgiveness and self-denial. The latter, in particular, is seen by our elites as repulsive.

If there is one person who hated self-denial—he said so explicitly—it was the man who helped secularize, and sexually engineer, our society. His name was Hugh Hefner, founder of *Playboy*.

The magazine, which Hefner founded in 1953, was not the most corrupting aspect of his work. It was his “Playboy Philosophy.” Launched in December 1962, it gave the ensuing

sexual revolution an ideological springboard. He offered several installments, reaching millions of men, an audience no cultural Marxist or feminist liberator could ever command.

"The Playboy Philosophy" was adamant in contending that the individual is "the all important element in society." From a Catholic perspective, this is absurd. It is the family, not the individual, that is "the all important element in society." But it would have been inconceivable for a man like Hefner to believe this. Indeed, he harbored a particular antipathy for Catholicism.

Similarly, "The Playboy Philosophy" maintained that "the primary goal of society should be individual happiness." Predictably, happiness was defined as pleasure, not joy. "Happiness and pleasure are mental and physical states of being and society should emphasize the positive aspects of both." It would be hard to make a more anti-Christian philosophical statement.

Self-discipline, perseverance, and personal responsibility—what I call the "vital virtues"—are what Hefner disparaged. All require a measure of restraint, a property "The Playboy Philosophy" abhorred. In fact, it treated selflessness as a sin. "We oppose the tendency to meaningless selflessness in our present society"; he singled out self-sacrifice and self-denial for condemnation.

Hefner's obsession with satisfying our individual primordial appetites did not allow him to appreciate selflessness as a virtue, one that is best expressed when we sacrifice for the good of others. Mother Teresa exemplified this virtue.

Mother Teresa is a great Lenten role model, taking her cues from Jesus, who died on the Cross for our salvation. She could not have comforted the sick and dying, caring for outcasts like lepers, without practicing self-denial. Absent self-denial, selflessness is impossible.

And then there is Hefner. As I recount in [*The War on Virtue: How the Ruling Class is Killing the American Dream*](#), he practiced what he preached.

He was an equal-opportunity predator who had sex with men, women, and dogs. He was accused of raping multiple women. If he got a gal pregnant, he arranged for an abortion. Like many men who are addicted to pornography and live a promiscuous lifestyle, Hefner was unable to get aroused without partaking in new experiences, some of which were sickening, to put it mildly. He provided girlfriends with drugs to endure constant orgies that he watched voyeuristically. Further, he engaged in acts of bestiality and forced others to do the same.

Admittedly, Hefner is an extreme example of what happens when self-denial is trashed. But his effect on the culture, via “The Playboy Philosophy,” has proven to be lasting and destructive.

Penance, forgiveness and self-denial are not only good for those individuals who observe Lent, their exercise is good for society. We need more Lenten observances, not less of them.

POLITICS AND RELIGION SCARE SECULARISTS

[Bill Donohue](#)

We hear a lot about phobias these days. Islamophobia, transphobia, fat phobia, but no one seems to notice religiophobia. There is a reason for this: the trio of phobias mentioned are invoked by liberals against conservatives, and they don't see themselves as harboring a phobia about

religion, or about anything else for that matter. Yet the evidence suggests otherwise.

Reuters, the British news service, recently did a story on politics and religion. So did the *New York Times*. They both honed in on evangelical support for Donald Trump.

Reuters noted that at a rally in Quemado, Texas, “vendors sold shirts, flags and hats promoting the Republican former president while conservative speakers touted conservative Christian values and criticized the border policies of President Biden, a Democrat.”

The *New York Times* covered the same event, saying it “featured an unexpected blend of political anger and religious ardor,” complete with “evangelical sermons, music and speeches.”

On the website of Time, an invitation was extended to sociologist Samuel L. Perry to offer an analysis. He noted, quite correctly, that America is becoming more secular, saying that “much of what religious institutions historically provided America’s citizens—education; counseling; support for the needy; marriage options; entertainment; and explanations for how the world works—are increasingly provided by the state and the market.”

Then Perry veers left. He tells us that as a nation we have become “an increasingly cosmopolitan, multiracial democracy where liberal values of tolerance are celebrated.” He maintains that young people are tuning out the voice of religious conservatives, and this is what is making them more secular.

A more persuasive case can be made that our culture has become so phobic about religion that of course young people are turned off. Whether it be in the mainstream media, social media, the schools, or the entertainment industry, Christianity has been marginalized, if not demonized. The

drumbeat is steady, and it is effective.

But the biggest mistake is thinking that “liberal values of tolerance are celebrated.” By whom? Not by liberals.

In 2020, a Cato study found that 77 percent of conservatives, 64 percent of moderates, and 52 percent of liberals said they were afraid to say what they think. On the subject of religion, 33 percent of Democrats felt free to express their viewpoint in most situations on a daily basis, but the figure for Republicans was just 14 percent; it was 32 percent for liberals and 18 percent for conservatives.

In 2021, a Lifeway Research survey found that “nearly 60% agreed that Christians increasingly are confronted by intolerance in America today.” Those who regularly attend religious services were even more likely to say this is true. As expected, young people and those who are religiously unaffiliated were the least likely to agree.

In 2022, a McLaughlin survey commissioned by the Catholic League found that 62 percent of Catholics agreed that “it is getting harder to practice your faith publicly in America.”

It is people of faith, especially conservatives, who are being bullied. And it is secular liberals who are doing the bullying.

It is commonplace for liberals to see themselves as the tolerant ones. Yet it is not conservatives who are punishing the speech of those who “misgender” someone. It is liberals who are promoting thought control.

Not to be misunderstood, there are, in fact, intolerant conservative Christians. But to portray them as the problem, while ignoring the antics of liberals who are phobic about religion, is simply unfair and inaccurate.

Joe Biden: Climate Change Is 'More Consequential' Than Nuclear War

Bill in the News (Breitbart): "On Friday, Catholic League President Bill Donohue pointed out that the president's assessment of the problems facing the nation is wildly out of sync with the views of ordinary Americans." [READ MORE HERE](#)