

# LUTHERAN DENOMINATION IN FREE FALL

June 12, 2025

[Bill Donohue](#)

As we have noted many times before, the more “progressive” a religious organization is, the fewer members it tends to have. This is certainly true of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA). It was formed in 1988 when three Lutheran denominations merged amidst disagreements with more traditional-minded Lutheran denominations.

The ELCA rejects the Christian definition of marriage, namely the union of a man and a woman. Instead, it believes in gay marriage, the union of two people of the same sex who are barred by nature from creating a family. It also rejects what science teaches about the sexes, which is that sex is binary—one is either a man or a woman. Instead, it believes the fiction that the sexes are interchangeable.

By rejecting core Christian teachings about marriage, the family and sexuality, many would argue that the ELCA has essentially forfeited its Christian status. But all of this will soon be moot: it won’t be around much longer.

In 1988, when the ELCA was born, it had 5,251,534 members. In 2020, the figure was 3,142,777. Its own Office of Research and Evaluation determined in 2022 that it will have fewer than 16,000 worshippers left on an average Sunday by 2041. This is happening despite a desperate attempt to be “proactive in evangelism and outreach.” This led one Lutheran observer to conclude that “according to current trends, the church will basically cease to exist within the next generation.”

Hastening the end is the radical LGBTQ agenda sported by the

ELCA. A microcosm of this phenomenon was recently brought to our attention.

On June 2, I registered a complaint with the Director of the Glenn Korff School of Music at the University of Nebraska. I mentioned how “a serious act of anti-Catholic bigotry was initiated by a doctoral student in your department. Reportedly, the final recital of his music degree took place at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church in Lincoln. It was a drag performance that viciously mocked the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; central aspects of it were debased. A video of this event is available on YouTube.”

I sent a copy of my letter to Tobi White, pastor of the church. She wrote back saying her church “would not knowingly insult another faith or religious institution.” But then she took it back, saying, “Upon reviewing the composition, we interpret the piece differently and support Dr. Willette’s artistic expression.”

The “artistic expression” that she supports includes music that Joseph Willette titled, “Kyrie,” “Gloria,” “Credo,” “Sanctus,” and “Agnus Dei.” The video features a fat man dressed in white, looking like a demonic nun/bride hybrid, dancing to the music. His face is painted in a ghoulish white as he gyrates around the church.

Does this sound like a love letter to Catholics, or a direct insult?

Pastor White’s claim that “we interpret the piece differently” is undercut by the student. He writes that the “Mass of Perpetual Indulgence” (the name is a play on the anti-Catholic group, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence) was an “appropriation of the traditional Mass [that] blurs the lines between the sacred and the profane.” He boasts that his drag show and other “queer imagery” represent the profane.

By checking the website of Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church we

learn that it boasts of being the most queer-friendly church imaginable. While it does welcome “People who are currently or formerly incarcerated”—it says not a word about the victims of these rapists and murderers—most of its “welcoming” efforts are aimed at gays and those who falsely claim to be transgender (no such persons exist). The church is lined with rainbow flags and its staff members go by such pronouns as “she/they.” That tells us a great deal about their mental faculties.

There is something really sick going on here. Not only does this church’s commitment to “inclusion” not extend to Catholics, they justify anti-Catholic behavior, claiming it is “artistic expression.” But would it be “artistic expression” if a house of worship featured a parody of drag queens, depicting them as pedophiles who get their jollies by raping kids? That could be seen as entertaining, couldn’t it be?

The church’s website also features a doctored video of Pope Leo XIV refusing to shake hands with President Trump. Posting this video must have made them giggle—we can almost hear them yucking it up like little boys and girls. Sorry about that folks—our new pope is not like you guys, not by a long shot.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America is close to death, a death of its own making. But not all examples of institutional suicide are to be mourned. Some should be celebrated.

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# TRANSGENDER CRISIS MARKS

# PRIDE MONTH: PART II

June 11, 2025

[Bill Donohue](#)

In this second installment on the transgender crisis that marks Pride Month, we turn our attention to transgender activists and their sympathizers who are trying to destroy women's rights.

Segregation is seen by many as a dirty word, but in reality it depends on the circumstance.

For example, most Americans support the Olympic games, notwithstanding the fact that it is a showcase of segregation. Having separate games for men and women is just common sense, but common sense is no longer commonplace, at least among self-identified liberals.

Their allegiance to transgenderism is so strong that it allows them to pursue this bizarre ideology even at the cost of destroying sports for women and girls. They want the men to win, relegating women to a second class status. That is why those who support transgenderism are today's misogynists, taking their place alongside the ultra-macho rednecks who sought to keep women in their place for decades.

In December, Charlie Baker, the president of the NCAA, testified before a senatorial committee defending the NCAA policy of allowing men to compete against women; he cited a lack of clarity from the courts on this issue. Sen. Josh Hawley ripped into him, saying, "Let's dispense with that canard. No federal court has ordered the NCAA to include biological men in women's sports."

In February, President Trump bailed Baker out. The NCAA head honcho congratulated Trump for providing student-athletes with

“a clear, national standard.” Trump’s executive order, “Keeping Men Out of Women’s Sports,” bars men who falsely claim to be a woman (so-called transgender women) from competing against women. Baker never took a principled stand; instead he allowed Trump to get him off the hook.

The resistance to Trump’s defense of women’s sports is still strong in some parts of the country. Just recently, men were allowed to compete against women in high school events in Oregon and California.

Fortunately, two female athletes in Oregon who competed in the high jump refused to stand next to a male on the medal platform at the state championship Saturday night.

In California, a male athlete who competed against females won the high jump and triple jump. President Trump blasted California Gavin Newsom for allowing this travesty of justice, and his Assistant Attorney Gen. Harmeet Dhillon put the offending school districts on notice: they must “certify in writing” that they will no longer allow men to compete against women in women’s sport, or risk legal liability.

While the struggle for justice in women’s sports continues in the United States, it is making progress internationally.

Last fall, the United Nations issued a report that found that more than 600 female athletes have been unfairly beaten by men in women’s sports. This amounts to a loss of more than 890 medals in 29 different sports.

Moreover, the report detailed cases of severe injuries that women athletes have had to endure by competing against men. They have had their teeth knocked out and legs broken. Worse, they have experienced skull fractures and neurological damage from concussions. The report also cited the lack of privacy for women in the locker rooms, a subject that transgender activists refuse to even acknowledge.

These policies would not exist absent support from academicians.

Every honest person knows that sex is binary: there are but two sexes. This means there are but two genders, because gender is a sociological term—constantly misinterpreted as a biological one—that refers to the social roles that are considered appropriate for males and females. Yet there are those in scientific circles, no less, who insist that science is wrong. They falsely claim that there is a continuum of genders. This fiction is entertained by once reliable publications such as *Nature*, *Scientific American* and *National Geographic*.

Transgender activism is evident at the highest levels in the scientific community. We learned last year that after the National Institutes of Health awarded millions of dollars to researchers examining the health benefits for children who were prescribed transgender puberty-blocking drugs, the lead researcher of the study concealed findings because the results supported critics of this exploitative practice. In short, she screwed the taxpayers for political reasons.

The elites are obviously important, but they may not have the last word on this matter. It's hard to prevail against overwhelming public opinion.

A poll released after the presidential election revealed that nearly three-in-four voters said it should be illegal to subject children to sex-altering procedures; it was a 10 percent increase in just three months. Several recent polls indicate that approximately two-in-three adults oppose allowing males who identify as transgender to compete in girls' sports and share locker rooms and bathrooms with them. And 77 percent of Americans do not want teachers to discuss gender identity and the possibility of being born in the wrong body in the early grades.

The Catholic League believes that encouraging minors to transition to the other sex—which is biologically impossible anyway—is a child abuse, pure and simple. The good news is that the elites are on the defensive.

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# TRANSGENDER CRISIS MARKS PRIDE MONTH: PART I

June 10, 2025

[Bill Donohue](#)

June is Pride Month, but this year, more than ever before, it is in everyone's interest to confront the transgender crisis.

In reality, there is no such thing as a transgender person—there are only males and females—but there is a small percentage of people who falsely claim that they are of the other sex. Unfortunately, there has been a significant spike in the number of sexually confused persons who misidentify themselves as transgender.

Between 2014 and 2023, there was a 68 percent increase in the number of adults who identify as transgender. Among 18 to 24 year olds, there was an increase of 422 percent. It's not just in the U.S. where this problem exists. In England, between 2011 and 2021, among those aged 18 and under, there was a 50-fold increase in the transgender population.

This is obviously due to social and cultural factors, yet when honest scholars have pointed this out, they have been silenced. This happened to Brown University professor Lisa Littman. She found conclusive evidence of the effects of

social media on young people considering a sex transition. She received such a hostile backlash that her own university pulled the promotion of her work, yielding to the cancel culture.

It is astonishing to hear well-educated Americans say that if a man identifies as a woman he should be allowed to compete against women in sports and shower with them. Last November, when Rep. Nancy Mace said that Rep.-Elect Sarah McBride, who is male, was male (he identifies as female), NBC host Yamiche Alcindor called Mace out, saying she “baselessly accused” McBride of being male. A genital check would have proven the journalist wrong.

This ideological poison has also affected the brain of Bill Kristol. He used to know better, but as part of his intellectual evolution, from right to left, he is now convinced that transgender persons exist and that we need to affirm their status. His father, Irving, whom I knew and respected, must be looking down at him in bewilderment.

Transgender mania has also surfaced among some Catholic notables. Father James Martin, who ministers to the sexually confused, was aghast when Arlington Bishop Michael Burbidge issued a Pastoral Letter in 2021 saying, “No one ‘is’ transgender.” Martin went off the rails. “The worst kind of marginalization, the worst kind of discrimination and the worst kind of hatred is to claim that someone doesn’t exist.”

No, what is really wrong is to claim that someone who is of one sex belongs to the opposite sex, simply because he says so. If he said he was a giraffe, would that make him one?

It is not surprising that given his cast of mind, Father Martin supports men using women’s bathrooms, providing, of course, they say they are female. So when Sam exposes himself to Sally in the locker room, the good Jesuit declares that Sally has no rights.



It is not helping Sam to encourage him to believe that he is a girl. Indeed, it may be hastening his death. According to the CDC, it was learned in 2023 that one in four transgender high school students said they had attempted suicide in the past year. This compared to 11 percent of normal girls and 5 percent of normal boys.

It is important to note that their suicidal behavior is not a reaction to their being unaccepted. On the contrary, it is a function of their refusal to accept what nature has ordained.

The Department of Health and Human Services recently released a comprehensive review of minors who have undergone medical treatment in pursuit of changing their sex. They suffer from infertility, sexual dysfunction and heart disease. Puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and surgeries create a host of serious psychological and physiological problems, some of which can never be reversed.

The medical professionals who encourage, or engage in, these practices, need to be held accountable. Ideally, they should be banished from the profession. But under the Biden administration, not only did they support these medical malpractices, they took out their anger at those who objected by seeking to punish innocent children.

It has been commonplace in schools for decades to give students a free lunch. This is especially appreciated by poor parents who find it difficult to pay for their children's lunch. But the transgender maniacs working for the Biden administration proposed new rules in 2022 that would end school meal programs in schools that did not abide by their radical LGBTQ curriculum. Some two dozen states blocked this initiative in the courts, but at the end of 2023, the zealots tried again, issuing rules that would victimize poor minority students by taking away their food.

The Trump administration is putting the brakes on this

extremism, and the American people have turned against the Democrats who are promoting it. But hard-core ideologues do not listen to reason, which is why this issue is not over.

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# FBI AND APPLE TV: TWIN CATHOLIC FOES

[Bill Donohue](#)

Last week, new revelations about the FBI's anti-Catholic spying ring emerged; it was operative under President Biden. We have been on this issue for years, having reached out to the chairmen of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees, and we did so again last week. Besides publishing news releases, contacting Sen. Chuck Grassley and other members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I addressed this issue on Fox News and Newsmax. We made it clear that we are not done with this matter.

While we were dealing with these issues a news story broke about a vile episode of the Apple TV+ series, "Your Friends & Neighbors." From online stories it appeared that the episode had just aired. That was false. It aired May 9. No matter, to trash the Eucharist is something that makes the Ku Klux Klan's anti-Catholicism seem quaint.

Why would anyone write such a script? We are reaching out to the man who wrote it, Jonathan Tropper, to find out. To read my letter, click [here](#).

The good news is that few are watching Apple TV+ (subscription is \$10 a month), and even fewer are watching "Your Friends & Neighbors." Apple TV+'s market share for streaming outlets was

8 percent in the first quarter of 2025. As of May 8, this particular show ranked #447 in terms of popularity.

When the federal government attacks the First Amendment rights of Catholics, there is nothing more serious. But cultural expressions of bigotry are not unimportant. It just goes to show what we are faced with these days.

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# WRAY AND GARLAND NEED TO ANSWER TO CATHOLICS

[Bill Donohue](#)

The new batch of documents on the Biden FBI Catholic spy ring makes it clear that those responsible for this obscene gambit need to be held accountable. The Senate Judiciary Committee, headed by Sen. Chuck Grassley, can begin by subpoenaing former FBI Director Christopher Wray and former Attorney General Merrick Garland.

When he testified in July 2023, Wray said he knew nothing about traditional Catholics being targeted by the FBI; by that time we knew that the Bureau was not content to simply go after “radical-traditionalist Catholics”—it was zeroing in on “mainline” Catholics. He said that when he first learned of this he was “aghast.” Garland testified in September and said he was “appalled” by this revelation.

As I asked in November 2023, “What exactly have they done about?” We still don’t know, which is why they need to testify again.

On December 4, 2024, the House Report of the Committee on the

Judiciary and Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government noted that the Special Agent in charge of the Richmond field office, which issued the infamous memo on the Catholic spy ring, said the memo “could be to inform...other intelligence analysts across the country.” We now know from the new documents that the Richmond office did, in fact, consult with the Louisville, Portland and Milwaukee offices.

What were these FBI agents interested in uncovering? We know from the aforementioned Select Subcommittee report that the spy operation focused exclusively on those Catholics who were “pro-life,” “pro family,” and who “support the biological basis for sex and gender distinction.” These practicing Catholics were labeled “domestic terrorists,” treated as if they were firebombing government offices.

Exhibit C in the newly released documents also mentions the FBI fixation on “hostility toward abortion-rights advocates.”

On April 18, 2024, a report on the FBI’s internal probe of Analysts involved in the investigation of Catholics was published. I read Inspector General Michael Horowitz’s report, and on April 24, I wrote to Rep. Jim Jordan of the House Judiciary Committee about it. It is worth mentioning some excerpts.

“It is as revealing as it is disturbing to note that the probe of Catholics was based on one person, namely, Defendant A. That he is clearly a violent, bigoted thug—he hates everyone from Jews to cops—is uncontested. But where are the others? There isn’t even a Defendant B.

“More disturbing is the admission that Defendant A does not attend a Catholic church. The report admits that he attended a church ‘with an international religious society that advocates traditional Catholic theology and liturgy *but it is not considered by the Vatican to be in full communion with the Catholic Church* (my italics).’”

The report further notes that “there is no evidence that Defendant A was being radicalized” at the church he attended.

In other words, this entire witch hunt spying on practicing Catholics was cooked up by the FBI on the basis of *one nut job who wasn't even Catholic*.

Then there is the role of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a wicked hate group that has a history of smearing conventional conservative organizations. Why would anyone in the FBI rely on them? The new batch of documents reveals that when agents from the Milwaukee and Phoenix offices warned against using SPLC as a source, no one listened. Why didn't they? We also know that files related to SPLC were deleted.

Even more disturbing, we now know that then-FBI-Deputy-Director Paul Abbate ordered “a permanent removal of the memorandum, as well as any edits or references, from all FBI systems,” telling the Special Agent in Charge of the Richmond field office to “pull it down,” the same day the memo was made public.

Looks like Sen. Grassley may want to issue subpoenas to many more operatives than Wray and Garland.

Finally, it must be noted that the FBI never once went after dissident Catholics, those activists who seek to discredit the Church from within. Not to be misunderstood—the FBI should not do so; it's none of their business. But by seeking to malign loyal Catholics, those who are in communion with the Church, the FBI has done much greater damage to the Catholic Church than the dissidents could ever do.

Catholics deserve to know the truth, and the whole truth. Those responsible for this outrageous violation of the First Amendment rights of Catholics need to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

*Contact                      Grassley's                      chief                      of                      staff:*

# BIDEN'S FBI LIED ABOUT SPYING ON CATHOLICS

[Bill Donohue](#)

We have known for years about an anti-Catholic cell group in the FBI that was operative under President Biden. It spied on practicing Catholics, not just those who were dubbed “radical-traditionalist Catholics” (RTCs). We now know, thanks to FBI Director Kash Patel, and Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley, how widespread it was. Indeed, the extent of this unconstitutional probe was far greater than we were led to believe by former FBI Director Christopher Wray.

At Patel's confirmation hearing on January 30, the Trump nominee told Sen. Josh Hawley of his “commitment to investigate” the FBI's probe of Catholics. He has done just that—he has turned over newly released documents to Sen. Grassley, making good on his pledge.

On February 9, 2023, I expressed my concerns in a public statement about the FBI's investigation of RTCs. I had a hunch that this probe was a ruse, and that the Bureau was really interested in targeting practicing Catholics. I asked, “What's next? Will it be a war on ‘Catholics who are orthodox?’” It turned out I was right.

On April 11, 2023, I wrote to Director Wray asking him to make public those documents that related to the FBI's outreach program to “mainline Catholic parishes” and “local diocesan leadership.” They were targeted, I said, “because of an

alleged 'radicalization' in the Catholic Church." Regarding the RTCs, I said, "we have not seen any evidence that they are a threat to anyone." More important, "Now the FBI has upped the ante, going after 'mainline' Catholics and dioceses."

Wray has insisted all along that the Richmond field office of the FBI was the only office that was involved in this anti-Catholic witch hunt. What Grassley has now revealed proves how untrue this is.

The Richmond memo, detailing the Catholic spy operation (which was first made public by an FBI whistleblower), was distributed to over 1,000 FBI employees across the country *before* it was publicly disclosed. In fact, the FBI produced at least 13 additional documents and five attachments that made plain its anti-Catholic bigotry. That it relied on information from a hate group, the Southern Poverty Law Center, makes this unseemly caper all the more despicable.

Grassley even revealed a second FBI memo that was drafted for distribution by the Richmond field office. The Iowa Republican noted that "The draft memo repeated the unfounded link between traditional Catholicism and violent extremism, but was never published due to backlash following the Richmond Memo's public disclosure. The existence of this second memo contradicts former FBI Director Christopher Wray's testimony that the Richmond field office only produced 'a single product.'"

The "backlash" that put the brakes on the second memo had nothing to do with a media blitz. As I noted on September 20, 2023, with the exception of conservative media outlets, the big media refused to cover this story. The same is true today: not a single mainstream media outlet has reported on Grassley's disclosure.

So where did the "backlash" come from? Here is what I wrote to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan on March 24, 2025: "In 2023, I wrote ten news releases on this subject:

four were open letters to you; one was a letter to FBI Director Christopher Wray; the rest were standard news releases. I issued three more statements in 2024, two were open letters—one was to Wray and one to you.” Sen. Grassley was copied on many of the letters.

These letters and news releases were followed up by radio, TV and internet interviews, thus contributing mightily to the “backlash.” Indeed, the Catholic League did more to keep the pressure on the FBI than any other organization in the nation.

We are committed to seeing this issue through until the entire truth is known to the public. Look for more on this subject soon.

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# CORPORATE RETREAT FROM PRIDE PARADES

[Michael P. McDonald](#)

In the last several years, we have grown accustomed to every major corporation spewing rainbows to mark the beginning of June as the corporate elites fell over themselves to genuflect at the altar of Pride. In a blatant disregard for consumer sentiment, major brands force down our throats support for this disordered lifestyle.

But, in 2025, there is a growing corporate retreat from Pride parades across the country, resulting in budget shortfalls. While it might not be a full on cultural realignment, the momentum is shifting. This is the natural progression of the backlash against Bud Light and Target that began in 2023.



Although many parade organizers attempt to blame this shifting momentum on external factors. Some point to President Trump's anti-Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies and a turbulent economic environment caused by the "trade war." Others insist that they still have support—it's just that the corporations do not want to be as visible. A few with false bravado claim they were the ones who actually dumped the corporate sponsors because they were never really "allies" to begin with. However, this is clearly happening because Americans of faith, who adhere to traditional values, and are firmly tethered to reality, have flexed their economic muscles pushing back on the corporations that endorse this hedonism.

Below are several examples of the shifting momentum:

#### **Washington, D.C. (June 7)**

- For many years, [Booz Allen Hamilton](#) sponsored the Capital Pride Alliance's activities, serving as one of the chief corporate sponsors as well as fielding several floats in the parade. For instance, Booz Allen contributed \$75,000 in 2024. However, just days after Booz Allen rescinded its DEI initiative, it also ended sponsorship of the parade.

#### **Salt Lake City (June 8)**

- Organizers of the Utah Pride admit that they have lost about \$400,000 in sponsorships, approximately [half](#) of the event's budget. The organizers, however, have declined to name which sponsors have withdrawn their support.

#### **Columbus (June 14)**

- The parade in Columbus, Ohio, has lost \$125,000 in [donations](#) from sponsors.
- The sponsors who have walked away from the parade are [Anheuser-Busch](#), [Lowe's](#), [Nissan](#), and [Walmart](#).

## Houston (June 28)

- The parade currently has a \$100,000 sponsorship funding [gap](#). Typically, the parade costs between \$500,000 and \$800,000 each year.
- In addition to the sponsorship funding gap, many sponsors have decided that they do not wish to be associated with the parade. According to Kendra Walker, a former president of Pride Houston, “so far this year, some have outright said they don’t want the backlash or the negative attention” that comes with publically sponsoring the festivities.

## Denver (June 29)

- Sponsorship for the Denver Pride Parade has fallen by nearly [two-thirds](#), resulting in a \$230,000 gap in the events budget. Although the parade organizers are refusing to list the sponsors, this silence, coupled with the devastating budgetary figures that have been made available, suggest the event is struggling.

## New York (June 29)

- Overall, the New York Pride Parade is facing a \$750,000 [deficit](#).
- The highest level of sponsorship, platinum, costs \$175,000. In 2024, the New York Pride Parade had five platinum sponsors. Of these five, three have withdrawn their support for the 2025 parade. These are [Grainer](#), [Mastercard](#), and [Skyy Vodka](#). Target was listed as a platinum sponsor in 2024, but this year it does not appear as a sponsor of the parade. However, according to the parade organizers, Target will continue to support the parade but wishes not to be publically associated with the event. Even with Target’s clandestine support, and L’Oreal, the sole returning public sponsor from last year, and a new sponsorship from Deutsche Bank, the New

York Pride Parade has a \$350,000 shortfall compared to last year among platinum sponsors.

- Lower tiered sponsors that have withdrawn their support include [Citi](#), [Nissan](#), [PepsiCo](#), and [PricewaterhouseCoopers](#).
- Approximately one [third](#) of last year's sponsors either cancelled their contributions or donated at significantly lower levels. The event organizers fear that this will lead to further diminishing support in the years to come.

### **San Francisco (June 29)**

- Parade organizers face a \$200,000 [deficit](#).
- Major sponsors to withdraw from the event include [Anheuser-Busch](#), [Comcast](#), and [Diageo](#).

### **St. Louis (June 29)**

- [Anheuser-Busch](#) ended its partnership of over 30 years with the St. Louis Pride Parade. This has resulted in a \$150,000 loss for the event.

### **Seattle (June 29)**

- Seattle Pride announced it has a \$350,000 [shortfall](#) in its budget for its parade as some corporate sponsors have withheld their support for the event.
  - To fill this gap, parade organizers turned to crowd sourcing with the initial goal of raising \$300,000. However a week later, Seattle Pride's [GoFundMe](#) stated the group was aiming for a more modest [goal](#) of \$75,000. As of May 29, the crowd sourcing campaign had only received 109 donations, totaling \$13,350 or roughly 18 percent of what they hope to raise.
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# POPE FRANCIS DIES AT 88; LEGACY WAS MIXED

*This is the article that appeared in the May 2025 edition of Catalyst, our monthly journal. The date that prints out reflects the day that it was uploaded to our website. For a more accurate date of when the article was first published, check out the news release, [here](#).*

The death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday caught many as a surprise, though not as a shock. He definitely rebounded from the time he was hospitalized, but he never regained his normal stature.

Pope Francis was treated far more kindly by the media than his predecessors. That's because he was seen as a champion of social justice and an ardent foe of inequality. He was also seen as an agent of change.

By contrast, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John Paul II were traditionalists; they spoke more to the moral issues that plagued the West.

It appeared that the pope would have liked to have made more changes, especially with regard to the Church's teachings on sexuality. He made that apparent by the appointments he made of cardinals to senior positions. But he also knew his authority was limited by Scripture and tradition.

While Pope Francis was not an admirer of President Trump, stylistically they had much in common. Speaking from the heart, and off-the-cuff, are refreshing attributes, especially among elites, but they can also be a source of trouble. After the pope traveled abroad, he gave interviews on the papal plane that were so blunt that his spokesmen often had to walk back what he said. Trump's casual style can also be a problem.

In the pope's waning days, he drew parallels with President Biden. Francis was mentally astute but in failing health;

Biden was cognitively challenged. In both cases, it was not clear who was in charge of the store. This is a condition that is rife for mischief.

Attention will now turn to the pope's successor. Pope Francis appointed most of the cardinals who will make that choice. This suggests that someone closer to his vision of the Church will be chosen. On the other hand, he has chosen men from the hinterland, from far away places where a penchant for orthodoxy, not change, is commonplace. This suggests that the new pope may be more of a traditionalist.

It does seem likely that whoever is chosen will have to bring about more clarity than we have been accustomed to under Pope Francis. Quite frankly, the Holy Father often made pronouncements that fostered confusion. The time has come to promote a more coherent vision; this will require a gentle push of the pendulum back to the middle.

If the cardinals decide to choose someone who is a traditionalist, they can do no better than to look to Africa. It is home to the most brilliant orthodox clergy in the world. If the cardinals want to choose someone more like Francis, they will look to Europe.

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## JUSTIFYING BIGOTRY

*This is the article that appeared in the May 2025 edition of Catalyst, our monthly journal. The date that prints out reflects the day that it was uploaded to our website. For a more accurate date of when the article was first published, check out the news release, [here](#).*

Look who's against fighting anti-Christian bias? An organized group of left-wing *religious* activists.

The Interfaith Alliance is a hodgepodge of left-wing activists, spread across a variety of religions. They are furious with President Trump's directive to U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi setting up a task force to root out anti-Christian bias in the federal government; we are assisting her in that effort.

Why would a group of professed religious people be against efforts to combat anti-Christian bias? Indeed, this is the only bias they appear to be okay with. To be exact, they deny it even exists. They say, "There is no evidence of widespread anti-Christian bias in the United States."

If that were the case, the Catholic League would not exist. We don't create bigotry, we respond to it. But in the minds of those affiliated with the Interfaith Alliance, the fact that we fight anti-Christian deeds means *we are a threat to liberty*.

They claim that efforts to oppose anti-Christian bigotry will "legitimatize discrimination against marginalized groups like the LGBTQ community, infringe on our reproductive freedom, and hurt our society's most vulnerable."

In other words, those who object to "Drag Queen Story Hours" for children, and those who oppose genital mutilation for minors, are the problem. Ditto for those who oppose child abuse in the womb.

Ironically, the Interfaith Alliance's opposition to fighting anti-Christian bigotry validates the reason why President Trump formalized efforts to combat it. We commend them for that.

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# POPE FRANCIS, R.I.P.

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**William A. Donohue**

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

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

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

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

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

It spoke well for Pope Francis that he rejected the practice of publishing the names of accused priests, something that is unheard of in every other institution. Regrettably, his inability to see through the deceitful character of his friend and fellow Jesuit, Bishop Gustavo Zanchetta—he was sentenced to prison by an Argentine court for sexually abusing seminarians—revealed a serious blind spot, one that earlier emerged in his dealings with priestly sexual abuse in Chile. Zanchetta is still a bishop.

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

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

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

Even more significant, his attack on traditionalists, especially those who favor the Latin Mass, were frequent and lacking in nuance. Yet at the same time, Francis welcomed



known Catholic dissidents, men and women who were previously condemned by officials in Rome and the United States for sabotaging the Church. His embrace of Sister Jeannine Gramick was the most conspicuous example of this phenomenon.

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

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

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

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

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

The pope admitted that as a young man the person who did more to shape his thinking about politics was a communist atheist, Esther Ballestrino. She introduced him to prominent communist publications.

Pope Francis made his mark on the Church, much as John Paul II

and Benedict XVI did. It remains to be seen whether his successor will hew more closely to his stance than that of his predecessors. May he rest in peace.