

# IS PACIFISM MORAL?

[Bill Donohue](#)

Let's cut to the quick. No, pacifism is not moral. Pacifism means that self-defense, and the defense of one's nation, is immoral. However pure the intent, pacifism holds that it is better to permit innocents to die than it is to use force to stop the aggressors. Now that is immoral.

This issue is back in the news largely because of the war in Iran. But it is also relevant again because of the recent death of Colman McCarthy, America's premier pacifist, and some remarks by Pope Leo XIV.

McCarthy wrote for *The Washington Post* for decades. He studied to be a monk and was popular in left-Catholic circles for his opposition to violence in any form and for any cause. He was 89.

He was such a purist that he even refused to stand for "The Star-Spangled Banner," objecting to the refrain "the bombs bursting in air." No doubt he hated fireworks. Any pacifist who views grades and exams as "forms of academic violence" surely must find Fourth of July celebrations to be verboten.

Though McCarthy was loved by his left-wing Catholic fans, he spoke with derision about Catholicism. "As the secretly elected leader of a male-run, land-rich, undemocratic, hierarchic, dogmatically unyielding organization headquartered in a second-rate European country, Pope John Paul II had few, if any, worries about accountability. He ruled, accordingly, as an autocrat."

Why the invective? Among other things, he hated the pope's defense of the "just war" doctrine. In his encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae*, His Holiness wrote that "the intrinsic value of life and the duty to love oneself no less than others are

the basis of *a true right to self-defense*" (his italics).

McCarthy would have none of it. He believed that we have no right to kill an aggressor even in circumstances where that it is the only viable option. Moreover, he believed that even when someone was able to kill an aggressor from killing scores of non-combatant women and children, it would be better to let him slaughter the innocent. This is what pacifism yields—immoral outcomes.

Catholicism ascribes to the "just war" doctrine as broached by St. Augustine. He wanted peace as much as anyone but he also knew there were times when we had to fight in order to achieve it. He laid down several criteria for war, among them that the cause must be just; that there must be a probability of success; that the means used must be proportionate to the desired outcome; and that force should be invoked only as a last resort.

Many years ago when I was teaching at a Catholic college, I listened to a visiting professor lecture the mostly Catholic faculty on the merits of pacifism. He cited the tradition of the Quakers as exemplary and had the audacity to chide the audience for its affiliation with a religion that justifies war in some instances. He was not too happy with me when I stopped him in his tracks, arguing that the only reason any of us are alive today is because enough Americans rejected pacifism as a just option in World War II.

Pacifists may say they believe in peace, but in my book they confuse peace with surrender.

Pope Leo XIV has not openly rejected the "just war" doctrine, but recent comments he made about the conflict in Iran come close.

On Easter Sunday, Pope Leo XIV called for all nations to lay down their arms and choose negotiation. On March 1, he went further, saying about the Middle East, "Stability and peace

are not achieved through mutual threats, nor through the use of weapons, which sow destruction, suffering, and death, but only through reasonable, sincere, and responsible dialogue.” That comment drew the ire of *Wall Street Journal* columnist Bill McGurn.

McGurn took strong issue with the word “only.” He is, of course, right. Countless wars have resulted in peace. In fairness, the pope was not speaking from a traditional mantle of authority—it was a tweet. No matter, he left himself open for rebuke. It also needs to be said that there are those who wage war on innocents and explicitly reject dialogue. What then? There are times when we can’t talk our way out of a confrontation.

St. Augustine won the debate in 418 A.D. when he wrote that “Peace should be the object of your desire; war should be waged *only* as a necessity...in order that peace may be obtained” (my emphasis).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* agrees with Augustine. “Legitimate defense can be not only a right but a grave duty for one who is responsible for the lives of others. The defense of the common good requires that an unjust aggressor be rendered unable to cause harm. For this reason, those who legitimately hold authority also have the right to use arms to repel aggression against the civil community entrusted to their responsibility.”

The great American political philosopher, Sidney Hook (whom I greatly admired and studied under), once wrote that “Those who will never risk their lives for freedom will surely lose their freedom without surely saving their lives...” A better rejoinder to Colman McCarthy would be hard to find.

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# DON'T GIVE UP ON NON-BELIEVERS AT EASTER

[Bill Donohue](#)

As Christians head to church this Easter weekend, they should pray for those who are struggling with their uneasiness over their apparent loss of faith. I say "apparent" because it appears many of them have not given up altogether.

Working at the Catholic League invariably means we get a chance to study, and occasionally interact with, agnostics, atheists and those who have no religious affiliation. Our impression is more negative than positive, but that may be due to the fact that we are dealing with activists, not ordinary non-believers.

Activists tend to be highly critical of people of faith, but from a recent public opinion survey of Vermont adults, "The Green Mountain State Poll," conducted by researchers at the University of New Hampshire, it seems they are not representative of most non-believers.

Vermont is home to relatively few believers. Two-in-three *never* attend religious services. That is more than double the average number nationwide, which is 31 percent. Sixteen percent of Vermont adults are atheist; 14 percent are agnostic; and 16 percent have no religious affiliation.

Given this distribution, it is surprising to learn that half of them combined (50 percent) profess a belief in God, Gods, or a Supernatural entity or entities exist. Moreover, seven-in-ten believe in an afterlife. These non-believers are reachable.

If there is one finding that separates activist non-believers from ordinary non-believers, it is the response that non-

believers in this survey gave when asked about the following: “Religious people in the United States are often persecuted for their beliefs.” Almost half of all agnostics (48 percent) agree with this observation; exactly half (50 percent) of atheists agree; and just over half (51 percent) of those with no religious affiliation agree.

If those with no religious convictions acknowledge that people of faith are “often persecuted for their beliefs,” who might they think are to blame? It suggests they are conceding that much of the problem can be laid at the doorstep of the more militant members of their community. If this is true, and no doubt it is, this would confirm the notion that ordinary non-believers are not the problem; it’s the activists in their ranks who are.

Ergo, we should not give up on non-believers at Easter. Many may, and clearly will, come back to the fold.

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## IS JADEN IVEY GUILTY?

[Bill Donohue](#)

Jaden Ivey, a professional basketball player for the Chicago Bulls, has been put on waivers after he made a series of alleged anti-LGBTQ comments, as well as remarks critical of abortion and Catholicism. To read what he said, click [here](#).

The issue that has garnered most of the attention were his LGBTQ statements. They shouldn’t have. While his comments were inelegant, they were entirely defensible, especially from a Christian perspective. Being against abortion is also defensible. Catholics are understandably upset when they hear Protestants say their religion is “false”—it is pure

ignorance—but it is not likely Ivey would have been sanctioned had he only said that.

Ivey's biggest mistake is not what he said—he did not make slurs against gays the way other professional athletes have—but that he went on a rampage, relentlessly creating discord with his team. That's where he crossed the line. He engaged in lengthy rants on three occasions online in one week. Thus did he become a divisive force, jeopardizing team unity. Had he not spoken a word, but simply whistled in the locker non-stop while game plans were being discussed, sanctions against him would be justified.

It's too bad Ivey didn't say these things on just one occasion. If he had, and the Bulls still put him on waivers, that would have made them the guilty party. To put it differently, if players cannot express their biblically grounded convictions in public, the bad guys are the censors, not the players.

This needs to be said because the NBA, the NFL and MLB have drifted into left-wing territory in recent years, evincing an intolerance for free speech and a preference for politically correct messaging. Indeed, this problem surfaced in responses made about Ivey's speech.

Mike Vrabel, the coach of the New England Patriots football team, responded to a tweet from one of his players, TreVeyon Henderson, who defended Ivey. All he did was quote Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Vrabel somehow found fault with this unexceptional statement, saying that he likes Henderson, and that his players should be "able to express what they believe." Not really. "I also wanna make sure that they're educated. We want to be inclusive."

He sounds like a woke robot. Indeed, his remark smacks of thought control. So nice to know that Vrabel wants to make

sure his players are “educated.” Meaning, of course, that they must learn to think like him. It doesn’t get more condescending than this.

It is also offensive for him to declare that “We want to be inclusive.” Who’s the “We,” and who appointed him and others to set these kinds of goals? It’s also phony. Vrabel’s inclusive tent obviously doesn’t apply to Ivey, who has been summarily excluded because of his “uneducated” comments.

Apparently, Ivey is beset with multiple problems, and he needs to deal with whatever is ailing him. The dons of professional sports are also in need of a corrective—they would benefit by freeing themselves from the left-wing ideologues that surround them.

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## **ISLAMISTS ON THE WAR PATH DURING HOLY WEEK**

[Bill Donohue](#)

Islamists, or Muslim extremists, are on the war path again slaughtering Christians in Nigeria during Holy Week. It is an annual event, though most people don’t know anything about it. As usual, when Muslims wantonly kill Christians, it’s either ignored or lied about. None of this is a mistake.

On Palm Sunday, more than two dozen Christians were massacred by jihadists. It occurred in Jos, a Christian city in Plateau state, Nigeria. According to International Christian Concern, at least 30 people were killed. Besides the BBC and the *New York Times*, most of the mainstream media did not cover it.

Last year on Palm Sunday in Nigeria, at least 54 Christians were massacred by Islamists in the village of Zikke, near Jos. Over 100 households were destroyed and the entire village was displaced. In 2024, more than 1,300 Christians were killed in Plateau state alone: the majority were non-combatants—more than 500 women and 260 children were wiped out, leaving 30,000 displaced.

The barbarians are mostly associated with Boko Haram, Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) and Fulani militants. They are responsible for killing thousands of Christians and destroying hundreds of churches. This has been going on in earnest since 2009 when Boko Haram went on a rampage slaughtering innocent Christians.

What has the United Nations done about this? It engages in “diplomatic mediation.” Swell. And what does it do when the next round of massacres occur? It engages in more “diplomatic mediation.” Worse, it refuses to call a spade a spade, eschewing any condemnation of Muslim extremists. It says the situation in Nigeria is “complex.”

The *New York Times* is working from the same playbook, branding the situation there “complex.” It goes beyond the dodging of the U.N. by criticizing those “who have [falsely claimed](#) that there is a Christian genocide happening in Nigeria.” This has also become the favorite talking point of the mainstream media.

Where is the evidence that a Christian genocide is not taking place in Nigeria? The *Times* provides a link to a story it ran in January [claiming](#) that “Spotty research from a Christian activist has been used by Republican lawmakers to justify U.S. intervention in the country [Nigeria].”

In fact, this news story should be studied in journalism classes as a classic case of how “spotty research” is done. It focuses on the comments made by one guy, a screwdriver

salesman, who argues that Christians are being singled out for slaughter. This is a red herring.

No serious scholar leans on anecdote for evidence. What about the annual reports on human rights in Nigeria released by Freedom House, Aid to the Church in Need, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, U.S. State Department and Open Doors?

Regarding the latter, the *Times* blithely refers to it as “a Christian advocacy group whose data has [sic] been cited by Mr. Trump.” Does that make it invalid? Talk about “spotty research.” Moreover, the paper never has a problem citing reports issued by George Soros-funded entities.

Those who are closer to the problem are not fooled. In 2022, Aid to the Church in Need said the situation in Nigeria “clearly passes the threshold of genocide.” In 2025, local leaders who witnessed the slaughter during Holy Week said it was “a targeted act of genocide against the Christian community.”

After a truck ran over a gathering of Christians on Easter Monday last year, killing six people, the initial police report said it was due to “faulty brakes.” “However,” as one reporter put it, “an investigation has now confirmed what the participants already knew—that the driver, named as 28-year-old Usman Mohammed, had deliberately plowed into the marchers.”

The governor of Plateau state, commenting on what happened during Holy Week in 2025, called it “genocide.” So did the president of International Christian Concern. He said the massacre was not a random event. He called it a “calculated” attack by the Fulanis to “erase Christians from their homeland.” He was explicit. “They roll in with AK-47s, machetes and gasoline, and no one’s stopping them.”

Christians in Nigeria should not have to endure Easter every

year—they should be celebrating it. There is nothing complex about what they are facing—it’s the most violent expression of anti-Christian bigotry imaginable.

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# HOW MAMDANI TREATS KEY RELIGIOUS DAYS

[Bill Donohue](#)

This year was the first time Zohran Mamdani observed Ramadan as New York City Mayor, and now he is about to observe Passover, Good Friday and Easter. However, this is not the first time he has done so as a public official (he was previously a New York State Assemblyman).

We checked his record and compared it to how his predecessor, Mayor Eric Adams, treated these key religious days. The differences are stark.

## **Ramadan**

### *Adams*

He attended Ifar events and issued tributes to Muslims.

### *Mamdani*

He attended more than a dozen events this year, claiming on the last day of Ramadan that this day is “[For All of Us](#).” Thus he invited non-Muslims to celebrate Ramadan. There is no record of him being that inclusive to Muslims, asking them to consider Passover or Easter as a day they should celebrate, nor does he invite them to observe Good Friday.

At a press conference marking the start of this month-long Muslim period, he said, "[Ramadan is my favorite month of the year.](#)" If this is true, it is of recent vintage.

For example, [he confessed in 2018](#) that it was the first time he celebrated Ramadan in years. Curiously, the next year he announced his candidacy for office: in 2020 he was elected to the New York State Assembly. This gave him the appearance of being an authentic Muslim. Yet his bona fides do not extend to respecting Islamic teachings on abortion, same-sex marriage and the LGBTQ agenda.

## **Passover**

*Adams*

He attended speaking engagements and issued celebratory tweets to the Jewish community.

*Mamdani*

Last year, he commemorated Passover by speaking to Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, a far-left organization that was condemned in 2022 by the [Anti-Defamation League](#) as being "out of touch" with the Jewish community. He exclaimed, "[No Fascists, No Pharaohs.](#)"

## **Good Friday**

*Adams*

He typically spoke about the crucifixion of Christ and the need for redemption and reform.

*Mamdani*

There is no evidence he has ever addressed this day.

## **Easter**

*Adams*

He usually addressed themes of rebirth and renewal.

*Mamdani*

In 2024, he said, "Happy Easter." In 2025, he said nothing.

We would expect a Muslim public figure to recognize Islamic religious days more than Jewish or Christian holy days. But Mamdani politicized Passover last year (the way he recently politicized [St. Patrick's Day](#)), and his terse treatment of Christian religious days is appalling.

We will be watching how Mamdani treats Passover, Good Friday and Easter. Will he mimic Adams or his old self?

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## NEW ANGLICAN LEADER FACES TURMOIL

[Bill Donohue](#)

Sarah Mullally has her hands full. The newly installed Archbishop of Canterbury is facing turmoil in her church, much like that of other mainline Protestant denominations in North America.

Mullally, who was a nurse before she was ordained an Anglican priest, took over as archbishop after her predecessor, Justin Welby, resigned following his handling of a sexual abuse case. She inherits a church that is torn over sexual issues.

She is also faced with a sharply declining Anglican population, especially among young people. Catholics in England now outnumber Anglicans among the Gen Z population (those born between 1997 and 2012) by a margin of more than

2-1. The problem is not limited to youth. Overall, attendance at Anglican services are declining; they are increasing among Catholics.

In the United States, none of the mainline Protestant denominations are in good shape. The Episcopal Church had made sharp cuts in its headquarters staff. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has also laid off many senior officials from its national staff. The United Methodist Church has undergone a major schism, cutting its number of bishops. All have seen sharp reductions in attendance at weekly services, though that appears to be stabilizing.

The Catholic population in the United States has grown by 40 percent in the past 40 years, mostly because of increases in the South and West. Of the top ten gainers, six are in Texas or California.

Younger dioceses such as Fresno and Atlanta are doing very well, while older dioceses like Pittsburgh and Milwaukee are not. Pittsburgh has seen a decline of over 30 percent in the Catholic population since 1980, and is situated in the bottom in terms of priestly ordinations, along with New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle and Dallas. New York is especially troublesome given that the Catholic population has actually increased; Pittsburgh's situation is more understandable given the loss of the Catholic population.

There are many reasons why Catholics are doing better than mainline Protestants in the U.S. and the U.K. The latter suffer from mixed messages on sexual issues, and from a misguided attempt to be "relevant." The data clearly show that the more "relevant" a religious community tries to be—in terms of accepting the norms and values of the dominant culture—the more irrelevant it becomes for its adherents.

This may seem counter-intuitive. But it isn't: the desire for continuity among the faithful is strong and seriously

unappreciated. If Christianity is about truth—which is what it is supposed to be—then constant challenges to settled teachings is not only unappealing, it is subversive.

We should have known by now that attempts to secularize Christianity are an utter failure. Archbishop Mullally will either move toward orthodoxy and succeed, or she will continue the slide toward heterodoxy, and fail.

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## TALIBAN OUTCLASSES MAMDANI AND SHERRILL

[Bill Donohue](#)

The Taliban are known as among the world's most brutal terrorists, yet they exhibited more humanity at the end of Ramadan than New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani and New Jersey Governor Mikie Sherrill.

On March 20, the last day of Ramadan, the [Taliban released](#) an American, Dennis Coyle, whom they had imprisoned for over a year, citing the holiday as the reason for doing so. They said his release was “based on humanitarian sympathy and goodwill.” Now contrast this with the way Mamdani and Sherrill acted that day. They were not guided by one ounce of “humanitarian sympathy and goodwill.”

Mamdani made his first visit to Rikers Island, home to the most violent inmates in the city. This may appear to some as an outreach to the marginalized, but when we learn that he habitually reaches out to murderers and thugs, but not their victims, a different picture emerges.

One New York City police veteran [told reporters](#) that Mamdani “hasn’t visited any victims of the heinous crimes some of these guys have committed.” He gave as an example a man who tried to knife police officers in Queens, noting that “he visited the criminal’s family in that case too.” He added, “He can go visit inmates in Rikers, but he can’t go visit a cop who gets hurt during an Isis-inspired attack outside the Mayor’s home earlier this month.”

Sherrill was just as insulting. It is one thing to visit a mosque at the end of Ramadan, quite another to choose one that has been linked to terrorism since its founding in 1989; the co-founder was convicted of funneling money to Hamas.

[She met](#) with Imam Mohammad Qatanani, pretending she was a Muslim (she wore a large cloth wrapped around her head, extending down the front of her body), offering her well wishes. This cleric has called for “a new intifada,” and has met with Hamas leaders in Gaza saying, “our wish should be we carry out Jihad to death.” That was his message to Jews—you should all be killed.

Ramadan is a month that begins in mercy, followed by an emphasis on forgiveness, and ends with a prayer asking for emancipation from hell. The Taliban’s decision to release Coyle evinced mercy and forgiveness. Mamdani and Sherrill turned these two virtues on their head, showing mercy and forgiveness for murderers and terrorists

Thus were New York City’s mayor and New Jersey’s governor outclassed by the Taliban. What a sorry state of affairs.

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# CATHOLIC HIGH COURT JUSTICES PROBED AGAIN

[Bill Donohue](#)

When Jews and Protestants are being considered for a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court, they are rarely, if ever, asked by legislators to explain how their religious convictions might affect their legal thinking. The same is not true of Catholic nominees: their faith often becomes center stage at the hearings.

Sometimes it gets really ugly, as when Senator Dianne Feinstein tried to smear prospective Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett. “When you read your speeches,” she said, “the conclusion one draws is that the dogma lives loudly within you. And that’s of concern when you come to big issues that large numbers of people have fought for years in this country.”

This was not Feinstein’s first rodeo. In 2005, she questioned John Roberts about his suitability to sit on the Supreme Court. She specifically asked him if he shared President John F. Kennedy’s 1960 convictions about not mixing church and state. Other prospective federal judges who are Catholic have been subjected to the same line of questioning.

It must also be asked, why is it that nominees who are known secularists are not probed to learn if they harbor an animus against public displays of religious expression? Why is it always Catholics who are asked to explain themselves?

Now our Catholic Supreme Court Justices are under the microscope again, only this time liberal commentators are afraid they may not be Catholic enough!

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has

filed an amicus in a case before the high court asking the Justices to reject the Trump administration's attempt to end birthright citizenship for some babies born in the U.S. Without addressing the merits of this case, what interests the Catholic League is the media reaction to the Catholics on the high court.

Maureen Groppe is a senior reporter for *USA Today*. A recent column she wrote says it all. "Will the Majority-Catholic Supreme Court Listen to the Church on Immigration?" She is particularly impressed that the USCCB is making a moral case against Trump's position, as well as a legal case; the bishops branded it "immoral."

The USCCB uses stronger language with regard to abortion. It labels it "intrinsically evil." Yet when Catholic Justices overturned *Roe v. Wade*, sending the issue of abortion back to the states, pro-abortion groups blasted them and law journals ran articles about conflating religious convictions and legal reasoning. The American Bar Association held a webinar on this subject.

"Will the Majority-Catholic Supreme Court Listen to the Church on Same-Sex Marriage?" Imagine a news story on this subject that invites the reader to question the autonomy of Catholic Justices. Would *USA Today* run it?

We all have biases, but when it comes to being clueless about harboring them, no one beats liberals. They live in a world where their political thinking is constantly reinforced, leaving them hopelessly blind to their own prejudices.

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# PROBE NEEDED OF ELITE NYC INSTITUTIONS

[Bill Donohue](#)

We are asking New York State Attorney General Letitia James and New York County District Attorney Alvin Bragg to investigate an apparent cover-up of sexual abuse that took place at Columbia University and New York-Presbyterian Hospital. The twin entities failed to adequately deal with a serial sexual abuser, Dr. Robert Hadden, and they have been able to get away with their delinquent decisions for far too long.

To read my letter to the two of them, click [here](#).

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## CHURCH INVASION IN ST. PAUL; WE RESPOND WITH VIGOR

The church invasion that took place at Cities Church on January 18 in St. Paul, Minnesota was a flagrant violation of constitutional law, federal law and common decency. It is the kind of behavior associated with totalitarian regimes, not democracies. Yet the outcry from all quarters—government, religious, civic, educational, the media—was miniscule.

The purported cause for action was to register disapproval of David Easterwood, one of the pastors of this Southern Baptist church; he heads the local office of ICE.

Nine of the church invaders were charged with entering the church “in a coordinated takeover-style attack,” and for

engaging in “acts of oppression, intimidation, threats, interference, and physical obstruction.” The indictment alleges that “the pastor and the congregation were forced to terminate the Church’s worship services,” and had to flee out of fear for their safety.

One of the defendants disrupted the church service by screaming, “This ain’t God’s house. This is the house of the devil.” He got in the face of a mother and her two young children, chiding her for not supporting the church invasion. He said to child congregants, “Do you know your parents are Nazis? They’re going to burn in hell.”

One of those arrested was Don Lemon. The former journalist and failed CNN pundit claims he was a disinterested observer, and not part of the organized protest.

The indictment says otherwise. Lemon met at a shopping center with all the other defendants to make plans about invading the church. He did not just stumble on the scene of the crime. Instructions were given by the organizers of the invasion; one of those arrested admitted Lemon was in on the planning. Also, he tried to intimidate the pastor and obstructed congregants from leaving the church.

The list of politicians and civil rights organizations that have nothing but contempt for the right to worship is astounding. See p. 4.

Notice that none of them even give a nod to the egregious violation of the “free exercise of religion.” They are framing this as purely a free speech issue.

In response to this incredible assault on religious liberty, the Catholic League embarked on a four-prong campaign: we asked the public to support Rep. Buddy Carter’s House Resolution condemning the church invasion; we contacted President Trump’s Religious Freedom Commission; we contacted the Department of Justice; we asked President Trump to support

funding for enhanced police protection of Christian churches (97% of the deadly incidents in a house of worship that occurred between 2000 and 2024 were in Christian churches).

The timid response to the church invasion is troubling. We responded with vigor.