

# IS THE ACLU CRAZY?

*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](#).*

**by Bill Donohue**

*This article originally appeared in the American Spectator on March 20.*

If there were a proposal to erect a statue of St. Michael the Archangel on a municipal building, it would be understandable if some objected. However, it would not be understandable to object on the grounds that a depiction of St. Michael stepping on the neck of the Devil ineluctably conjures up images of George Floyd. But that is exactly the position of the ACLU of Massachusetts.

Having authored a Ph.D. dissertation, two books, and a monograph on the ACLU, I am convinced that most of its board members and senior officials harbor a deep animus against religion. Nothing bothers them more than Christianity, especially Catholicism. This is much more than a phobia: religion is seen as a threat to liberty.

When the ACLU was founded in 1920 by Roger Baldwin (the ACLU today falsely claims that Baldwin was one of 10 who founded the organization), all the provisions of the First Amendment, save for religious liberty, were listed as part of their ten objectives. That was not an oversight: Baldwin was an atheist.

Still, the reasoning of the ACLU of Massachusetts is off-the-charts, even by ACLU standards. It is challenging a decision made by the mayor of Quincy to erect two statues of Catholic saints outside the Quincy Public Safety Building. Mayor Thomas Koch chose St. Florian and St. Michael the Archangel; they are the patron saints of firefighters and police officers,

respectively. The ACLU says the statues violate the separation of church and state.

The ACLU is well aware that religious statues adorn many buildings in the nation's capital, including the Capitol Building, the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress, the Lincoln Memorial, and other public buildings. Even in Massachusetts, the Boston Public Library features the outstanding work of John Singer Sargent: his religious murals, including "Madonna of Sorrows," are classic. At the State House, there are statues and paintings of famous Christians, clergy, and laity alike.

But none of this is enough to allay the fears of the ACLU.

In the ACLU's letter to Mayor Koch and the Quincy City Council, it said that "we note that the contemplated statue of Saint Michael is not only troubling ... it depicts a figure stepping on the neck of a demon. Such violent imagery is particularly abhorrent in light of the murder of George Floyd and other acts of police brutality throughout the country."

In other words, the revered saint who battled Satan and who is known as the guardian prince of Israel—he stood ready to defend God's chosen people—reminds the ACLU of a serial violent criminal who resisted arrest and was subdued by the cops; he had four times the lethal dose of fentanyl in his system. Maybe if St. Michael had been depicted as engaging in dialogue with the Devil, instead of crushing his head, the ACLU would have applauded.

Would Baldwin have agreed with the ACLU? Only in part.

When I interviewed him in his home in New York City in 1978, we discussed an array of issues. He was cordial and forthcoming. But when it came to religion, he was an extremist. Here is an exchange I will never forget (See my book, *The Politics of the ACLU*: Transaction Press, 1985).

**Donohue:** The ACLU has even gone so far as to deny the right of people to voluntarily take the time during the day, as a schoolchild, to say a prayer.

**Baldwin:** Not on school time.

**Donohue:** Well, whose rights are being infringed upon if there is a silent prayer voluntarily said by a student?

**Baldwin:** If they don't say anything? You mean if they don't—

**Donohue:** Right. Are you afraid they are going to proselytize the rest of the class?

**Baldwin:** Well, they've tried to get around it. They've tried to get around it even further than you by calling it meditation.

**Donohue:** What's wrong with that?

**Baldwin:** You don't say anything about God or religion or anything. I suppose you can get by with that but it's a subterfuge, because the implication is that you're meditating about the hereafter or God or something.

**Donohue:** Well, what's wrong with that? Doesn't a person have the right to do that? Or to meditate about popcorn for that matter?

**Baldwin:** I suppose that—it sounds very silly to me because it looks like an obvious evasion of the constitutional provision.

Back to St. Michael. Baldwin surely would have opposed erecting the statue, but he would have done so on conventional church and state grounds. Even if he were apprised of the George Floyd incident, he clearly would not have equated St. Michael stepping on the head of the Devil with a cop kneeling on Floyd. I spent many hours with him. He may have been an extremist on church and state, but he was not crazy.

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# COLORADO'S SICK WAR ON PARENTAL RIGHTS

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

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

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

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

In an unusual move, the bill passed the mostly Democratic

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

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

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

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

Kelly Loving was murdered in 2022 at a nightclub in Colorado Springs. Five were killed and 25 injured when a madman opened up on them with an AR-15 rifle. But it wasn't an ordinary club—it was an LGBTQ hot spot. And Kelly was no ordinary person: he falsely claimed to be a woman. It appears Kelly was named Jonathan Ray Loving, and later adopted a female name after becoming confused about his sex.

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

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

The person who killed Kelly Loving was Nicholas Franklin Brink. But he later changed his name to Anderson Lee Aldrich because he did not want to be associated with his father. When

he went on his killing spree, he was a 22-year-old sexually confused person who falsely claimed to be neither a man nor a woman. He called himself “non-binary” (there is no such thing) and wanted others to falsely refer to him as “they” or “them.”

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

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

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

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

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

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# McCARRICK'S DEATH DOESN'T RESOLVE EVERYTHING

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Theodore McCarrick died April 3 at the age of 94. The defrocked cardinal was known for decades as one of the most influential prelates in America. He was also a masterful fundraiser and a notorious homosexual whose predatory behavior is legendary.

Contrary to what the *Washington Post* editorialized in 2019, it was not the media that revealed McCarrick's offenses—it was New York Archbishop Timothy Cardinal Dolan.

Dolan's Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program was responsible for outing McCarrick. Dolan went public after one of McCarrick's victims came forward. As Bill Donohue said in his book, *The Truth about Clergy Sexual Abuse*, "How many rapists who work in the media—think of CBS and NBC—have had one of their senior officials turn them in? None."

McCarrick was not content to be a good priest. The report on him, known as "The McCarrick Report," found that when he was Archbishop of Newark, he told two bishops of his quest to succeed Cardinal John O'Connor as the Archbishop of New York (he had been an auxiliary bishop there in the late 1970s-early 1980s). He "pounded the table and blurted out 'I deserve New York.'"

In the mid-1990s, McCarrick called to congratulate Bill Donohue for fighting anti-Catholicism. He had been in the job

for only a few years. Donohue was struck when McCarrick told him of his desire to come across the Hudson and become the successor to Cardinal O'Connor. Why, Donohue wondered, would he tell him? It was obvious that he was consumed with this issue.

None of this would have come as a surprise to those who knew him when he was a monsignor in the late 1960s. He was assessed by his superiors as being overly "ambitious."

In the 1980s, McCarrick first served as the Bishop of Metuchen, and then as Archbishop of Newark. This is when he began his predatory behavior. It was at his beach house on the Jersey Shore where he would invite seminarians to stay with him. He would intentionally invite more men than he had beds for. This set the stage: he would invite one of them to sleep with him. He often succeeded. He also had sex with seminarians in the Waldorf Astoria in Manhattan.

McCarrick justified his behavior by telling the seminarians that "priests engaging in sexual activity with each other was normal and accepted in the United States, especially in that diocese." While this was an obvious rationalization, it was not altogether incorrect. The homosexual network at that time was extensive.

His sexual romps were known to many of the New Jersey bishops, but they did nothing about it. Nor did they say a word when McCarrick grabbed the crotch of a priest at the dinner table—they simply looked away.

Were there any good guys? Yes. Cardinal O'Connor was not afraid to act. After fielding several complaints, he reported McCarrick to Vatican officials. But McCarrick had friends everywhere, and those who surrounded Pope John Paul II took his side when he contested O'Connor's account. It took Pope Benedict XVI to get beyond this. In 2006, he accepted McCarrick's resignation, something he had to offer when he

turned seventy-five.

Travel restrictions were placed on McCarrick but he ignored them. He ignored them under Benedict and even more so under Pope Francis. He did exactly what he wanted to and no one stopped him.

Unfortunately, McCarrick's death does not put to rest all concerns.

The person who is currently in charge of the Vatican's administrative duties is also the person who lived with McCarrick in Washington, D.C. for six years (McCarrick consecrated him in 2001), yet he claims that he never heard of any wrongdoing. Indeed, he "never suspected or ever had reason to suspect, any inappropriate conduct in Washington." As Donohue said in his book, "That would make him unique."

His name is Cardinal Kevin Farrell. He is now the Camerlengo, or Chamberlain, responsible for overseeing the daily operations of the Vatican. He was very close to Pope Francis, who elevated him to several high posts. Pope Francis also said he never heard about McCarrick's predatory conduct, though others say they told him.

Farrell admitted in 2019 that he received a \$29,000 gift from Bishop Michael Bransfield to refurbish his Rome apartment. A probe found that he had been using diocesan funds for these gifts and his own personal spending. He then returned the money; Bransfield was removed from office.

A priest was recently quoted saying that Farrell is holding "the fort down until the conclave elects a new pope." Now that McCarrick is dead, it would be helpful if he told us more about his interactions with him. It would also be instructive to know why he thinks he was held in the dark when so many others at least heard of McCarrick's offenses.

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# CATHOLIC BASHING SURFACES AT UNIV. OF NEBRASKA

*The following letter was written after a story on this incident appeared on the website of The College Fix.*

June 2, 2025

Professor Felix Olschofka  
University of Nebraska  
Director, Glenn Korff School of Music  
WMB 120  
Lincoln, NE 68588-0100

Dear Professor Olschofka:

It has been brought to my attention that 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.

As one who has taught college for many years, and who served on the board of directors of the National Association of Scholars for twenty years, I am well aware of the importance of academic freedom. I am also well aware that academic freedom—like any freedom—is open to abuse. Trashing a world religion surely would qualify.

If an anti-Jewish or anti-Muslim student were to mock their religion, as part of fulfilling course requirements, reasonable people would object. This has nothing to do with

the pursuit of truth, the core value of higher education. Catholic students expect the same treatment. That is why those professors who are responsible for sanctioning this blatant example of anti-Catholic bigotry need to be held accountable.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President

cc: Dr. Jeffrey P. Gold, President, University of Nebraska  
Andrew Belser, Dean, Hixson-Lied College of Fine and  
Performing

Arts, University of Nebraska

Dr. Barbara Gellman-Danley, President, Higher Learning  
Commission

Tobi White, Pastor, Our Saviour's Lutheran Church

Gabrielle Temaat, Assistant Editor, The College Fix

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## **NEW WEBSITE ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS**

Noted journalist and conservative activist Don Feder is sounding the alarms over the causes and effects of plummeting birthrates, aging populations and the disintegration of family life. Check out his new website, [StopDemographicWinter.com](http://StopDemographicWinter.com). Bill Donohue serves on his board of advisors.

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# FRENCH INTELLECTUALS ABET PERVERTS

[Bill Donohue](#)

In 2017, a 6-year-old girl told her mom that the man next door showed his genitals to her and fondled her. After he was arrested, French authorities searched his home and found hundreds of thousands of child porn pictures, as well as videos featuring bestiality and excrement. They also found a diary where he detailed what he did to his victims. The pervert was not some demented idiot—he was a surgeon.

In 2020, he was sentenced to prison, and on May 23 a French court found Joël Le Scouarnec guilty of raping and sexually assaulting 299 children; he was sentenced to the maximum 20 years in prison. He admits that his first sexual offense took place in 1985 when he raped his 5-year-old niece. It appears that he took after his father, who sexually assaulted his own grandson, namely Joël's son. "I reproduced in many children what my father did to my son," the former surgeon said.

Why wasn't he punished sooner? In 2005, he was convicted for possessing and importing child porn; he was sentenced to four months of suspended prison time. His medical license was not suspended and he was not barred from interacting with children. We now know that from 1989 to 2014, he raped hundreds of boys and girls in hospitals, the average age being 11. Most were unconscious or sedated.

How could he do such things? "I didn't see them as people." He is telling the truth. When Albert Speer, second in command to Hitler, was asked how he could kill so many Jews, he said he didn't hate Jews. "I depersonalized them," he said. Le Scouarnec also confessed that he "acted without any qualms," thus confirming his sociopathic status.

Pornography, especially hard-core child porn, desensitizes its consumers, making it possible for them to treat human beings as subhuman. Indeed, Le Scouarnec readily admitted, “I was addicted to viewing child pornography.” But there are other factors that also played a role.

French law is very relaxed when it comes to sex between adults and minors. Up until fairly recently, there was no age of consent in France—now it’s 15. Currently, men who have sex with minors have legal rights—they cannot be charged with rape unless they engage in “violence, coercion, threat, or surprise.” In other words, if a 15-year-old girl is coaxed into having sex with a 25-year-old man, there are no penalties for the guy.

Law often follows changes in the culture, and as such we need to inquire why French laws governing sexuality are so lax. To do that we need to examine the thinking of French intellectuals on these matters.

Recall that Le Scourarnec started his rape rampage in the 1980s. A decade earlier, in 1977, French intellectuals signed a petition addressed to the French Parliament calling for the end to age of consent laws. Sex between adults and kids, they said, should be legal. The signatories were a “Who’s Who” of intellectuals.

One of those savants was author Gabriel Matzneff. In 2020, he published a book about his sexual adventures with young boys and girls. He also admitted to having sex with eight-year-old boys in the Philippines. But this was not the first time he came clean. He openly bragged about these exploits for years, going on TV to discuss them. Not only did he do no jail time, he became the hero to the literati.

Matzneff learned the central lesson of the social revolution in France—“It’s forbidden to forbid.” He took that 1968 message to heart, saying, “To sleep with a child, it’s a holy

experience.”

Those who also signed the petition included such notables as Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. All of them were sexually promiscuous. Foucault, a reckless homosexual, went further, justifying rape.

Other signatories included Felix Guattari, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Rancière and Giles Deleuze.

Guattari joined the Communist Party when he was a young man, and while he later quit, he never stopped promoting the politics of the left, focusing on the need for a sexual revolution. Lyotard was a postmodernist, an atheist who denied the existence of truth. Rancière believed in the “equality of intelligence,” telling his happy students that an ignorant person could teach another ignorant person. Deleuze was praised for his intellect by Foucault, but it didn’t pay dividends in the end—he committed suicide by jumping out the window of his Paris apartment.

Did these intellectuals cause Le Scouarnec to become a monster predator? Not directly. It’s more complicated than that. They certainly had nothing to do with his upbringing. But they did help create a milieu where legal and social norms governing sexual expression became so relaxed as to be practically non-existent. Thus did they make it easier for a very sick man to get away with his history of rape and assault with impunity.

Evil does not occur in a vacuum. When perverts like Matznetff are applauded by the deep thinkers, it seeds the social soil for men like Le Scouarnec to act “without any qualms.”

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# DO CATHOLICS WANT A MORE INCLUSIVE CHURCH?

[Bill Donohue](#)

A recent Pew Research Center survey of Catholics concluded that they want the Catholic Church to be “more inclusive.” But do they?

No sooner are we told that “Most U.S. Catholics Say They Want the Church to be ‘More Inclusive’” when we learn how seriously qualified that conclusion is. What matters is whether Catholics are practicing or not.

Before going any further, it is legitimate to ask the obvious: If Catholics do not practice their religion, can they really be counted in a poll on Catholics? Are vegetarians really vegetarians if they say they are, but readily admit to enjoying hot dogs and hamburgers?

As Pew reports, practicing Catholics and non-practicing Catholics have little in common. The former are much more accepting of Church teachings on an array of issues; the latter are not. For example, the majority of Catholics who attend Mass weekly say the Church should not allow women to become priests, and two-thirds say the Church should not recognize gay and lesbian marriages. Those who are not regular Church-goers favor both.

The Catholic League commissioned a survey of Catholics in 1995, 2015 and 2022. Above all, we were interested in learning whether Catholics wanted the Church to hold to traditional teachings, or adopt a much more relaxed stance. We found out, as did Pew, that Catholics are conflicted: when asked about specific issues, both practicing and non-practicing Catholics tend to adopt a more liberal position. However, when asked about the advisability of abandoning traditional teachings for

a more inclusive interpretation, they balk.

In the Pew survey published this spring, it found that 53 percent of U.S. Catholics who attend Mass weekly say the Church should stick to its traditional teachings, *even if that means it gets smaller*. This was exactly the position taken by Pope Benedict XVI. Indeed, he believed that a smaller Church was a better Church. Commenting on this observation, Pope Francis called Benedict a “prophet” for predicting the Church would become a smaller, but more faithful, institution.

This vision of a smaller but better Church flies in the face of a “more inclusive” Church.

In 1995, the Catholic League survey reported that 33.8 percent of Catholics (both practicing and non-practicing) said the Church should “conform to modern day opinion of its members,” but 51.8 percent said it should “stick to founding principles and beliefs.” Practicing Catholics were the most supportive of the latter position.

In 2015, the same question was asked, and the results were similar: 52 percent said the Church should not change and 38 percent disagreed. In 2022, 56 percent said it is better to “stick to principles and beliefs” and 33 percent said it would be better to “conform to modern-day opinions.”

This shows a consistency that is as striking as it is encouraging. Despite the strong secular bent of the dominant culture, most Catholics—especially those who regularly attend Mass—do not want to belong to a Church that “goes with the flow.”

This contradicts the conventional narrative about Catholics wanting more “inclusivity.” It also contradicts the notion that the Church needs to be more “relevant.” In fact, the more “relevant” *any* religion is today, the more irrelevant it is in the eyes of its adherents—they are losing members the fastest. Meanwhile, orthodox strains within every religion are doing

the best.

Why does it matter so much to survey houses like Pew that they keep on polling Catholics to see if they reject the Church's teachings, especially on women and sexuality? Because it provides ammo for those who are pressing the hierarchy about the need to change and get with the times.

This smacks more of a political agenda than a scientific enterprise. The latest Pew survey proves it.

It sampled 1787 Catholics, 531 of whom attend Mass weekly or more often. Of the 1254 who attend Mass less often, most of them—1088—attend *yearly or less often* [note: adding the numbers results in 1785]. Imagine a survey of vegetarians, the vast majority of whom admit to liking franks and burgers! Would we not expect that most of them think it's time to lighten up? Moreover, Pew interviewed far more women (999) than men (784). This matters because women Catholics are much more liberal than men.

The Catholic Church is not a democracy, nor does it aspire to being one. Ergo, attempts to judge it by democratic indices are meaningless, if not absurd. The Church is engaged in the pursuit of truth, and as such it is not amenable to popular opinion.

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## **DOJ NEEDS TO PROBE ANTIFA'S ANTI-CHRISTIAN RIOT**

[Bill Donohue](#)

A group of Christians hold a pro-family rally in Seattle and

are attacked by Antifa anarchists for doing so.

This is exactly the kind of incident that President Trump's Commission on Religious Liberty needs to investigate. He set up a task force on anti-Christian bias, and the Catholic League has been working with this unit, supplying documentation and other information. We are contacting their lawyers today.

On Saturday, May 24, a Christian pro-family group, Mayday USA, held one of its [#DontMessWithOurKids rallies in Seattle](#). They were there to combat the radical transgender movement which is exploiting vulnerable young people. It didn't take long before they were assaulted by the counter-protesters.

The Antifa counter-protesters wore their signature [black-clad garb and masks, and some exposed themselves publicly](#). The pro-family rally was held in Cal Anderson Park, in the heart of the LGBTQ community. The mayor, Bruce Harrell, a Democrat, blamed the pro-family group, saying they "[inspired violence](#)," yet all 23 of those arrested were from the [Antifa-led counter-protesters](#). Moreover, the rally's organizers said they never wanted this venue, arguing that they tried to hold their event in a [different neighborhood](#).

The pro-LGBTQ anarchists waved transgender flags and threw [water bottles and other objects at the police](#). [Some jumped the police barrier](#) and assaulted the cops; [one officer was taken to a hospital for treatment](#). They called their protest "Keep Your Bibles Off Our Bodies," saying their goal was to fight "[fascist family values](#)."

One of the pastors who led the pro-family rally, [Russell Johnson](#), wrote on X that the Seattle mayor "owes Christians in WA State an apology for his bigoted remarks after folks who were holding a peaceful worship event at Cal Anderson Park were violently assaulted for the high crime of expressing their deeply held religious beliefs in the form of a permitted

worship event on city property.”

Anti-Christian violence needs to be condemned and those responsible for it must be brought to justice. The Department of Justice is empowered to address this incident and it is our hope that they will do so with dispatch. They can begin by questioning the mayor, asking him to explain why he was more condemnatory of the non-violent protesters than he was the violent extremists who went on a rampage.

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## POPE LEO XIV STRESSES CHARACTER FORMATION

[Bill Donohue](#)

Last week, Pope Leo XIV addressed Catholic teachers, making plain that his idea of education transcends the ABC's. He implored them to “dedicate yourselves to the formation of the young with enthusiasm, fidelity and a spirit of sacrifice.”

He specifically spoke to the issue of values. “What, in the world of youth today, are the most urgent challenges to be faced? What values are to be promoted?”

From a Catholic perspective, the values that young people adopt must be grounded in obligations to others. This is difficult these days given the cultural emphasis on self-absorption. Indeed, focusing “on the other” is a radical idea in many parts of the world.

The Holy Father nicely summarizes the challenges that await young people. “Think of the isolation caused by rampant relational models increasingly marked by superficiality,

individualism and emotional instability; the spread of patterns of thought weakened by relativism; and the prevalence of rhythms and lifestyles in which there is not enough room for listening, reflection and dialogue, at school, in the family, and sometimes among peers themselves, with consequent loneliness.”

In sounding the alarms over individualism and relativism, Leo sounds more like Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI than Pope Francis. His statement comes at a time when parents are struggling with the allure that technology has for their children.

A new study of young people and their parents found that “Two-thirds (67%) of parents fear they’re losing precious moments with their children due to screen addiction.” Indeed, parents spend almost 100 hours fighting with their kids over screen time every year. It is so bad that 41 percent of moms and dads are afraid they’re “losing their little ones’ childhood to technology completely.”

Screen addiction is isolating, resulting in the loneliness that Leo warns about. Social media may bind some people together, but it also causes much consternation, especially for girls.

There needs to be a national discussion about this issue. Unless parents and teachers pay as much attention to character formation as they do standard pedagogical concerns, they are doing young people a disservice.

Stanford University professor William Damon faults the public schools for their refusal to provide for citizenship education. He notes that the Obama administration “closed down the Department of Education’s character education desk as soon as it took office.”

This was a very serious attack on young people. “Although most parents would like to see schools impart values such as

honesty and responsibility to their children,” Damon writes, “character education in public education has been hindered by progressive resistance to instruction that makes claims about right and wrong in the face of cultural variation (even when such claims focus on values such as truth and obligation that virtually all cultures respect).”

What Pope Leo XIV told Catholic teachers needs a much bigger audience. All students, in every school, public, private or parochial, need character formation. An educated, but virtue starved, student is no asset to society.

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## WASHINGTON STATE SHOULD ADOPT CANON LAW

**Bill Donohue**

*Respecting separation of church and state is a two-way street. That is the occasion for this letter. Contact:*  
[noel.frame@leg.wa.gov](mailto:noel.frame@leg.wa.gov)

May 20, 2025

Sen. Noel Frame  
220 John A. Cherberg Building  
PO Box 40436  
Olympia, Washington 98504

Dear Sen. Frame:

Your interest in preventing Catholic priests from being excommunicated for violating Canon law if they disclose what they have learned in the confessional is striking. This is especially noteworthy given that the bill that allows the

state to crash the confessional is yours.

You see away around this problem. "We the state of Washington have a secular legislative purpose that is to protect children from abuse and neglect and if faith communities choose through their rules not to protect children from abuse and neglect, we the state are choosing not to be complicit in that choice by their rules."

You do not cite one instance where any child has ever suffered abuse or neglect, in any state, because a priest chooses not to disclose what he has learned in the confessional. That's largely because molesters tend not to be the kind of persons who like to "fess up." In other words, your bill is only tangentially related to this issue: let's face it—it is the nose of the camel in the tent, and we all know what happens after that.

Your proposal to resolve the confessional dilemma for priests is enticing. "I am reminded that Canon law has changed many times over the years in the Catholic faith and there's nothing to say they cannot change their rules to allow the reporting of real time abuse and neglect of children. That is within their power to change and I think they should do so."

Funny thing is I feel the same way about your state legalizing assisted suicide. Except I would recommend that state law follow Canon law.

We the Catholic Church have a theological purpose that is to protect the vulnerable from assisted suicide and that is why state legislators should choose to follow Canon law to protect such persons, as we do not want to be complicit in killing them.

I am reminded that state law has changed many times over the years in secular society and there's nothing to say they cannot change their rules to follow Canon law and put an end to assisted suicide. That is within their power to change and

I think they should do so.

My concern for the vulnerable is grounded in the data. In Washington, the majority of those who have been killed by assisted suicide are widowed, divorced or never married. Moreover, six-in-ten (59 percent) say the reason they want to be put down is because they are a “burden” on others.

Surely anyone who is truly interested in protecting kids from abuse and neglect would want to protect the vulnerable from being killed. Your interest is excommunication; my interest is execution.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.  
President