

# PENNSYLVANIA AG'S DECEITFUL NOTE TO POPE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a letter sent by the Pennsylvania Attorney General to Pope Francis:

On July 25, Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro sent a letter to Pope Francis that smacks of deceit.

"A comprehensive investigation by the Office of Attorney General found widespread sexual abuse of children and a systemic coverup by leaders of the Catholic Church," Shapiro said. He was referring to the six dioceses in Pennsylvania that were the subject of a grand jury investigation.

Shapiro then takes aim at his critics, whom he accuses of trying to "silence the victims." He even accuses two unnamed "leaders in the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania...[who] are behind these efforts to silence the victims and avoid accountability."

Shapiro's account is scurrilous.

There was no "comprehensive investigation." If there were, then all the parties to the probe would have been given the opportunity to respond. But they have not. Indeed, this is why many in the clergy are protesting the release of the grand jury report.

No evidentiary hearings of the priests named in the report have occurred. Accusations made against them are clearly rebuttable, but Shapiro has shown no interest in allowing the priests the opportunity to do so. Moreover, there are many unchallenged accusations, some of which are patently false.

Is Shapiro aware that the Pennsylvania Constitution includes guarantees for the protection of one's reputation? Is he ready

to defend himself?

For the record, there has been no attempt to silence alleged victims, but there certainly has been a well-orchestrated attempt, led by Shapiro, to silence his critics. In fact, that is what his letter is designed to do. Does he really think the Holy Father is going to accept his unsubstantiated criticisms of Pennsylvania priests and bishops?

Shapiro clearly has an animus toward the Catholic Church, one that is easy to prove.

Why has he singled out the Catholic Church for past instances of sexual abuse, and no one else? Why hasn't he investigated the public schools—no institution in the nation has had a bigger problem with the sexual abuse of minors than the public schools. In fact, Pennsylvania has a particularly bad record.

Why hasn't Shapiro investigated coaches? Why hasn't he investigated psychologists and psychiatrists? Why hasn't he investigated therapists and counselors? Why hasn't he investigated camp officials?

Why hasn't Shapiro investigated rabbis? Why hasn't he investigated ministers? Why hasn't he investigated imams?

Why has Shapiro only investigated Catholic clergymen? This is where he is in big trouble: doing so is a clear violation of the First Amendment.

Just recently, the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of a baker who refused to customize a wedding cake for two men on the grounds that his First Amendment rights were violated by the Colorado Civil Rights Commission. "The commission's hostility was inconsistent with the First Amendment's guarantee that our laws be applied in a manner that is neutral toward religion," said Justice Anthony Kennedy for the majority.

There is nothing neutral about Shapiro's approach to Catholicism. Indeed, he is no friend of the Catholic Church. He previously declared war on the Little Sisters of the Poor, trying to force them to pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plans. And now he is warring on priests.

Shapiro says in his letter to Pope Francis that he had the opportunity to welcome him to St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in 2015. Well, I had a chance to meet the pope as well, in Washington, D.C. I am confident the Holy Father will now welcome my letter to him checkmating Shapiro's deceitful ploy.