

SCAPEGOATING CARDINAL WUERL

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on recent criticisms of Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington:

It is one thing for the laity to be angry about recent revelations regarding former cardinal Theodore McCarrick, and the Pennsylvania grand jury report on molesting priests ([which is riddled with lies](#)), it is quite another to allow emotion, not reason, to guide one's perspective on these twin scandals. Yet that is what is happening.

The most angry comments are directed at Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington: He is being blamed for the twin scandals. This is patently unfair—there is no basis for either accusation.

I have known Cardinal Wuerl for 30 years. I met him when I was a professor at La Roche College in Pittsburgh, and had the opportunity to assess his record during his first five years of service as the Bishop of Pittsburgh. It was outstanding.

Cardinal Wuerl is not only an authority on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and a prolific author, he is one of the most brilliant and courageous bishops in the nation. He is now being battered by people who know nothing about him, but just want to get the biggest scalp they can find, and that would be the Archbishop of Washington. The haters are found on both the right and the left in the Catholic community, especially the right. They've become delirious.

It is being said that Cardinal Wuerl must have known all about what McCarrick allegedly did and chose to do nothing about it. Aside from rumors, which are a staple in every workplace, Wuerl was in no position to know anything about McCarrick's alleged sexual behavior with seminarians, and he certainly was in no position to know anything about more recent allegations involving minors.

Consider the timeline of McCarrick's predatory behavior with seminarians, which allegedly took place in the 1980s down the Jersey Shore.

When McCarrick was installed as Bishop of Metuchen in 1982, Wuerl was executive secretary to Bishop John Marshall of Burlington, Vermont. When McCarrick became Archbishop of Newark in 1986, Wuerl was an Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle. In 1988, Wuerl became Bishop of Pittsburgh, and in 2006 he took over as the Archbishop of Washington.

In short, Wuerl was in Burlington, Seattle, and Pittsburgh when McCarrick was allegedly preying on seminarians in his home in Sea Girt, New Jersey. To hold him accountable for McCarrick's deeds is absurd and patently unfair. Moreover, he had nothing to do with financial settlements arranged by the Diocese of Metuchen (2005) and the Archdiocese of Newark (2007).

What we do know about Wuerl is that he distinguished himself early on by confronting priestly sexual abuse.

When Wuerl became Bishop of Pittsburgh in 1988, he learned of a few cases of molestation involving minors. Against the advice of attorneys, he met with the victims and their families. A few months later, he removed Father Anthony Cipolla from ministry.

Cipolla maintained his innocence, but Wuerl was convinced he had mental problems, and notified the Vatican about it in 1989. Wuerl told the Congregation for Clergy that "it would be morally impossible to assign Father Cipolla, who is in need of serious psychological treatment, to the pastoral care of the faithful in the Church."

Cippola appealed to the Congregation for Clergy, but it sided with Wuerl.

In 1991, Cipploa appealed to the Vatican Signatura, the

Catholic Church's Supreme Court. In 1993, the high court overruled Wuerl, ordering him to reinstate Cippola. Wuerl said no—he would not return him to ministry. Wuerl argued that there were “inaccuracies” in the Signatura's decision and asked the Vatican to reopen the case.

In 1995, the Vatican reversed itself, agreed with Wuerl's assessment, and Cippola was officially barred from public ministry.

In 1989, the year after Wuerl's first encounter with sexual abuse as a bishop, he launched a Diocesan Review Board. At that time, the bishops had no institutionalized mechanism for assessing sexual offenses—the bishops' conference never had one until 2004—putting him way ahead of the curve.

It is no wonder that Wuerl's courageous decisions were appreciated by so many. Critics on the left, notably the *National Catholic Reporter*, said in 1993 that “Wuerl should be applauded for refusing to reinstate accused pedophile Father Anthony Cippola despite a Vatican Supreme Tribunal order.” [Note: Cippola, like most molesting priests, was a homosexual, not a pedophile.]

In 2002, the *New York Times* singled Wuerl out as the leader among bishops determined to root out bad behavior. “Bishop Wuerl stands on one end of a broad spectrum of how Catholic leaders have responded to the sexual abuse crisis in the church,” crediting him with “seeking ways to prevent abuse and to hold pedophiles accountable.” [The pedophile myth is a staple in left circles.]

Praise for Wuerl also came in 2002 from Tim Bendig, who claimed he was molested by Cippola. Speaking of Wuerl, he told CBS News, “I think it's a commendable job. I really do, especially from a victim's standpoint, to have kind of your day in court, if you will, where a bishop—a bishop of the—of the city of Pittsburgh just blatantly says, ‘We don't want

this priest.' And—and he fought it all the way to Rome.”

In 2006, the liberal-leaning *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* noted how effective Wuerl was when he was Bishop of Pittsburgh (he had just been appointed Archbishop of Washington). “When other dioceses around the nation were mired in an ugly abuse scandal involving priests who preyed on younger church members, Pittsburgh was unscathed.”

Conservatives such as Michael Novak also applauded Wuerl’s move to Washington. He noted that Wuerl’s “reputation was as one who knows his theology, who is brave and forthright in it, has a good, stout character and is not deterred by criticism.” Novak concluded, “I think it’s a good choice.”

These plaudits, of course, were prior to the release of the Pennsylvania grand jury report. The report does raise some questions about Wuerl’s handling of a few cases. News stories are focusing on Father Ernest Paone and Father George Zirwas.

Paone was accused of molestation in the early 1960s and was granted a leave of absence for psychological, physical, and spiritual reasons in 1966. The following year he relocated to California. He never worked in Pittsburgh ever again, and no further charges were made against him. However, he was still under the authority of the Pittsburgh bishop, and in 1991 Bishop Wuerl reassigned him to the Diocese of Reno-Las Vegas.

In the same section of the grand jury report that notes this case, it says the following:

“On June 30, 1989 [one year into his tenure in Pittsburgh], Bishop Donald Wuerl sent a letter to the Vatican with respect to several diocesan priests who had recently been accused of sexually abusing children and whose cases had generated significant publicity. In the letter, Wuerl documented his diocesan policies for sexual abuse and stated his responsibility as Bishop was to determine the course of action in these cases. Wuerl wrote that Catholic parishioners had a

right to know whether a priest accused of such crimes had been reassigned to their parish.”

Father George Zirwas was the subject of complaints between 1987 and 1995. He was sent for psychiatric help in 1988 and was returned to ministry after the therapists said he had been treated successfully.

As usual, they were wrong—psychologists and psychiatrists have long oversold their level of competence—and he was accused again in 1991 and 1995. Wuerl should have removed him from ministry but instead gave him a leave of absence. Zirwas moved to Havana, working with the poor, and was murdered there in 2001.

Wuerl is now being criticized because he allowed Zirwas to receive a stipend and other benefits, and because he presided at his funeral. So what? Wuerl was just following canon law—even priests removed from ministry are not denied some financial support.

Maybe that’s wrong, but it is unfair to pin this on Wuerl. As for the funeral, yes, bishops have been known to preside at the funeral of many despicable persons—it’s what they do. They leave the final judgment to God.

Like everyone, Wuerl must be judged on the basis of his overall record, and in his case it is meritorious. In his 18 years as the Bishop of Pittsburgh, he fielded 19 new cases of accusations against priests. In 18 of those cases, the priest was immediately removed from ministry.

It’s a shame that more bishops don’t have as good a record as Donald Wuerl. It’s also a shame to hear angry Catholics—who don’t know what they are talking about—attack him. Cardinal Wuerl has served the Catholic Church with distinction and is deserving of our commendation, not condemnation.

PENNSYLVANIA GRAND JURY REPORT DEBUNKED

To read Catholic League president Bill Donohue's analysis of the Pennsylvania grand jury report, click [here](#).

BISHOPS STRIKE THE RIGHT TONE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the response of the bishops to the Pennsylvania grand jury report on sexual abuse:

The bishops are understandably apologetic over the conduct of some priests who abused minors. The tone of their commentary is welcome.

As a Catholic civil rights activist, who has had nothing to do with any miscreant priest, I am in a better position to confront the lies that color the grand jury report, and interpretations of it. I will do so tomorrow and in the days to come.

BURGER KING BOYCOTT ENDS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the league's boycott of Burger King:

The boycott of Burger King is over.

I called for a boycott two weeks ago, restated again last week, when Burger King continued to advertise on Samantha Bee's TBS show, "Full Frontal." Many other companies that had advertised on this offensive show—she attacks Catholics and women—pulled their sponsorship when requested to do so. Now Burger King joins their ranks.

José Cil, the president of Burger King, was not made aware of our protest until yesterday. When he learned of our concerns, he said, "our advertising plan never targeted this show in particular," conceding that a "small number of our television ads have appeared." The good news is that he said, "we won't be advertising with this show going forward."

Thanks to everyone who emailed Mr. Cil. And many thanks to him for stepping up and doing the right thing.

PA GRAND JURY REPORT BASED ON ACCUSATIONS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the Pennsylvania grand jury report on six dioceses in Pennsylvania:

The grand jury report will attract the prurient interest of the public, much to the delight of the media. But when the

dust settles, what counts are the facts.

The media are saying that the report will name “more than 300 predator priests.” Not true.

- Many of those named are not priests: the list includes lay persons, deacons, and seminarians.
- Many—perhaps a majority—are dead, and cannot rebut the accusations.
- Even among the living, most have not had an opportunity to rebut the accusations.
- In most cases there has been no attempt by the dioceses, or the grand jury, to verify the accusations. That is what happens when an investigation extends back to World War II.

Catholics want the guilty to pay, but any fair-minded person also wants due process for the accused. In this crazed #MeToo environment, that is not easy, and this is doubly true when the accused are Catholic priests.

Those awaiting a grand jury report on the sexual abuse of minors in the public schools, or among the clergy of other religions, shouldn't hold their breath. It will never happen.

This is akin to doing an investigation of crime in low-income minority neighborhoods, allowing white-collar crimes committed in the suburbs to go scot-free, and then concluding non-whites to be criminally prone. It is a scam.

CHEAPENING ANTI-SEMITISM

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an exchange he had with officials from Philly.com:

What is worse than anti-Semitism are bogus charges of it. That is what Philly.com did on August 8. This media outlet is an important source of news in the Philadelphia area, so what it prints must be taken seriously.

It has twice embarrassed itself this week: first, by publishing an article by John Baer that makes not-so-veiled accusations of anti-Semitism, where there is none; and second, by defending him.

Baer was writing about my criticisms of the Pennsylvania grand jury report on six dioceses in the state. One of my complaints is that the Catholic Church was the only institution to merit a grand jury report, though the problem of sexual abuse occurs in every private and public institution where adults interact with minors. Indeed, the public schools in Pennsylvania have one of the worst records in the nation, yet they never come under scrutiny.

Here is what Baer had to say about my criticisms:

A statement from league president Bill Donohue argues Shapiro singled out the church: 'A grand jury report on sexual misconduct in any institution could also serve the prurient interests of the public.'

This is the ever-popular everybody-does-it defense. But crimes are crimes. And crimes committed against children are the worst. Especially when committed by clergy. Then covered up. Why wouldn't any prosecutor always go after the worst?

I suspect among hard-core church supporters there's an ugly undercurrent of, well, you know, Shapiro's Jewish, as is former Philly DA Lynne Abraham, who released the '05 report. And isn't that a little suspicious?

No. That's a little anti-Semitic.

And as for me? I still hope there's a hell.

Here is my complaint:

Mr. Fitzgerald,

I am copying John Martin on this complaint because I have dealt with him before and found him to be honorable.

My complaint is straightforward. In a column posted today by John Baer on Philly.com, he ends his article ('Looking back, looking ahead at Catholic clergy sex abuse') by accusing me of being 'a little anti-Semitic.' His evidence? I critically mentioned Lynne Abraham and Josh Shapiro in a news release.

I would like an apology and a retraction.

Please check the Catholic League website for several other statements I have made recently about the grand jury report and you will see that I have also mentioned people such as Mark Rozzi, Seth Williams, and Kathleen Kane. According to Baer's logic, that would make me anti-Italian (Rozzi), anti-black (Williams), and anti-Catholic (all three). Indeed, it would make him both anti-Irish and anti-Catholic for simply criticizing me.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bill Donohue
President
Catholic League

Here is his response:

Mr. Donohue,

Thank you for writing. My reply is straightforward as well. First, John Baer is an opinion columnist, with wide latitude to sound off on events with his personal reflections on them. Second and most important, Baer did not in this piece accuse you of anti-Semitism. He accurately quoted a statement you issued on behalf of the Catholic League expressing your

opinion that Pennsylvania's attorney general had unfairly singled out the Church for prurient reasons. Later, Baer says he 'suspects' that there may be an 'undercurrent of anti-Semitism' among some of the most intense critics of Attorney General Shapiro. He does not accuse you personally of anything.

I respect your position and have given your complaint serious consideration, but in this case believe that no apology or retraction is necessary.

Respectfully,
Thomas Fitzgerald
Politics and Governing Editor
The Philadelphia

Here is my reply to him:

Mr. Fitzgerald,

You are dancing on the head of a pin. Yes, Baer did not directly accuse me of anti-Semitism but he certainly implied as much. For him to do that to a person who combats discrimination and defamation—and who works cooperatively with Jews—is scurrilous.

By the way, opinion columnists have responsibilities, as well as reporters. If Baer had made an anti-Semitic remark, I am sure he would hear it from you.

I have one last request: Let me know if you discussed this matter with Baer (I am not asking for the contents of the discussion).

Thanks,
Bill Donohue

Anti-Semitism is cheapened when people like Baer make false accusations. It is worsened when people like Fitzgerald defend him.

Contact: tfitzgerald@phillynews.com

LATEST NEWS ON SAMANTHA BEE'S SHOW

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Samantha Bee's TBS show, "Full Frontal":

Here is the bad news: Burger King ran two commercials on Samantha Bee's TBS "Full Frontal" TV show on August 8.

Here is the good news: Her show continues to struggle to find sponsors; it showed a drop from last week. Indeed, it had to resort to running more advertisements for movies in lieu of decreasing corporate sponsorship of goods and services.

Catholics are urged to boycott Burger King. Not only does it sponsor a show that trashes Catholics and women, its cultural priorities are anything but Catholic-friendly.

In 2017, Burger King created a "Proud Whopper" for the San Francisco gay pride march. Moreover, the Burger King McLamore Foundation even reserves school scholarships for students who are homosexuals. There are no scholarships exclusively given to students who are heterosexual.

Contact José Cil, Burger King president: jcil@whopper.com

PENNSYLVANIA CHIEF COPS' WAR ON CHURCH

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the ongoing war on the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania:

The war on the Catholic Church conducted by Pennsylvania Attorneys General and District Attorneys is strewn with lies, hypocrisy, bigotry, and corruption. Here are some incontrovertible facts that the citizens of Pennsylvania need to know before assessing the upcoming grand jury report on six dioceses in the state.

In 2001, Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham was given a specific charge "to investigate the sexual abuse of minors by individuals associated with religious organizations and denominations." She never did. Instead, she chose just one religion to investigate—the Catholic Church. All Jews, Muslims, and Protestants were given a pass.

On March 31, 2011, I sent a letter in the overnight mail to Abraham asking her to identify which "religious organizations and denominations" she pursued other than the Roman Catholic Church. She never replied.

In 2005, Abraham gave up: not a single priest was prosecuted. That was the end of Round 1.

Five years went by before Round 2 of the war on the Catholic Church started, this time led by Abraham's successor, Seth Williams. This Philadelphia District Attorney relied heavily on his star witness, Daniel Gallagher, a.k.a. "Billy Doe."

Gallagher was described by police investigations and court-ordered psychiatric evaluations as "immature and self-indulgent," and "hedonistic." He was also a chronic liar, an alcoholic, a drug addict, and a thief. Kicked out of two high

schools, even his own mother testified against him. This was the guy Williams found persuasive.

The prize catch for Williams was Msgr. William Lynn. In one of the most incredibly unethical trials in recent memory, he was convicted of not doing enough to protect minors from predatory priests. But this decision was overturned by the state Supreme Court in 2016 after deciding that jurors were “prejudiced” against Lynn: they were treated to hearing endless testimony about past acts of alleged priestly misconduct having nothing to do with Lynn. He is still awaiting a retrial.

We know for sure one person who is guilty: Seth Williams. In 2017, he was found guilty of bribery. He is now sitting in prison.

The Pennsylvania chief cops’ war on the Catholic Church entered Round 3 in 2014 following the launch of grand jury investigations of six Catholic dioceses. The person who pulled the trigger was Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen Kane.

What motivated Kane to conduct this probe? An internal investigation by Catholic Church officials in Johnstown. How’s that? Instead of congratulating Bishop Mark Bartchak, who leads the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, for *immediately* notifying the police upon learning of the conduct of a serial abuser, Kane took the opportunity to launch a massive probe of the Catholic Church.

At that point, the bishops of Pennsylvania should have held a press conference branding this effort for what it was—a rank expression of anti-Catholicism.

Sometimes justice works very slowly. Like Williams, Kane has been convicted for abusing her office. She is awaiting a prison term. She was also convicted of two felony perjury charges. Not only that, she leaked grand jury reports in a bid to destroy a critic and then lied about it to a different grand jury.

Kane's successor, Josh "Salacious" Shapiro, started Round 4. He is now about to release the grand jury report. From documents made public so far, *almost all of these are old cases, some which extend back to the 1940s, involving men who are either dead or were thrown out of the priesthood.* Shapiro can do nothing about these cases, but he can use his cherry-picking ploy to stick it to the Church by releasing salacious details. That is what this is all about.

Catholics in Pennsylvania need to arm themselves with the facts. They are being played by some very sinister, dishonest, hypocritical and vindictive officials.

ARTIST POSES STORMY DANIELS AS VIRGIN MARY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest artistic assault on Christianity:

They really do hate Christians. The latest expression of hate will appear August 9 at a dumpy art gallery in the tony Long Island town of Southampton. The Spur, which is a barn, is showcasing the barnyard fare of Nika Nesgoda, who lives in nearby Amagansett, home to many multimillionaires.

The rich and famous will have the opportunity of seeing Nesgoda's masterpiece, "Virgin." It is a doctored photographic exhibit featuring porn stars such as Stormy Daniels posing as the Virgin Mary.

According to the promo for this trash, it says Nesgoda "playfully interprets art history" and "challenges the contemporary notion of iconography, identity, and religion."

Stunning.

I have a suggestion for this genius. Why doesn't she do an exhibit called "Muhammad" that features Harvey Weinstein and Anthony Weiner as the prophet? That might attract a crowd, but I'd make sure to call the bomb squad first.

PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOLS MERIT GRAND JURY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on grand jury investigations in Pennsylvania:

Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro needs to explain why he never convened a grand jury to investigate the sexual abuse of minors in the public schools. That's where the action is—his state has one of the worst records on this score of any state in the nation—so why is he *only* interested in probing sexual offenses in the Catholic Church?

The grand jury was convened by Shapiro's predecessor, Kathleen Kane, who is now awaiting prison for perjury and abuse of office. The proximate cause of the probe was the revelation that administrators at Bishop McCort Catholic High School in Johnstown failed to adequately supervise Brother Stephen Baker, a serial abuser, in the 1990s.

When the grand jury was seated in April 2014, public school teachers were raping children, yet Kane did not see fit to convene a grand jury. [Here is a partial list of those crimes](#), which were reported in the press, six months prior, and six months after, the grand jury investigation of six Catholic dioceses was launched.

Shapiro has also had ample opportunity to investigate sexual assault of minors in the public schools, but he refuses to do so. He was sworn in as Attorney General on January 17, 2017. [Here is a partial list of those crimes](#), which were reported in the press, after he took office.

There are a lot of unanswered questions, issues the Pennsylvania media have shown little interest in following. Here are some of them.

- Why did Kane fail to commence a grand jury investigation of the public schools?
- Why has Shapiro failed to do the same?
- Why did both of them use an internal investigation conducted by officials at Bishop McCort High School to launch a probe of the entire Catholic Church in Pennsylvania?
- Why didn't the police contact Cambria County District Attorney Kathleen Callihan?
- Once she learned what happened, why didn't Callihan start a grand jury investigation of her own instead of pitching it to the state AG?

When Bishop Mark Bartchak learned of Brother Baker's offenses in November 2011—Baker turned himself in—he *immediately notified the authorities*. He also advised those who had brought the information to his attention to report it to the police.

When the Johnstown Police Department conducted an investigation, some accusers chose not to be identified; there was also a question whether the statute of limitations had expired. The police reopened the case in 2013 and on January 23, 2013, a report was issued. Baker committed suicide the same day.

- Has Shapiro ever learned of a single official from any public school who notified the authorities after he

conducted his own internal investigation of sexual abuse?

- If some have, why didn't Shapiro use that as a springboard for a grand jury probe?
- Has a district attorney from any part of the state ever contacted him about sexual abuse in a local public school, asking him to do the probe?
- If some have, why didn't he use that as a springboard for a grand jury probe of every school district in the state, not just the reporting school, treating the public schools the way he treats Catholic schools?
- Why hasn't Shapiro demanded that all legislation that would suspend the statute of limitations for crimes of a sexual nature against minors include the public schools?
- Why should the suspension of this basic due process right apply only to Catholic schools and other private institutions?

This is a scam. It is not about justice—it is about singling out the Catholic Church and letting every other institution off the hook. It smacks of bigotry.