

# CUOMO SHOULD NOT EXTEND WINDOW FOR VICTIMS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue is appealing to New York Governor Andrew Cuomo not to extend the deadline for the Child Victims Act. To read his letter, click [here](#).

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# TRUMP WARNS OF DRUGS, DEPRESSION, SUICIDES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks made by President Trump on the social effects of coronavirus:

In his March 29 briefing on coronavirus, President Donald Trump alluded to the social consequences of not taking seriously the threat it poses. He mentioned the “massive” rates of drug use, depression, and suicide that might happen if he took a more relaxed approach to the disease.

Trump’s critics have played their “fact check game,” questioning how accurate his statement is. Even if we allow for hyperbole, Trump is right to call attention to these often neglected side effects associated with the stress and isolation engendered by a pandemic.

What Trump did not say is that one of the greatest tonics guarding against these conditions is religion; it is also true that those most at risk are non-believers. This is not a grey area: the studies are numerous and the findings are

impressive. [The evidence is cited in my book *The Catholic Advantage: Why Health, Happiness, and Heaven Await the Faithful*.]

Dr. Harold G. Koenig is the nation's leading scholar in the study of well-being. He teaches psychiatry and medicine at Duke University, and is the director of Duke's Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health. He and his associates examined 278 studies on the relationship between religion and alcohol and drug use. They found that 86 percent of the studies concluded that the more religious a person was, the less likely he was to indulge. They also found that of the 185 studies on religion and drug abuse, the inverse relationship between religion and drugs was found 84 percent of the time.

Frank Newport is editor-in-chief of Gallup, and his surveys disclose that "very religious Americans are less likely to report that they have been diagnosed with depression than those who are moderately religious or nonreligious." Dr. Koenig and associates found that in 61 percent of the studies, religious Americans are less likely to be depressed than nonbelievers, and are more likely to recover at a faster rate from depression. Atheists, they learned, are more likely to be depressed. Worse, the secular care they choose leaves them more likely to be stuck in their condition longer than those who avail themselves of religious care.

Wayne State University sociologist Steven Stack did a study in which he rated twenty-five nations on a scale that measured religious commitment, and then sought to see if there was any relationship with suicide rates. He found that the more religious a person is, the less likely he is to commit suicide. Sociologist Rodney Stark looked at the data in America's largest metropolitan areas and found that the higher the church membership rate, the lower the suicide rate. Similarly, one review of more than 100 studies found that in 87 percent of them, religion was related to a lower incidence of suicide.

None of this is to suggest that people treat religion as some sort of mental-hygiene drug. Make no mistake about it, the beneficent effects of religious convictions and practice are dependent on their sincere application. But if they are, chances are that in times of stress and isolation such persons will fare much better than their nonbelieving counterparts.

It would be great if President Trump were to call attention to these findings. It might inspire many Americans to reconsider their personal relationship with God.

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## **BLAMING CHRISTIANS FOR THE VIRUS IS PARANOID**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an article blaming Christians for the coronavirus:

It is not unusual for authors of a new book to seize opportunities to plug their work. But the March 27 op-ed in the *New York Times* by Katherine Stewart breaks new ground. After inventing a bogey man—"Christian Nationalists"—she then blames them for the coronavirus. Here is some background information.

When George W. Bush won reelection in 2004, no issue brought voters to side with him more than "values." These "values voters" sent a shock wave through the ranks of the secular elite in the Democratic Party, and they responded by founding rogue lay Catholic groups such as Catholics United and Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good. They also discovered the virtue of "God talk" and an expressed interest in government faith-based social programs (absent the faith element, of course).

Those phony tactics were buttressed by an onslaught of bigoted attacks that branded conservative Christians “theocrats.” It didn’t get them one vote. Now the same crowd is back arguing that “Christian Nationalists” are a threat to the country.

In July 2019, those who hate religious conservatives released a document, “Christians Against Christian Nationalism.” They said this new enemy “demands that Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian.” One wonders why these nefarious Christians settled for *implying* that everyone be a Christian—why didn’t they *demand* it?

Stewart is one of the proponents of this crazed idea. In her op-ed she drops a few anecdotes citing some wild-eyed remarks made by a few pastors, and then unloads by blaming Trump for listening to these people, resulting in an allegedly poor response to the coronavirus.

This is a cheap game. It would be like conservatives blaming left-wing cable television channels for the coronavirus. How so? By suggesting, and in some cases stating, that Trump is a bigot for putting a ban on travel from China. He did that on January 31, ten days after the first case of the virus hit the U.S. This led the Chinese-Communist friendly head of the World Health Organization to label Trump a “racist,” and Joe Biden responded by saying he was fomenting “xenophobia” and “fear-mongering.”

The medical community acknowledges that Trump saved an untold number of lives by making this decision. Would it now be fair to blame his left-wing critics for the coronavirus? No, only a Christian conservative who thinks the way Stewart does would blame them.

Finally, to show how much Stewart hates religious conservatives, consider that she is upset with Trump for saying he hopes we are “just raring to go by Easter.” What’s

wrong with that? “He could have said, ‘by mid-April.’” Yup, this is proof that Christian Nationalists are running the country.

This is the level of intellectual scholarship that the *New York Times* fancies these days. The newspaper of record is now mainstreaming paranoia.

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## ARE BANS ON CHURCH GATHERINGS KOSHER?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the religious liberty issues involved in coronavirus restrictions:

In Michigan, New York, and Ohio, churches are exempt from bans on large gatherings at this time due to the coronavirus. Indiana, Louisiana, and Virginia have decided to extend the ban to churches. This is definitely a state issue: the Trump administration has wisely stayed out of it.

At the state level, this is a difficult issue. Our first impulse is to defend religious liberty, but like any freedom, it is not absolute. For example, in New York, it was reasonably decided, after much discussion, not to exempt religious bodies from mandated vaccinations.

Whenever religious liberty collides with public health, the government is obliged to put the least restrictive measures on religion. If that is done, and the motive is purely to protect the public, then in a crisis situation, temporary bans may be

legitimate.

Motive counts. Why? Because we must always consider the source of an objection to religious exemptions. If the source is the medical community, and reasonable temporary restrictions are called for in a crisis situation, that is one thing; if the source is a hostile force, that is another. Unfortunately, there are plenty of examples of the latter.

Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), Americans United for Separation of Church and State, and the Center for Inquiry have all issued statements against allowing religious exemptions for bans on large gatherings at this time. Their motives are not benign.

For example, FFRF opposes the decision by the West Virginia Governor to designate a "day for prayer" at this time of crisis. Americans United opposes a similar measure in Pennsylvania. The Center for Inquiry, an atheist organization, has not weighed in on this issue, but it is so extreme that it forced its founder, Paul Kurtz, off its board of directors because he was deemed too moderate.

We also have the likes of the religion haters at American Atheists blasting Senator Marco Rubio for seeking to allow financial assistance to churches so they can meet payroll and rent bills. But why not? If the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is considered worthy of stimulus funds, why should monies be denied churches to pay their bills (the funds are not for proselytizing campaigns)? American Atheists surely had no problem supporting efforts to provide funding to Planned Parenthood.

The best way to proceed with this issue is for religious leaders to work with state officials in coming up with a compromise during these difficult times. What we don't need is the advice of those who are anything but religion-friendly.

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# DOJ DEFENDS WOMEN AGAINST TRANSGENDER SCHEME

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the Trump administration weighing in on an important transgender case:

Title IX is a federal law that bars discrimination on the basis of sex; it was written to protect the rights of women. Yet it has been hijacked by left-wing activists pushing transgender politics, one of the consequences of which is to deny women athletes their rights.

The Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC) discriminates against women by allowing male athletes who think they are women to participate in women's sports. Fortunately, the Department of Justice, led by U.S. Attorney General Bill Barr, has signed a statement defending the rights of [real] women athletes to compete against their peers.

The Catholic Church, which acknowledges the reality of human nature, and, of course, nature's God, is unequivocally opposed to what the CIAC is doing. Last year, the Congregation for Catholic Education published a brilliant document, "Male and Female: He Created Them." It affirmed biblical teachings, as well as common sense. God not only created man and woman, he did so in a manner that recognizes their complementary natures.

The Vatican document took aim at gender theory, saying it "denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family." To put it differently, the sexes do not evolve—they are immutable. As for gender, it refers to socially learned roles,

most of which pay homage to that which nature has ordained. Furthermore, there is no such thing as an “Intersex” person: it is a figment of the imagination.

No world leader, either secular or religious, has been more vocal in denouncing gender theory than Pope Francis. He has called it “dangerous” and “demonic.” It is dangerous because “it would make everything homogenous, neutral,” and it is demonic because it is “the great enemy of marriage”; it is also part of the “global war against the family.”

If transgender athletes want to have their own sports, let them, though there may not be many takers. But for men to lie about their sex and then shove their way into women’s sports is worse than a fiction—it is patently unjust. Worse, many cultural elites support this insanity, such as the CIAC.

Feminists who have supported the gay agenda must now decide whose side they are on: Do they stand with women, or with men who pretend they are women?

It is perverse to allow biological men to crash women’s sports. It is even more perverse that they can do so by exploiting a federal law written to promote equality between men and women. Fortunately, the Trump administration has come down on the side of women’s equality and common sense.

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## **ABORTION ACTIVISTS ENDANGER PUBLIC HEALTH**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on why pro-abortion activists are a threat to public health:



Should abortions be considered elective surgery and therefore not be permitted during the coronavirus pandemic, or are they an essential healthcare issue that should be permitted? Predictably, in pro-life states like Ohio and Texas officials are saying abortions constitute elective surgery and should therefore not be allowed, while in pro-abortion states like Massachusetts and Washington, officials are defending them.

This issue has even split those in the medical community working in the same facility. Nearly 300 doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center recently sent a letter to management asking them to “postpone procedures that can be performed in the future” so that they can accommodate the expected surge in patients due to the coronavirus.

The central issue in this case transcends the usual abortion debate: any elective surgery that is being performed during this crisis uses resources that are needed to help those who are hospitalized with the coronavirus.

Chethan Sathya is a pediatric surgeon and journalist in New York City. Here is his analysis of what is at stake. “Surgeries are resource-intensive—requiring surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, transport teams, medical beds and equipment such as ventilators. Suspending elective surgeries will free up those doctors, other medical personnel, and rooms and equipment.”

Dr. Sathya is also concerned about the effect that doing elective surgeries is bound to have on medical staff. “Because of the number of health-care workers required to work close to one another for each surgery,” he writes, “I have no doubt that continuing to perform non-urgent surgeries would lead to further spread of the virus among health-care workers.”

In other words, those who are pushing for abortions during the coronavirus are endangering the lives of healthcare workers.

But do they care?

Here is how Planned Parenthood has responded. "We're closely monitoring the spread of the new coronavirus, or COVID-19. The health and safety of our patients, staff, and communities is our top priority."

Notice that Planned Parenthood is only interested in its own agenda. It says not a word about tying up resources needed by those who are truly sick. By taking away needed personnel, gear and equipment from servicing those who are infected with the coronavirus, it is jeopardizing the lives of those at risk.

The heart of this dispute rests on the question of whether abortion is elective surgery or not. Planned Parenthood, NARAL, and others in the abortion industry argue that abortion is not elective surgery and must be provided at all times. But is it?

Take two women, Joy and Jane. Joy has a life-threatening heart problem and is scheduled for surgery. Jane wants an abortion. No one in his right mind would equate the two. If Joy doesn't get heart surgery, she will probably die. If Jane is denied her abortion, she lives (as does her baby).

It comes down to this: Joy has a need; Jane has a want. No woman *wants* to have heart surgery—they either need it or they don't. Conversely, no woman *needs* an abortion—it is, as they like to say, a matter of choice.

Does that mean that abortion is like any other elective surgery, such as a facelift (rhytidectomy) or a tummy tuck (abdominoplasty)? No. In those cases, only the person's face or tummy is affected. In the case of an abortion, another person is affected. And there is nothing elective about that person's fate.

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# TERRENCE McNALLY DIES AT 81

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the passing of Terrence McNally:

Playwright Terrence McNally has died as a result of complications from coronavirus; he was 81. The four-time Tony award winner came to the attention of the Catholic League when his play, "Corpus Christi," was performed at the Manhattan Theatre Club. The play featured Christ having sex with the twelve apostles and was the source of a demonstration I led when it opened in October 1998.

The *New York Times* got a copy of the script during the summer, before the play debuted. It said that "from the beginning to the end [the script] retells the Biblical story of a Jesus-like figure—from his birth in a Texas flea-bag hotel with people having profane, violent sex in the room next door to his crucifixion as 'king of the queers.'" It added, for good measure, that the Christ-like character, Joshua, "has a long-running affair with Judas and sexual relations with the other apostles." The script ended with a statement to Christians. "If we have offended you, so be it."

The play, interestingly, was replete with gay stereotypes, ranging from the sexual to the scatological. There was crotch grabbing and a clear obsession with the male sex organ. The Christ-like figure pretended to urinate in front of the audience, and he was joined by three of the apostles, complete with sounds of urination piped into the theater. No doubt this was considered creative.

Joshua had sex with Judas at a high school prom and then another romp with Philip. At one point, Philip said to Joshua,

"I hope you have rubbers." He then asked the Jesus-figure to perform oral sex on him.

According to the *New York Times*, the demonstration I led drew 2,000 on a rainy night; only 300 joined a counterdemonstration. "The protest began with a fiery speech by William A. Donohue, the president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights," the newspaper said. "Mr. Donohue shouted criticisms at the opposition. 'You are the real authoritarians at heart. We're the ones that believe in tolerance, not you phonies.'"

The counterdemonstration was organized to protest the free-speech rights of the Catholic League. I never called for censorship. Our critics were led by People for the American Way. They were joined by the National Campaign for Freedom of Expression, the National Coalition Against Censorship, and the PEN American Center. All of these organizations were founded to defend freedom of expression, and all were there to condemn my free-speech rights.

The play turned out to be a bomb. Fintan O'Toole of the *New York Daily News* called it "utterly devoid of moral seriousness or artistic integrity." Clive Barnes of the *New York Post* said it was "dull," and David Lyons of the *Wall Street Journal* rebuked it for its "fatheadedness." The *Washington Post* said "the play plummets to a whole new level of grandiosity," and the *New York Times* pronounced the writing "lazy" as well as "flat and simpleminded." None were critical of the play's Christian bashing, or the fact that McNally singled out Catholics for special treatment.

McNally is gone. Let him rest in peace.

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# ATHEISTS RIP PENCE FOR CHURCH DONATION APPEAL

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on atheist critics of Vice President Mike Pence:

Organized atheists, unlike most Americans who are non-believers, are more often than not driven by hatred of religion and the faithful. Their impulses are totalitarian: they would ban all religious expression if they could. A classic case is Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF).

FFRF has gone ballistic because Vice President Mike Pence recently implored Americans to make donations to their church, even if they cannot attend during the coronavirus crisis.

The atheists said that no American public official “should lend the power and prestige of their office to a particular church or to religion in general.” They even accused Pence of being un-American. “Leveraging a global pandemic to drum up church donations is an egregious betrayal of the country’s founding principles in order to benefit religion.” The atheists added that Pence “should not further encourage Americans to give their money to those who least deserve it.”

Their reasoning is bankrupt. Here are four reasons why.

First, Pence was exercising two of his First Amendment rights: freedom of speech and freedom of religion (religious expression is a core constitutional right). Even vice presidents maintain those rights.

Second, Pence did not order anyone to give to their church or offer new tax incentives if they did. His terms were purely volitional.

Third, what Pence said not only did not betray America’s

founding principles, it affirmed them. Every president in American history has made public appeals expressing the critical role that religion plays in society, especially during times of adversity.

During the Civil War, Lincoln once told his secretary, "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." Similarly, William McKinley, struggling with his decision to seize the Philippines, said to a group of ministers, "I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night."

Atheists like those at FFRF like to cite Jefferson as an example of a non-believing president who wanted an impregnable wall between church and state. They are badly educated.

When Jefferson was seen carrying a red prayer book, a skeptical citizen asked where he was going. "To church," he replied. "Why, Mr. President, you don't believe a word of it," the citizen said. Jefferson replied, "I, as the chief magistrate of this nation, am bound to give it the sanction of my example." Jefferson also awarded the Kaskaskias Indians \$300 so they could build a Catholic church. And all Pence was doing was asking Americans to give to their church!

Fourth, it is risible to read atheists tell the faithful not to give to their church because it will go to "those who least deserve it." Every study on charitable giving shows that atheists are the *least generous and religious Americans are the most generous*. From giving blood to providing food, clothing, and shelter to those in need, the churches, synagogues, mosques, and other houses of worship lead the way in donating goods and services to those in need.

God bless Vice President Pence for encouraging Americans to support their local religious institutions during this crisis.

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# CELEBRITIES LEARN TO COPE WITH CORONAVIRUS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on how celebrities are coping with the coronavirus:

In times of adversity, most Americans turn to God for relief, but there are segments of society that are so thoroughly enmeshed in a culture of secularism that even something as horrific as the coronavirus pandemic is not enough to change them. Hollywood is a case in point. The advice that celebrities are being given is only complicating their condition.

The *Hollywood Reporter* recently interviewed three therapists about the advice they are giving celebrities.

Dennis Palumbo is a former screenwriter-turned-psychotherapist who works almost exclusively with those in the entertainment industry. He tells his patients that they need to adjust to their new environment by letting themselves “process what a change this is” and learn to deal with it. “I think rather than try to get right back on the horse,” he advises, “I would suggest walking alongside the horse for a week.” Besides being hopelessly vague, and therefore almost useless, this is classic self-help advice. Self-help aficionados, of course, have no need for God.

Dr. Jenn Mann is a psychotherapist and host of VH1's “Couple's Therapy” and “Family Therapy.” She can't bring herself to

advise her Hollywood patients to pray—that would be too extreme—but she does come close: meditation is okay. But meditation must have an object. Meditation about what? Given her patients' subculture of self-absorption, we have a good idea it won't be about anyone save themselves.

Philip Pierce is a producer and Beverly Hills psychologist and he recommends that his patients “reflect on one's values, and what is truly meaningful.” Those values, however, are hopelessly secular to begin with, thus doing nothing to alter their condition.

Even those celebrities who have been moved to rethink their relationship with God have a hard time breaking away from their narcissistic condition. For example, Miley Cyrus says the coronavirus pandemic has inspired her to reconsider her rejection of religion.

In a conversation with Hailey Bieber (Justin Bieber's wife), the “Wrecking Ball” star said, “So I think now you are telling me that I'm allowed to redesign my relationship with God as an adult and make it how it feels most accepting to me would make me feel so less turned off by spirituality.” While it is commendable for Cyrus to have some second thoughts, her statement smacks of self-centeredness.

Hollywood is not wholly unique. We know from many studies that a self-absorbed milieu is characteristic of the media, the arts community, and academia. That is what secularism spawns, and that is not the kind of environment that is particularly helpful at any time, never mind times of adversity. To give those who are already basking in themselves self-centered advice is worse than folly—it is regressive.

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# BUFFALO NEWS NEEDS TO BE CONSISTENT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an editorial in the *Buffalo News*:

In a March 18 editorial, the *Buffalo News* called for Buffalo Bishop Edward B. Scharfenberger to open the personnel files on priests accused of sexual abuse. The newspaper speaks of a “cult of secrecy” and a “cover-up culture” in the Catholic Church.

We would love to know if the *Buffalo News* can name one—just one—institution in the United States, religious or secular, that *has not handled cases of alleged sexual misconduct in secret*. From Hollywood to the media, and from the public schools to the corporations, virtually every organization has handled cases of alleged wrongdoing behind closed doors.

In other words, the Catholic Church does not have a monopoly on refusing to turn over its personnel files on alleged victims (though some dioceses have). If this is such a big deal for the *Buffalo News*, why doesn't it ask all organizations in Buffalo (we suggest they begin where the action is—in the public schools) to open their personnel files on accused sexual offenders. Let's see how the unions react to that one.

Better still, why doesn't the *Buffalo News* demand that Buffalo organizations do away with non-disclosure agreements? The Catholic Church has (but no institution has followed).

It is not just the *Buffalo News* (which in fairness did not write an insulting editorial the way other papers have on this issue) that needs to be consistent in making these statements, it's every media outlet. We need to stop the cherry picking: religious profiling is no less invidious than racial

profiling.

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