

# FEC CHAIRMAN IS WRONG ABOUT THE BISHOPS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks made by the head of the Federal Election Commission:

Trey Trainor, the chairman of the Federal Election Commission, is accusing the bishops of refusing to partake in electoral politics because they are more interested in receiving federal funds than they are in mobilizing Catholics. He even goes so far as to say that priests should disobey their bishop.

Trainor says, "the bishops are using their non-profit status as a shield to hide behind from having to make a decision about who to support." Why? Because they want federal dollars. "To look at the amount of money the Church receives for social services, I would say that they have a big fear of provoking the government into pulling money away from activities the Church is involved in."

In actual fact, the bishops have always been reluctant—properly so—to tell Catholics who to vote for in an election. We don't go to church to get lectured to by priests who are Republicans or Democrats.

To be sure, priests are entitled to discuss public policy issues that the Church supports, such as laws that restrict abortion or statutes that support school choice. But priests who go beyond this are crossing the line. None of this has anything to do with money—it has to do with prudence and respect for the conscience of parishioners.

Worse is Trainor's comments on priests and bishops. "When a priest takes the vow of obedience to the bishop, it's in the area of faith and morals, but they have a higher duty to Our Lord. If the bishop is putting out something that is not right, then the priest has an obligation to the faithful to

correct it because he has the higher duty to Our Lord.”

Arrogance is commonplace among Washington officials, but this one is a gem. Since when is it the job of the chairman of the FEC to offer theological instructions to Roman Catholic priests? What mantle of authority does this bureaucrat have to tell priests that they should disobey their bishops?

One would think that with all the hullabaloo about fraudulent ballots being cast, and all the chicanery about mail-in voting, that the head of the FEC would have better things to do than to tell the Catholic clergy what their responsibilities are. Trump needs to rein this guy in right away.

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## WHY IS FOX NEWS PROTECTING GEORGE SOROS?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Fox News and George Soros:

On September 16, Newt Gingrich was cut off the air on a Fox News show, “Outnumbered,” for merely mentioning the role that George Soros is playing in fomenting the anti-cop agenda of the left. Here is what he said.

- “The number one problem in almost all these cities [where riots have taken place] is George Soros-elected left-wing anti-police pro-criminal district attorneys who refuse to keep people locked up.”
- “Progressive district attorneys are anti-police, pro-criminal, and [are] overwhelmingly elected with George Soros’ money.”

Gingrich was interrupted by one of the show's regulars, Melissa Francis, who said, "I'm not sure we need to bring George Soros into this." The former Speaker of the House replied, "He paid for it. Why can't we discuss the fact that millions of dollars ..." Gingrich was then cut off again, this time by Marie Harf who took Francis' side.

Why is Fox News protecting George Soros? Is there anyone who doubts that he is one of the biggest contributors to left-wing causes in the nation, if not the biggest? We at the Catholic League know the atheist billionaire as the nation's most generous donor to anti-Catholic causes and organizations.

It seems plain that Francis was told by the show's producers (in her earpiece) to cut Gingrich off at the knees. She dutifully obliged.

It didn't take long before left-wing media outlets celebrated what happened. The Daily Beast explained that Soros is "often the focus of anti-Semitic tropes." HuffPost said, "In some cases, his name has been used to evoke anti-Semitic tropes."

Maybe Soros has been used this way, and if so, that would be despicable. But neither left-wing website provided any examples. Are we to assume, then, that because some bigots have attacked Soros that no one is allowed to cite his role in promoting the left-wing agenda without being called an anti-Semite? Does this justify trying to censor Newt Gingrich?

Where did Fox News, the Daily Beast, and HuffPost pick up on the talking point that negative comments about Soros can legitimately be construed as anti-Semitic? From the *New York Times*.

On October 30, 2018, in a front-page story in the *New York Times*, reporters noted that "baseless claims" that Soros financed illegal border crossings "carry a strong whiff of anti-Semitism." Two days later, November 1, 2018, another front-page story commented that critics of Soros employ

“barely coded anti-Semitism.” On March 11, 2019, reporters commented that critics of Soros have “skated up to the edge of racism and anti-Semitism with no consequences.”

Is it anti-Semitic to criticize George Soros? If so, then the ADL, which was founded to combat anti-Semitism, is anti-Semitic.

On December 5, 2003, ADL national director Abraham Foxman wrote that Soros blamed the current “upsurge of hatred” directed at Jews on Jews. “Not surprisingly,” he wrote, “many Jews are distressed by this tendency, now spilling over to our own community, of blaming Jews for anti-Semitism. That is why I have called Mr. Soros’ comments obscene.”

Would Fox News consider Foxman’s remarks anti-Semitic?

Last year, Fox News host Neil Cavuto interviewed me about the fire that engulfed Notre Dame Cathedral in France. Here is what I said. “Well, Neil, if it is an accident, it’s a monumental tragedy. But forgive me for being suspicious. Just last month, a 17th-century church was set on fire in Paris. We’ve seen tabernacles knocked down, crosses have been torn down, statues.”

That was it—Cavuto had a meltdown and cut me off. “We don’t know that. So if we can avoid what your suspicions might be.”

In short, even speculating about the guilty—even though I did not say a word about religious fanatics—was enough to set off the censors in the control room. So much for my free speech.

It is not just Big Tech that is stifling the free speech of conservatives. It’s executives at Fox News.

Contact Jay Soroko, executive producer of “Outnumbered”:  
[Jay.Soroko@foxnews.com](mailto:Jay.Soroko@foxnews.com)

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# NETFLIX MERITS DOJ PROBE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on *Cuties*, the French film featured on Netflix:

*Cuties* is wrong on every level. It is soft-core child porn masquerading as a coming-of-age story. According to Bernadette Brady-Egan, the Catholic League's vice president who reviewed the movie, there is "no redeemable reason to watch it." She added that "at no point could I laugh at this film. I wanted to cry a number of times for these girls."

Netflix bills *Cuties* as a sex-comedy movie, but in reality it is more tragic than anything else. The content is outrageously graphic. According to the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), which prepared a guide for parents, *Cuties* is intended for mature audiences. That is why it branded the "sex and nudity" elements "severe."

For example, IMDB says there are "Frequent scenes of 11 yr old girls dancing lewdly where the camera pans in and zooms in on the children's buttocks, midsections, and crotches."

There is also a scene where "an 11 yr old girl dressed in a tank and panties is splashed with water and begins twerking in a frenzied kind of way. On her feet bent over, on her knees, and on her hands and knees. Camera zooms in on her buttocks as she positions on all fours and twerks."

Then there is the shot of an 11-year-old who takes a picture of her private parts before publishing it online. And so on.

*Cuties* seeks to normalize pedophilia. The producers say that is not their motive. Nonetheless, they cannot deny the effects of this wholly irresponsible portrayal of young girls. It will

obviously appeal to some very sick men. Moreover, it sends a message to teenage males that it is okay to prey on subteens.

Those “open-minded” reviewers who like *Cuties* are either plain stupid or malicious. They complain about the sexual harassment of women, sexual abuse, and sex trafficking of young girls. They are livid over reports of pedophile priests. Where do they think these offenders got the idea that sexual exploitation is not unacceptable? Are they so dumb they cannot connect the dots? Or are they that depraved that they really don't care?

There are several senators who have asked Netflix to pull *Cuties*. We wish them well. But we are supporting Sen. Ted Cruz. He is asking the Department of Justice to investigate Netflix with an eye towards possible violation of the federal law governing the production of child pornography. I will write to Secretary Bill Barr today.

Contact Reed Hastings, Netflix's CEO:  
[reed.hastings@netflix.com](mailto:reed.hastings@netflix.com)

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## TEXAS A&M PROF DIGS DEEPER HOLE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the Texas A&M professor who is under fire for his anti-Catholicism:

Yesterday, I [wrote](#) to Texas A&M University President Michael K. Young about the incredibly anti-Catholic social media posts featured by professor Filipe Castro; we also contacted many officials at the university and in government. Now we have received more social media posts of the same variety. To see a

small sample, click [here](#).

Some of what Castro has said on social media are highly controversial statements of a political nature. Such commentary is not the issue. He has every right to his opinion. But he has no right to deliberately insult Catholics with his sick portrayal of priests and his trashing of Catholicism.

If imams were targeted, and Islam was being denigrated, such expressions of bigotry would not be tolerated. Anti-Catholicism should not be treated any differently.

Complaints have also reached our office of Catholic students being badgered by Castro in the classroom, and of obscene remarks he has made about women. Unlike the photos of his vile social media posts, we cannot be certain he is guilty of such offenses. That is why we are calling on President Young to launch an investigation on all of these matters.

We understand that one is under way by the Office of Risk, Ethics, and Compliance. We implore President Young to give his full and public support to this probe. We are copying every academic and government official we contacted yesterday, as well as new ones, with the latest proof of Castro's indefensible behavior.

Contact President Young: [PresidentYoung@tamu.edu](mailto:PresidentYoung@tamu.edu)

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## TEXAS A&M PROFESSOR'S HATE SPEECH CANNOT STAND

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a Texas A&M

professor:

Anti-Catholicism on our nation's campuses is nothing new, but there is an anthropology professor at Texas A&M University, Filipe Castro, who has gone beyond the typical rants against Catholics and Catholicism.

What he has posted on social media shows that he does not seek to engage Catholics in rational discourse—he seeks to insult and to denigrate. As such, he has no legitimate role to play at any institution of higher education, and this is doubly so at a state-funded university.

To read my letter to Texas A&M President Michael K. Young, click [here](#). It is being distributed to many parties in education and government.

To read Castro's social media posts, click [here](#).

Contact President Young: [PresidentYoung@tamu.edu](mailto:PresidentYoung@tamu.edu)

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## **CATHOLIC AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS DIFFER ON OPENING**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the new school year:

For the most part, Catholic schools across the nation have opened normally. For the most part, public schools across the nation have opened abnormally (if at all). The contrast in administrative competence could not be more stark. Here is a representative sample.

*Atlanta*



- Schools in the Archdiocese of Atlanta returned to in-person instruction August 12. The public schools opened August 24 with virtual learning.

### *Boston*

- All schools in the Archdiocese of Boston opened in September to in-person instruction. All public schools opened remotely.

### *Chicago*

- All schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago opened to in-person learning August 17. The public schools opened remotely September 8.

### *Cincinnati*

- All schools in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati are open to in-person instruction. The public schools resorted to distance learning for the first five weeks of the school year.

### *Dallas*

- The Diocese of Dallas opened to in-person learning September 2, six days before a start date ordered by Dallas County health officials. The public schools did not open to in-person learning until September 8.

### *Denver*

- The Archdiocese of Denver started August 24 with in-person learning. The public schools started the same day, but with remote learning; it continues until October 16.

### *District of Columbia*

- The Archdiocese of Washington schools opened as early as August 25, roughly half in-person. The public schools

opened to distance learning August 31, and will continue that way until November 6.

### *Houston*

- Many schools in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston opened August 13 to in-person learning; some elected to open remotely. Public schools opened September 8, all with remote learning. None will open in-person before October 16.

### *Milwaukee*

- The schools in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee opened in-person. The public schools opened remotely.

### *New York City*

- The Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn opened to in-person learning five days a week on September 9. New York City public schools will not open until September 21, starting with three days a week. The teachers threatened to strike, which is illegal in New York.

### *Philadelphia*

- Schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia opened partly in-person and partly virtually. The public schools opened only to remote learning.

### *Pittsburgh*

- The Diocese of Pittsburgh opened to in-person instruction September 8. The public schools opened to distance learning the same day.

### *San Diego*

- All 39 schools in the Diocese of San Diego will have in-person learning by the end of September. Public school

officials cannot agree when to reopen the schools (including distance learning).

The teachers' unions are responsible for the stalling tactics, citing unfounded horror stories about Covid's effects on kids. Elementary and secondary schools have been opened in Europe for weeks, if not months, without the kinds of calamities that American educrats have been predicting.

Politics is also playing a role. The Los Angeles County Public Health Director reportedly told school officials and medical staff that the public schools will not open "until after the election, in early November." This is obviously being done to hurt President Trump at the polls.

Meanwhile, Catholic schools have returned to normal in this country. One more reason why school choice makes eminently good sense. As usual, the biggest victims—minority students from low-income families—are the ones being punished. Perversely, those who rhetorically champion their cause are responsible.

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## **TRUMP      ENSURES      RELIGIOUS LIBERTY   ON   CAMPUS**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a new Trump directive on religious liberty:

For many years now, I have said that there is more free speech allowed in your local pub than there is on your local college campus. Ditto for religious rights. It took the Trump administration, led by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, to

assure that colleges and universities catch up to public standards.

On September 9, DeVos issued a new directive that holds public institutions of higher education accountable for enforcing norms that protect free speech and religious liberty on campus. For example, student-initiated religious clubs on campus cannot be denied the right to set their own strictures regarding membership.

This rule is necessary because attempts to deny religious liberty have been commonplace on the campuses of public universities. In short, "a religious group must have the same rights as other student groups at the public institutions to receive official recognition, to use the institution's facilities, and to receive student fee funds."

In a more sane environment, it would not take the U.S. Department of Education to tell public institutions of higher education that they are expected to enforce the rights encoded in the First Amendment. The administrators would see to it. But because so many college administrators are at least as hostile to free speech and religious liberty as their faculty are—if not more so—the job of protecting basic constitutional rights falls to the executive branch of government.

Though the Department of Education news release announcing this ruling does not say what brought us to this point, it is clear to anyone who has followed this issue that radical gay activists—students, faculty, and administrators—are largely responsible. It is one thing to respect the rights of homosexual students and those confused about their sexual identity; it is quite another to allow activists in their ranks to deny the religious rights of those who disagree with their agenda.

Public colleges and universities are quick to demand federal funding of their programs. They should not be given a dime if

they fail to ensure free speech and religious liberty on campus. Kudos to the Trump administration.

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## NEW YORK TIMES EARNS SPOT IN “1619 PROJECT”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue discusses the racist record of the *New York Times*:

Coming on the heels of a bloody summer, much of it driven by racially charged rhetoric and behavior, the new school year has begun. But not without calls to address racism. Elementary and secondary students are being primed to learn about America’s irredeemably racist past, present, and future.

The favorite resource for educators is the “1619 Project.” It is a proposed curriculum being disseminated by the *New York Times* that seeks to revise American history. According to this version, America was not founded in a revolution in 1776; it was founded in slavery in 1619.

This vision of the Founding is now working its way into school curricula across the nation. It has been formally adopted in Chicago, D.C., Buffalo, Newark, Wilmington, and Winston-Salem. Thousands of classrooms around the nation will implement this radical interpretation of American history.

The “1619 Project” is the work of Nikole Hannah-Jones. Her contribution is not the result of her training: She is neither a historian or a professor. She is a journalist. And while she complains about systemic racism, Hannah-Jones, whose mother is white and father is black, insisted that no white people work with her on the Project.

Prominent historians of America's founding have panned her work. In a letter that these leading scholars signed, they charged the "1619 Project" with "a displacement of historical understanding by ideology." Pulitzer Prize winning historian Gordon Wood accused this initiative of being "so wrong in many ways." Another winner of this prize, James McPherson, said that it "left most of the history out."

Hillsdale College president Larry Arnn succinctly summed up the problem with Hannah-Jones' creative enterprise. The "1619 Project," he said, is "an ideological campaign to undermine Americans' attachment to our founding principles and to the Constitution by making slavery—rather than the principles of liberty that ended slavery and preserved our liberties for nearly 250 years—the principal focus of American history."

Students will be taught that Africans were forcibly taken from their homeland and brought to the New World as slaves. They will not be taught that slavery has existed in every part of the globe, and that Africans were bought by Europeans from their African slavemasters; they were not captured. Nor will students learn that slavery was abolished in the United States in 1865, but it took until 1981 for Africa to make it illegal (it still exists in parts of Africa today).

Most important, students will not learn that the Founders could have decided to justify slavery, making no overtures toward liberty. That is what virtually every other nation has done. Instead, they crafted the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the net effect of which was to lay the philosophical and legal foundation for the eventual demise of slavery. The Civil War was fought precisely to realize the Founders' vision of liberty.

No nation has made more progress in realizing equal opportunity than the United States. We recently twice elected a black president and have done more to end systemic racism than any other nation. One of the reasons why so many people

want to come to our shores—often illegally—is because we are the envy of the world. It is our unparalleled freedom and prosperity that draws so many minorities to come here. But none of this will be taught to students subjected to the “1619 Project.”

To make matters worse, the *New York Times* has no moral leg to stand on. The following report was sent to all schools in the six states listed above that have adopted the “1619 Project.” The version that the schools received included an introductory note.

**“1619 PROJECT”:  
PROPOSED REVISION**

The *New York Times* rolled out its “1619 Project” on the alleged racist origins of the United States with great fanfare. It would be inexcusably hypocritical not to include the newspaper’s own contribution to racism in classroom instructions.

The family that owned the *New York Times* were slaveholders. To wit: Bertha Levy Ochs, the mother of the paper’s patriarch, Adolph S. Ochs, was a rabid advocate of slavery, continuing a tradition set by her slave-owning uncle. She lived with her father’s brother, John Mayer (he dropped the surname Levy), for several years in Natchez, Mississippi before the Civil War. He owned at least five slaves.

Ochs’ parents, Julius and Bertha Levy, were German Jewish immigrants who met in the South before moving to Ohio (where Adolph was born). When the Civil War broke out, Bertha wanted to be actively engaged in her pro-slavery efforts and moved to Memphis to support her Confederate-fighting brother (Julius was on the Union side).

When Bertha died, the United Daughters of the Confederacy, to which she belonged, draped a Confederate flag over her coffin. Adolph even donated \$1,000 to have her name engraved on the

founders' roll of the Stone Mountain Confederate Memorial. He sent a note saying, "Robert E. Lee was her idol."

Adolph was raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, and at age 20 he became the publisher of the *Chattanooga Times*. In 1900, the paper ran an editorial saying that the Democratic Party, which he supported, "may justly insist that the evils of negro suffrage were wantonly inflicted on them." After he purchased the *New York Times* in 1896, he moved to New York. When he died in 1935, the United Daughters of the Confederacy sent a gift to be placed in his coffin.

Most Americans are mature enough not to blame the *New York Times* today for the racist beliefs and practices of its ancestry. In doing so, they show prudence. But are they too generous in their assessment? According to the wisdom of the "1619 Project," they are absolutely too forgiving.

If this were all there was to the racist history of the *New York Times*, we could give it a pass. But we cannot. Its racist record runs deep.

In 1910, the *Times* covered a heavyweight boxing match between the black heavyweight champion, Jack Johnson, and Jim Jeffries, the former heavyweight champion who came out of retirement for the fight. Jeffries, dubbed the "Great White Hope," was expected to win. He lost.

The sports writers for the *Times* put their money on Johnson, but not before issuing a dire warning. "If the black man wins, thousands and thousands of his ignorant brothers will misinterpret his victory as justifying claims to much more than mere physical equality with their white neighbors." In other words, stupid blacks might want political, economic and social rights as well, and that would not be auspicious.

In the 1920s, after a race riot in Washington, a *Times* editorial waxed nostalgic, speaking about conditions prior to the Great War (World War I.) "The majority of Negroes in



Washington before the Great War were well behaved,” adding that in those happy days, “most of them admitted the superiority of the white race and troubles between the two races were unheard of.” They wanted more than “mere physical equality.”

Also in the 1920s, Adolph Ochs invited a black singer, Roland Hayes, to lunch at the *New York Times*. His father, Julius, was so angry he left the building. According to Iphigene, Adolph’s progressive daughter, Julius believed that while “we love the Negroes,” it is important to “keep them in their place; they are fine as long as they stay in the kitchen.”

In 1931, in one of the most infamous racist events in the 20th century, two white woman accused nine black teens of rape. It turned out to be totally false. Adolph’s *Chattanooga Times* was quick to condemn the alleged rapists. An editorial read, “Death Penalty Properly Demanded in Fiendish Crime of Nine Burly Negroes.” The trial reporter for the paper called the defendants “beasts unfit to be called human.”

Matters did not change throughout the 1940s. The NAACP, while noting that this southern arm of the *New York Times* was somewhat better than its competitors, it was still “anti-Negro.” That is because the papers were in the hands of Arthur Ochs Sulzberger. While on a Red Cross tour of England during World War II, he expressed horror at the sight of black American soldiers “fraternizing” with white women. “Rape by Negroes is just one degree worse than by whites, and black illegitimate children just one degree more unfortunate than white ones.” That is what he told General Dwight Eisenhower.

Arthur’s workplace policies were also tinged with racism. A Newspaper Guild survey taken in the 1950s found that of the 75,000 newsroom employees he commanded, just 38 were black. Bad as he was, he was still better than other family members. He fought, successfully, to end the practice by the *Chattanooga Times* of publishing racially segregated

obituaries.

Even though those who ran the *New York Times* made progress with racial relations in the 1960s and 1970s, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr. said in the 1980s that the paper was “just miserable to women, miserable to blacks.”

It was miserable to blacks in another way. By championing the life of Margaret Sanger, a notorious racist, it shows, and continues to show, how much further it needs to go before its racist past is behind it.

Sanger, the founder of Planned Parenthood, referred to blacks as “weeds” and “human waste” in need of “extinction.” But to the august *New York Times*, she was known in 1980 as a “modern heroine.” At the end of the decade, she was cited as a “legendary pioneer.” In 1992, she was labeled a “strong-willed woman.” In 2006, the eugenicist was branded “courageous,” and in 2014 was noted as a “pioneering feminist.”

Never once did the *New York Times* call Margaret Sanger out for what she was—a white racist who lied to the public about her real motives. “We don’t want the word to get out that we want to exterminate the Negro population.” She had little to worry about—the “newspaper of record” kept the truth from the public. It still does.

It’s not just the defense of notorious racists that bedevils the newspaper—it has been accused of promoting racism in its workplace.

In 2016 two black female employees in their sixties filed a class-action lawsuit against Mark Thompson, the CEO of the New York Times Company. They argued that “deplorable discrimination” exists in the workplace. “Unbeknownst to the world at large,” their deposition says, “not only does the Times have an ideal customer (young, white, wealthy), but also an ideal staffer (young, white, unencumbered with a family) to draw that purported ideal customer.”

For all of these reasons, any school that adopts the “1619 Project” as a model to discuss the history of racism in the United States has a moral obligation to inform students of the racist legacy of the *New York Times*. Not to do so would be intellectually dishonest. If we are to have a national conversation about race, we must tell the truth about the role that this newspaper has played in contributing to racism in the United States.

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## PRO-ABORTION “CATHOLIC” GROUP SHOULD FOLD

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Catholics for Choice:

In 1973, in the year that abortion was legalized, an anti-Catholic group was founded to promote abortion rights. But it was not the usual anti-Catholic outfit. This one falsely assumed a Catholic identity. Initially called Catholics for a Free Choice, it would later shorten its name to Catholics for Choice. Having been around for almost a half century, it now looks like it is in disarray.

When it was founded in New York City, it did not set up shop in the New York Archdiocese (as did the Catholic League when it moved to the Big Apple in 1992). No, this “Catholic” pro-abortion outfit rented space from Planned Parenthood. Its first president was Father Joseph O’Rourke; he was expelled from the Jesuits in 1974. It now appears that its time is up: It has been curiously without a president this entire year.

Jon O’Brien was president of Catholics for Choice for 12 years, having succeeded Frances Kissling, the long-time

champion of abortion-on-demand. On December 2, 2019, this well-funded letterhead (it has no members) announced that he resigned. In his place was named an acting president, Sara Hutchinson Ratcliffe. She is still acting president.

Ratcliffe honed her abortion-rights skills at Planned Parenthood. Under her tutelage, almost nothing has been done. Its quarterly magazine, "Conscience," stopped publishing in the fall of 2019. In 2020, Catholics for Choice issued a mere seven press releases, and the last time it was cited in the news was March 31, 2020 (before that it was August 16, 2019). By contrast, the Catholic League generates news releases on a steady basis and is cited in the news almost daily.

Every presidential-election year, Catholics for Choice tries to convince the public that it is entirely acceptable for Catholics to be pro-abortion. It is not. From the Vatican to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, directives have repeatedly been issued making it clear there are not two legitimate Catholic positions on abortion. There is only one: pro-life. This year, the invisibility of this faux Catholic outlet will not be of any use to Joe Biden.

Without funding from the Ford Foundation and other left-wing philanthropies, Catholics for Choice would fold. It's time it should. Even its allies must know that its time is up—it is accomplishing nothing.

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## **MORE MISUSE OF THE VATICAN ARCHIVES**

*The following article was written by Ronald J. Rychlak, Distinguished Professor at the University of Mississippi*

*School of Law. He is one of the world's foremost experts on the role of the Catholic Church during the Holocaust. He serves on the board of advisors of the Catholic League.*

For decades now, critics of the Catholic Church have insisted that no assessment of Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust would be valid until all of the archives were examined. That argument has always struck me as [weak](#). There is plenty of evidence to show that Pius defied the Nazis, aided the Jews, and encouraged the rescuers. Still, the critics insisted that no judgment could be final until all the documents were examined.

Earlier this year, the final archives were made available to researchers. Unfortunately, the coronavirus outbreak forced them to close soon thereafter (preventing my own scheduled research trip this summer). They re-opened and again re-closed. The result is that only a handful of relevant documents have been discovered. Yet, the critics who long insisted that all of the evidence had to be evaluated wasted no time in claiming that these new documents condemn the Church and the pope.

The first claim was made by Fr. Hubert Wolf of the University of Münster. He found an internal memorandum cautioning the pope not to accept all of the claims being made about the Holocaust and tried to twist it into proof of Pius XII's anti-Semitism. It did not hold up to close scrutiny. (See [The First Outrage from the New Archives](#), Catalyst, June 2020).

The newest outrage comes from long-time papal critic David Kertzer. Writing in *The Atlantic*, he claims that he and his researchers have found documents that show the postwar Vatican supported the "kidnapping" of two Jewish boys whose parents perished in the Holocaust, the so-called [Finally affair](#).

This matter started on February 14, 1944, when Gestapo agents entered the village of Tronche, France. They arrested two Jewish refugees from Austria, Fritz and Annie Finally (also

sometimes spelled Finely). The Finalys were transported to Auschwitz, never to be seen again. Their children (Robert, aged three and Gerald, aged two) were left behind. A Catholic woman named Antoinette Brun took the two boys into the Grenoble founding home, which she ran. She soon came to love the boys and was named provisional guardian. In 1945, after learning of their parents' death, she began the process to formally adopt them.

After the war, an aunt from New Zealand wrote a letter asking that the boys be sent to her. Brun resisted, and soon the family sent a representative (the boys' aunt, a sister-in-law to their father) to plead with Brun in person. She still resisted, and in 1948 she had the boys baptized into the Catholic Church. That had serious implications within the Church; it meant that they were now Catholic, and the Church could not turn her back on them.

Unlike the Nazis, for whom Jewishness was a racial matter, once someone is baptized into the Church, they are Catholic, plain and simple. This helped many victims thwart the Nazis and avoid deportation, either with actual conversion or with falsified papers, but it complicated things here. The parents were no longer in the picture, and many in the Church assisted Brun as she resisted efforts to relocate the boys.

In 1949, the Finaly family filed suit to have the children sent to an aunt in Israel. The lawsuit went on for almost four years, and the evidence was conflicting. The boys' late father had told friends that he wanted to have his sons brought up in France, but there was debate about his (and their mother's) religious wishes. For their part, the boys were said to have wanted to stay in France with Brun.

Kertzer cites as his new evidence, a "Vatican document coming from Church sources in Grenoble." Discussing Brun's stance, it says "Her attitude, motivated by her conscience from

the fact that the boys are Christian, is approved by His Excellency Cardinal Gerlier" (the archbishop who oversaw Grenoble). In addition to that memo *about* Gerlier, however, there is a January 1953 letter *from* him, that clearly indicates his strong discomfort with Brun's position. (Kertzer attributes this to the fact that "the press had gotten hold of the story," though it seems to have been in the news well before the date of the letter.)

Cardinal Gerlier's letter asked for guidance on a particular matter. "In these conditions, should one be advised to refuse, come what may, to return the children, who belong to the Church by their baptism and whose faith, in all likelihood, would scarcely be able to resist the influence of the Jewish milieu were they to come back?"

After setting up his essay to discuss this difficult question, Kertzer lets it hang for a couple of pages while he goes over material that he covered in his earlier writings, including the [false claim](#) that Pius XII did nothing when Germans rounded up almost 2000 Roman Jews. (See [New Books Attack Catholicism](#), Catalyst, October 23, 2001 and [The Controversy Over Edgardo Mortara](#) Catalyst, May 25, 2018). When he returns to the question at hand, it is not advice from the pope that we see as his new evidence, but a memorandum from the Holy Office that said the health of the soul was a matter of divine right of children who had reached the age of reason, and the Church had the duty to defend them.

Note that this had nothing to do with their Jewishness. If the children had been from an atheist family, a Hindu family, or a Muslim family, the answer from the Holy Office would have been the same. As Kertzer quotes from Future Cardinal and Vicar General of Rome, Angelo Dell'Acqua, "The Catholic Church not only has rights with respect to [the Finaly boys], but duties that it must fulfill." There was clear debate within the Church as to the correct avenue.

French courts ultimately sided with the Finaly relatives, but when authorities went to get the boys, they were missing. Friends and supporters of Ms. Brun (who was arrested and held for six weeks), including some Catholic priests and nuns, had spirited them off to Spain.

Several arrests were made, and the Church got some bad press. Contrary to what the critics claimed, however, the Catholics involved were not acting on behalf of the institutional Church.

When she was asked by the press about her Catholicism, Brun said she "[didn't give a fig](#) for the Pope." Bishop Alexandre Calliot of Grenoble took to the radio airwaves to demand that anyone with information about the missing boys contact the authorities. One of the first to comply was a priest in Spain who reported on their whereabouts.

For his part, Pius XII approved an agreement that was negotiated between Cardinal Gerlier and the chief rabbi of Paris. It called for sending the children to their relatives in France, but provided for their free choice when it came to religion. Several of the pope's top advisors advised him to reject any agreement that sent Catholic children to live in a Jewish household.

As the matter was unfolding, and the boys were still in hiding, the French ambassador presented the Vatican with a report that said, "The Governor of San Sebastián [in Spain's Basque region] continues to think ... that ... 'without a formal order from Rome, the boys will remain in the shadows.'" Soon thereafter, a representative of Cardinal Gerlier made the final trip into Spain to get the boys. They were waiting in the home of a Spanish provincial governor, and Church officials helped bring them back to France. As *Time* magazine explained (November 7, 1955): "the Roman Catholic hierarchy had helped in getting the Finaly brothers back" to their Jewish relatives.



After the family had taken custody, the boys were flown to Israel. Aware that this was an open breach of the agreement and meant they would be instructed in the Jewish faith. Giovanni Battista Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, noted that this affair, “had inflicted a serious blow to the Church’s ... prestige in the world.” Some within the Vatican urged the pope to publish an article that would “unmask the Jews and accuse them of disloyalty.” Despite this advice, and despite having been presented with a draft article, Pius did not publish it.

While rushing to judgement on the basis of a couple of new archival documents, Kertzer completely overlooks the new evidence laid out in Mark Riebling’s book *Church of Spies: The Pope’s Secret War Against Hitler* (see [When the Pope Tried to Kill Hitler](#), Catalyst, November 16, 2015) documenting Pius XII’s role in the plot to assassinate Hitler. Nor does he discuss the [disinformation campaign](#) against Pius conducted by the Soviets during the Cold War. He also fails to mention Pope Pius XII’s [1942 Christmas address](#) or his open encouragement to Howard Wisla in 1941 that he must “[Always be proud to be a Jew](#).” Ignoring elements like these render his conclusions simply invalid.

This whole event is reminiscent of another controversy that took place back in 2004, when *The New York Times* and other publications reported on the discovery of a document in a French archive, purportedly authorized by the Vatican, saying that Church authorities should not return “hidden” Jewish children (like the Finaly boys) to their families if they had been baptized. Long before any serious research could take place, critics were coming out from every rock to condemn kidnapping by Pius XII and the Catholic Church.

To those of us who had studied the work of Pius XII, the directive immediately seemed suspicious, and for good reason. The real directive, dated October 23, 1946, and authorized by Pope Pius XII, was quickly found in the Vatican archives. It was quite different from what had been reported in the news.

It seems that there were other Catholics who, like Ms. Brun, grew quite attached to Jewish children in their charge. The directive told the rescuers to return these children, baptized or not, to blood-related relatives who came to get them. Over and above that, if no relatives survived to reclaim the children, and if individuals or organizations unrelated to the children now wished to adopt them or transfer them to a new environment, each request was to be examined on a case-by-case basis, always with a sense of justice for the child, and with a sense of what their parents would have wanted for them. The children were not to be 'dumped' on the first agency that came along.

This directive is perfectly in line with Judeo-Christian compassion and responsibility. It is also very probative of Pius XII's mindset on these issues. It is far more probative than the internal memoranda that Wolf and Kertzer have used to infer what Pius XII thought. Like any large entity, the Holy See has memoranda prepared on many issues. The advice found in one memo often conflicts with that of another. That is a good thing. What matters is the final decision. In the Finaly case, Pius—against the advice of some—returned children to their families. That's because he was a good man and a good leader.