

VICTORY FOR PRIESTS' RIGHTS; CASE MERITS REVIEW

On March 2, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that it will review a Superior Court decision that allowed Renee A. Rice the right to pursue claims against the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown even though the statute of limitations had long expired.

The Catholic League filed an amicus brief in the case in support of the diocese; the Pittsburgh firm of Jones Day represented us.

The Superior Court held that a grand jury report issued by the state Attorney General in 2016 could trigger the running of statutes of limitation, though it is common practice for the clock to start at the time of an injury.

Rice said she was molested 40 years ago by Fr. Charles Bodziak at St. Leo's Church in Altoona, a charge the priest denies. She further maintains that two bishops tried to cover up his behavior, even though the diocese sent her a letter 10 years before her lawsuit encouraging her to come forward about her alleged abuse. She did nothing until the grand jury report supposedly awakened her.

Attorneys for the Catholic League contend that the Superior Court ruling "effectively enacts window legislation [it allows a look-back provision] from the bench, contrary to decades of precedent."

When our brief was filed in September 2019, we commented on its significance. "We have reached a new level of creative jurisprudence when a court can invoke a jury decision as the new clock determining when the limitations period starts to run. At issue here is the separation of powers between the legislature and the judiciary, not exactly a small issue."

If jurors are allowed to widen the time limits for civil claims in clergy sexual abuse cases, it would create havoc. For instance, 15 “copycat” lawsuits were filed after the Superior Court ruling, beckoning other alleged victims to file suit. No wonder plaintiffs called the decision a “game-changer” that will “open the courthouse doors” to decades-old claims.

It is good news that the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has agreed to hear the appeal by the diocese. It also granted leave for the Catholic League to file an amicus brief on behalf of the diocese, which we will do.

Were the Superior Court ruling to hold, the effects would be felt not only by the Catholic Church but by all religious organizations. Indeed, secular institutions such as schools, hospitals, colleges, and all other employers would be at risk for being sued decades after the alleged offense.

We look forward to a complete reversal of the lower court’s decision. That would ensure that the rule of law will be applied equally to priests, dioceses, and religious organizations.

KEY CASES TO BE DECIDED

We may not know the outcome until the spring of 2021, but it looms as one of the most important cases pitting gay rights against religious liberty that the U.S. Supreme Court has ever agreed to hear.

Two years ago, a federal district court turned down Catholic Social Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in its bid not to be forced to place children for foster care with

parents of the same sex. The city of Philadelphia brooked no religious exemption. Last year, it lost again in the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals.

Those on the side of the Catholic Church include the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Jewish Coalition for Religious Liberty. Those on the other side include the Hindu American Foundation, Muslim Advocates, Sikh Coalition, Unitarian Universalist Association, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Union for Reform Judaism.

Catholic social service agencies do not recognize homosexual parents as suitable to be foster parents. They believe that children are entitled to a mother and a father, the only two people who can naturally create a family. Children need to be loved by those who provide role models for them based on the two sexes.

Religious liberty cannot exist without extending to religious individuals and institutions the kinds of exemptions they have traditionally been afforded.

This is only one of three religious-liberty cases that the high court will rule on in the spring.

ABORTION'S SATANIC TOUCH

Animals have no rights—they cannot be held morally responsible for their behavior—but they certainly deserve our respect. Indeed, those who abuse them should be punished: animal cruelty should never be tolerated. It should be axiomatic that human beings, at all stages of development, are also entitled to great respect, including those not sentient enough to make

moral choices.

Why, then, are so many politicians and celebrities more concerned about the plight of seals than kids? Selfishness plays a big role. Animals, especially pets, make us happy, but some human beings make us unhappy. Hence, the desire to protect the wellbeing of pets but balking on humans. After all, if the prospect of welcoming a new baby into our lives is likely to bring about unhappiness, shouldn't we have the right to rid ourselves of the source of our unhappiness?

The de-Christianization of our society has even worse consequences. Two pro-life bills, the "Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act," and the "Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act," were recently shot down in the U.S. Senate, mostly by Democrats.

The "Born Alive" act was written to strengthen a 2002 law by providing specific sanctions for abortionists who intentionally allowed innocent babies to die if they survived a botched abortion. The "Pain-Capable" act would prohibit abortions after 20 weeks gestation. Both bills received majority support but failed to achieve the 60 votes necessary to end debate and move to a final vote.

What would those senators who voted against the former bill say to individuals—and there are many of them—who survived an abortion and became model citizens? That they have no right to be here? Regarding the latter bill, how would they explain the reaction of a child in the womb who recoils upon being pricked by a needle—the pictures don't lie. That he was feigning pain?

Some in the Congress are so rabid in their defense of abortion that they have literally cracked up. One of my senators is Chuck Schumer. He is a bright man and a hard worker. While I usually don't agree with his politics, he has always commanded my respect. Not anymore. When he threatened two Supreme Court Justices, Brett Kavanaugh and Neil Gorsuch, because he thought

they may vote against abortion rights, that was it for me. He acted like a thug.

Then we have “The Squad,” the four freshman members of Congress who are in a constant state of rebellion against America. Few things matter more to them than abortion. In fact, they would put their lives on the line to protect abortion rights before they would ever sacrifice their lives to protect our nation from a foreign enemy. That’s just how far gone they are.

Rep. Ayanna Pressley sounded the alarms over the Supreme Court’s decision to hear some important abortion cases by exclaiming, “reproductive rights is racial justice.” This is the kind of statement we would expect from the Klan. Pressley is black.

Rep. Rashida Tlaib lashed out at pro-life Americans, saying, “Y’all, y’all, you know what? You’re so freakin obsessed with what I do with my body, maybe you shouldn’t even want to have sex with me.” In response, I told the media, “Believe me, lady, no one does. I know of no defender of life who wants to sleep with you. And if you don’t know the difference between a woman who wants to remove a wart from her toe and a pregnant woman who wants to remove a human being from her body, you need to enroll in Bio 101.”

Rep. Ilhan Omar previously unveiled her support for abortion by saying that pro-life legislation was “only the latest in a long history of efforts to criminalize women for simply existing.” That would mean that pro-life Americans want their mothers imprisoned. Even those in the asylum don’t speak such gibberish.

Last year, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez objected to a pro-life bill in Alabama that the governor pledged to sign. She labeled it an example of “patriarchy.” The governor is a woman. In the fall, she said that “non-binary people” need

access to abortion. News flash: They don't exist.

Think you've heard enough? Consider that March 10 was "National Abortion Providers Appreciation Day," a time when abortion-happy activists celebrate abortionists doing what they do best—killing kids. NARAL called abortionists "real live superheroes." Ms. Magazine called the day an occasion that recognizes "acts of kindness." The ACLU commended abortionists for their "life-saving work."

In Spokane, the city council passed an ordinance that empowers the police to cite pro-life activists who pray, or sing, too loudly outside the local Planned Parenthood abortion mill. In the Washington city of Bellingham, pro-life students were attacked for praying. A man masturbated in his car in front of the students, a woman flashed them, and a man threw a vial at them. To top things off, a woman screamed at them, "We don't need your prayers. Hail Satan!"

Satan has long left his mark on abortion politics, but these recent events suggest he is upping his game.

BETRAYED BY VICTIMS' ADVOCATES

The following is a first-hand account of a clergy sexual abuse victim. Last year, he met with Catholic League staff in New York City; we are protecting his anonymity. Some of what he recounts was previously noted by Catholic News Agency.

As an adolescent victim of homosexual clergy abuse, I know the challenges that men face in coming forward. Many of us are silenced in shame after being abused by our homosexual

superiors. Aggravating the recovery process is that, despite the evidence, there is an ongoing agenda to cover up the homosexual nature of the abuse crisis, disenfranchising more than 80% of us victims.

Recovery is difficult enough without predatory advocacy groups and their lawyers trolling us for profit and politics. The added torment of being told the problem isn't related to homosexuality only compounds our pain. For this reason, I am grateful to the Catholic League for giving me the opportunity to relay the difficulties facing victims of homosexual abuse in particular, with all due respect and recognition of the grief suffered by victims who were subjected to heterosexual abuse.

For all of us men who were robbed of the opportunity to allow our sexual identities to mature before being assaulted, the abuse may be ruinous, to the point that some victims never speak of it. Sadly, the odds of suicide attempts are 2-4 times higher among women and a staggering 4-11 times higher for men compared to those who are not abused. These statistics do not account for the compounded effect of betrayal of our faith caused by our spiritual fathers.

I never spoke a word about my abuse until seven years later, feeling safe only to disclose under the seal of confession. The problem was that I didn't know that the priest behind the confessional screen was an active homosexual. So, when I confessed to him, and he offered to help me, I didn't know I was being solicited.

I was 22 years old, it was 1989, and there was no public knowledge of the predatory homosexual cadre in our Church. Over the ensuing 18 months the priest from the confessional provided pastoral counseling, but I was also subjected to lewd homosexual conversation and harassment. It was complicated, I was benefitting from his counseling as I was preparing for medical school and hoping to get better, so I tolerated his

sporadic foulness. I became dialed into my faith like never before, attending mass and praying on my knees every night. I seemed to be recovering. But that all ended one night when he phoned me, ostensibly drunk, blurting out the most appalling sexual propositions. It was truly devastating. After that I could no longer sit through a mass. I left the Church, vowing I would never speak about my abuse again.

Decades would pass before I found myself in professional counseling. Not knowing I had PTSD, I was dealing with severe anxiety. I didn't intend to tell the psychologist about the abuse, however, he got to the source, and thus began my recovery. I was 44 years old, with a wife and four kids. We had made the difficult decision years earlier to educate our kids in Catholic schools.

I'd like to share some experiences I had in the recovery process to benefit other survivors and their families to learn from my mistakes, and for members of the Church to understand what happens to us victims when we step forward. Recovery is a difficult course to navigate with plenty of bad actors and hidden agendas out there.

The first step I took after coming forward was to learn what happened to my abuser. I found the "Bishop Accountability" website and read that he had been incarcerated in Oklahoma for assaulting boys there. On that webpage I saw a banner ad for a group called "Road to Recovery".

I reached out, and had an immediate response by founder and former priest, Bob Hoatson. In that first email he asked if I would like an attorney. I was surprised by this, it wasn't why I was contacting him, I declined the solicitation and told him I only wanted to get better.

I took his counsel thinking he was an expert on clergy abuse. He appeared on CNN with Anderson Cooper and was in countless newspaper articles. He became a significant influence on me.

Ultimately, under his influence, I brought a suit against the Church and I would leave the Church, again. I drew the line when Hoatson encouraged me to get my children out of the Church. Nonetheless, my family was going to mass without me with a negative effect on us.

Hoatson introduced me to the petulant attorney, Mitchell Garabedian, at the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) conference in Chicago. SNAP proclaims to be a support group for survivors, but what I experienced was anything but support for survivors. SNAP invited the shark attorneys, used the victims like chum, and watched the frenzy unfold.

I saw Jeff Anderson, the mega-sex abuse plaintiff attorney, giggly and excitedly prance around the conference to funnel money to SNAP. All the attorneys raised their hands to show how much they “cared”, but it was an obvious pledge to their motherlode, SNAP. Anderson offered to match all donations up to \$50,000. I thought Anderson was entirely inappropriate and found his exuberance personally offensive for the occasion. I watched in disbelief as survivors were subjected to the machinations of SNAP.

After the victims were commoditized with attorneys in the conference room, we broke into small groups. I was looking forward to this part, thinking someone could tell me how to break through. Our group leader, Patrick Wall, was an ex-priest. I thought, “surely these ex-priests, Hoatson and Wall, must be good people and can help.” Instead, what happened in my small group had no therapeutic value. From my years of training in medicine, my assessment was that Mr. Wall had no skills in facilitating a group like this. There were about 10 men in my group and nothing was accomplished. Nothing.

Then, Wall told us he was an attorney working in Jeff Anderson’s practice. My heart sank, my eyes welled up with tears. I went to the SNAP conference to get better, and I had

hoped they would help, but all I saw was SNAP aligning victims with attorneys for money and to weaponize victims against the Church.

I left the small group session deflated, and sat in the hallway. A woman came asking if I was OK. I told her that SNAP wasn't what I thought it was going to be. She said, "I'm sorry that you feel that way." I asked if she was part of SNAP. She said no, "I am an attorney, here to see how I can help." She handed me her card. I felt sick and had to get out of there.

I found David Clohessy, the president of SNAP, in the hotel lobby. He authored an article about my abuser. I wanted to know where he got his information and where I could learn more. When asked, he couldn't remember writing the article. He couldn't give me any information about my abuser. I thought, "how can someone write an article and not remember a single thing about it?"

What I've come to learn over the years is that SNAP will regurgitate negative news about the Church to multiply the exposure. That's why Clohessy didn't remember his article. He did not offer to help me, he only apologized for not knowing anything.

Soon after the conference, a whistle blower, Gretchen Hammond successfully sued SNAP. She witnessed SNAP taking kickbacks from the attorneys. I was happy and felt vindicated that someone stood up for victims against SNAP.

Fast forwarding through the years, I was able to prosecute my abuser with a loophole in the statute of limitations. He was convicted, sentenced to prison, and will likely expire there. On December 23rd, 2017, I had a remarkable and unexpected reversion to our Faith. Being back in the Faith brought joy that superseded the happiness I was seeking in counseling.

Hoatson made some disparaging remarks about my return to the Church and my communication with him fell off. In reflection,

I realized how he funneled victims to Garabedian, manipulating them much like SNAP. I asked Hoatson what his financial relationship was with Garabedian, he only said "Mitch takes good care of me."

In September of 2018, I was traveling across the Great Rift Valley in Africa, leading a team on a medical mission. I received an email from Hoatson in our satellite-equipped safari truck. He sent me his press release in response to the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report. It read, "homosexuals don't rape minors, predators rape minors." He went on, "sure, some homosexuals rape minors, and some heterosexuals rape minors," leading the reader to believe that there is no difference. He also implored Catholics to embrace homosexual and transgender priests.

I confronted him, asking him to add facts to his press release and tell the truth. I replied, "Bob, I was raped by a homosexual and you're telling the press that I wasn't. How do you think that makes me feel?" He told me I was the only survivor who felt that way. I reported this to Cardinal Tobin, in New Jersey, where Hoatson's organization is located. I learned that I am not the only survivor who feels disenfranchised by the position that homosexuality has nothing to do with the crisis.

The effort to protect and harbor active homosexual priests in the Church adds insult to victims' injury. Many point to "clericalism" as a cause. Alright then, let's recognize that homosexuals far and away outpace heterosexuals in using clericalism as a means to an end. Can we stop with this politically correct nonsense? We are the Church, forever counter-cultural, with no duty to bow to the gay agenda.

Sometimes I hear words of hope. Like Pope Francis' statements on homosexuals in ministry. Recently our local rector sent out a notice about screening homosexuals from entering the seminary. In response, I immediately sent a \$1,000 donation in

gratitude.

Today, SNAP continues to smear our Church. Recently, Clohessy appeared in my city with TV coverage accusing our Bishop of not including my abuser on a list of accused, highlighting my abuser on the news. But he was never in this archdiocese. I contacted the TV station and SNAP multiple times asking them to correct their false reporting but they never responded. SNAP created false news, smeared the Church, their mission accomplished. SNAP also recognized Bob Hoatson with an award last year.

Navigating the recovery process is tough. There are forces vying for victims' money and souls. However, for me, it was my return to the Catholic Faith that pulled me through the effects of abuse. I am grateful to God for that.

ORLANDO SENTINEL ATTACKS FIRST AMENDMENT

The editorial in the February 18 *Orlando Sentinel* is critical of private schools, mostly Christian, which participate in a state-school voucher program; the schools uphold biblical teachings on homosexuality. The newspaper says they should not qualify for the program because they discriminate against homosexuals the way Bob Jones University once discriminated against blacks. There are several problems with this line of reasoning.

Race and sexual orientation have nothing in common: race is not a behavioral category but sexual orientation is ineluctably ordered to behavior. Christian sexual ethics, which are based on Judaism, proscribe adultery, homosexuality,

and other sexual acts. That is their right.

There is no rational argument for denying a person who is black, brown, or white from marrying to attending a Christian school: race is behaviorally neutral. Indeed, it is because Bob Jones University—which also promoted anti-Catholicism—could not sustain a rational argument that it eventually was forced to change course.

There is a rational argument for allowing religious schools to sanction behaviors it finds sinful. To deny them this option is to deny them their identity. Moreover, to protect the institution of marriage—indeed to grant it a privileged position—Christian sexual ethics does not approve of sexual conduct that is outside the union of a man and a woman in the institution of marriage. No such reasoning could plausibly be applied to denying mixed racial marriages.

An investigation of private schools in Florida by the *Orlando Sentinel*, published January 23, found 156 private Christian schools with “anti-gay views.” Almost half are Baptist. Catholic schools were mostly given a pass by the newspaper.

Catholic schools do not reject applicants on the basis of sexual orientation, though they will enforce teacher contracts which bar them from marrying someone of the same sex, and they generally do not admit students whose parents are homosexuals. The reasoning is sound: sending mixed messages to students only confuses them about the validity of Catholic sexual ethics.

As it turns out, there are nine schools cited by the newspaper where a quoted statement is cited as proof of their “anti-gay views.” It is important to note that they *have nothing to do with the status of a student’s sexual orientation*. Rather, they have to do with beliefs and practices.

1. Central Florida Christian Academy admits students who follow biblical teachings and abstain from “sexual

immorality.” The newspaper concludes this means “gay children aren’t welcome.” But it is not clear that it does. The school did not say it does not admit gay students. It said it does not admit students who are engaged in sexually immoral behavior. That could mean premarital sex (until recently confined to heterosexuals) as well as homosexual acts.

2. Calvary Christian High School in Clearwater is mentioned because it denies students who practice a “homosexual lifestyle or alternative gender identity” or “promoting such practices.” Lifestyle, switching sexes, and [homosexual] practices are all behavioral categories, and as such are entirely legitimate for a Christian school to consider.

3. Wade Christian School in Melbourne says students can be expelled for a “homosexual act.” The emphasis is on an “act,” not orientation.

4. Master’s Academy describes “homosexual behaviors” as sinful and does not enroll those who engage in them. Again, it is the behavior that matters.

5. Mount Dora Academy lists as an offense “sexual misconduct or professing immorality (including homosexuality) on or off campus.” Conduct is not neutral—it is normative—and is therefore a valid concern for Christian schools.

6. Landmark Christian School in Haines City does not accept or retain “faculty, staff, or students who profess to or practice a homosexual lifestyle.” A lifestyle is empirically a behavioral category.

7. Cooper City Christian Academy in Broward County says students should refrain from “talking favorably or engaging in” such things as “idolatry, Satanism, astrology, profanity...premarital sexual activity, pornography, homosexual behavior, gender-confusion behavior, cross-dressing” and the like. All of these beliefs and practices are proscribed by our Judeo-Christian tradition.

8. Worshipper’s House of Prayer Academy in Miami says it has a “zero tolerance” policy for “homosexual activity.” Activity is conduct.

9. Donahue Academy is the one Catholic school listed. Its

“anti-gay” rule bars those who “advocate” or act “upon those [disordered] inclinations romantically or sexually.” This speaks to the religious beliefs of Catholic schools and the acting out of proscribed moral conduct.

In short, the *Orlando Sentinel* counts as “anti-gay views” anything associated with the sexual ethics of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It has a First Amendment right to free speech to do that. But religious schools also have a First Amendment right to free speech, as well as the free exercise of religion.

BEWARE LAY CLERICALISM

Two teachers at Kennedy Catholic High School, located in the Seattle area, recently resigned, and although neither school authorities, the Archdiocese of Seattle nor the teachers are speaking to the media, it is understood that both teachers, a man and a woman, were engaged to a person of the same sex, thus forcing the issue.

This should be a slam dunk case. Those who teach at Catholic schools sign a contract pledging to uphold Catholic teachings. Indeed, teachers in this archdiocese voluntarily agree that “if the teacher’s life-style is incompatible with Catholic moral values or if his/her conduct is at variance with Catholic teaching,” they can be fired.

The Catholic Church, like so many other religions, does not condone gay marriage. Ergo, homosexual teachers at a Catholic school who claim to be engaged or married to someone of the same sex are at variance with Catholic teaching.

A small protest outside the Archdiocese of Seattle drew

dissident Catholics who supported the insubordinate teachers. Some dissidents said such things as, "I don't believe this is in line with Jesus' mission." Greg Nickels, ex-mayor of Seattle, argued the teachers were fired "because they are gay." State Sen. Joe Nguyen said the archdiocese was "on the wrong side of history."

It is important to note that, assuming the teachers were fired, they most certainly were not let go because they were homosexuals (presumably this was known to at least some at the school before their engagement). It was their planned marital status that was controlling.

The reaction of the protesters smacks of lay clericalism. Lay people have an important role in the life of the Church, but they are not empowered to make decisions that are the proper reserve of the bishop. Canon 806 states that the diocesan bishop has the right to oversee and inspect Catholic schools (including those run by religious orders).

Pope John Paul II explicitly warned against lay clericalism. The laity are entitled to a "consultative voice," he said, but the final authority rests with the bishop. The bishop "must hear the faithful, clergy and laity, to form an opinion," but, he added, "the latter may not formulate a definitive judgment on the Church" as "it corresponds to the bishop to discern and pronounce himself, not on a mere question of conscience, but as a teacher of the faith."

Those who claim that the Church is "on the wrong side of history" are badly educated in the Catholic faith. The Church is committed to the pursuit of truth—that is the only side it seeks to be on—and properly eschews that which is trendy and fashionable. That is suitable for politicians and preteens.

EPISCOPAL BISHOP SHOULD BUTT OUT

We would not defend a Catholic bishop who publicly criticized a decision by a high-ranking cleric of another religion about matters that pertain only to the members of that religion. We respect house rules. It's too bad that Greg Rickel, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia, Washington, does not.

Recently, two teachers at a Catholic high school in the Seattle area, a man and a woman, resigned, and it is believed they did so because it became known that they each got engaged to a person of the same sex. They voluntarily signed a contract pledging to uphold Catholic teachings, something they obviously violated. This should be a "slam dunk" case, but, of course, a few dissidents protested.

Then an Episcopal bishop, Greg Rickel, weighed in. After Seattle Archbishop Paul Etienne spoke in defense of what happened at the Catholic high school, Rickel sounded the alarms. He accused Catholic officials of "making oneself God," something he said was "the greatest heresy." He also accused them of "discriminating and ruining the livelihood of two people who simply want to love." He added it is "no wonder we are in decline."

Rickel would not only do well to respect house rules and mind his own business, he needs to attend a local Catholic college and learn what Catholicism teaches. He may then learn—he could actually go to a Catholic elementary school—that Catholic clerics do not believe they are God. As for the teachers, yes, Catholic schools are known to fire those who reject Catholic teachings on racism, genocide, sexuality, and many other matters.

Regarding the decline of Christianity, Rickel should heed the

words of one of his own, Rev. David Goodhew, director of ministerial practice at Durham University in England. “The church is a movement and the Episcopal church is moving downward...Some optimists hope the decline is slowing. This is not borne out by the data.”

In other words, Bishop Rickel, worry about your own problems. There are many. His church has been in free-fall for decades, precisely because of its quest for “relevancy.”

REQUEST TO REPRIMAND REP. TLAIB

On March 16, Bill Donohue asked the House Ethics Committee to reprimand Rep. Rashida Tlaib for her obscene assault on people of faith. Donohue’s letter to the committee chairman is printed below (the other members received the same letter).

To read Bill Donohue’s letter click [here](#).

IS AOC CATHOLIC?

Is Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) Catholic? She was, but there is no evidence she still is. Yet she is conveniently labeled as a Catholic by some of her supporters and she occasionally implies she is still Catholic.

Why does this matter? If she were not a congresswoman, it wouldn’t. But when someone who is no longer a member of the

faith community he was raised in passes himself off as a loyal member—for self-serving political purposes—that raises serious ethical problems.

Who is and who is not a Catholic is not purely a matter of self-identity. If someone born of Irish ancestry and raised as a Catholic calls himself a Jew, no one thinks he is Jewish. Truth matters, and the truth never turns on self-identity alone.

AOC spoke on February 27 at a congressional hearing on “The Administration’s Religious Liberty Assault on LGBTQ rights,” held by the House Committee on Oversight and Reform. She criticized the Trump administration for its policies on homosexuals and transgender persons, saying it was misusing religious liberty to undermine these people.

In her remarks, AOC never once identified herself as a Catholic, though she did play the religion card. She preferred to use such terms as, “From the perspective of a woman of faith” and “I know it is part of my faith.”

Not only did she not identify her faith, she said, “We are equal, in my faith, in the eyes of the world.” Catholics don’t speak that way. They would say something like, “As a Catholic, I believe we are all equal in the eyes of God.”

In a glowing article on AOC posted on Huffington Post, it says that she “identifies as Catholic” and “frequently refers to her religious beliefs on Twitter.” Not true. On Twitter, she never identifies herself as a Catholic: she calls herself a “raised Catholic” (see her tweet from 12-10-18). That is the way ex-Catholics speak, not those who are currently practicing their religion.

In a caustic exchange on Twitter with Kellyanne Conway, AOC spoke about her “Christianity + faith life” (tweet is from 4-28-19). Again, that is not the way Catholics speak. In fact, that is a really weird way for any Christian to talk. There is

no need for the "+ faith life" if the person is truly a Christian.

We did a Nexis search of AOC to learn how often she identified herself as a Catholic. We looked for "As a Catholic" or "My Catholic." The answer: Zero. The only reference to her Catholicity is from an article she wrote for America magazine on June 27, 2018, the Jesuit publication.

In her piece, she made a comment about the Catechism and forgiveness, and uses terms such as "For Catholics," but never once does she say she is a Catholic. Yet that was the purpose of the article. It was titled, "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on her Catholic Faith and the Urgency of Criminal Justice Reform." Why the reticence given this opportunity to showcase her Catholic credentials? Indeed, she could have told us something about how much her Catholic faith means to her, but she didn't come close.

In her statement before the House committee, AOC did address one Catholic issue. Not surprisingly, she condemned the Catholic position.

"My faith commands me to treat Mr. Minton as holy because he is sacred, because his life is sacred, because you are not to be denied anything I am entitled to, that we are equal in the eyes of the law."

What was all that about? Evan Michael Minton, who also spoke before the committee, wanted to change from being a woman to a man (that is biologically impossible, but that is not the issue). In 2017, "he" sought a hysterectomy at a Catholic facility, Mercy San Juan Medical Center; it is part of the Dignity Health Care chain.

The Catholic hospital does not perform elective hysterectomies (such a procedure is only done to treat a serious medical problem and when there is no alternative treatment available). Mercy immediately referred "him" to another hospital within

the Dignity chain that is not Catholic, and the procedure was performed within a few days. Even though there was no discrimination, “he” got the ACLU to sue Mercy.

In other words, AOC flexed her so-called Catholic muscles by taking the side of someone who deliberately sought an operation from a Catholic institution that it was prohibited by its religious tenets from performing. She obviously does not believe in the free exercise of religion as guaranteed by the First Amendment. Worse, she took the side of anti-Catholics.

The Catholic League does not tolerate fictions. Everyone knows that inside a pregnant woman’s body there is another human being, and everyone knows that no one can change his or her chromosomal makeup, even though many learned people believe otherwise. And everyone should know that AOC is a fraud.

U.N. REPORT ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IS ABSURD

A recently released United Nations report on religious freedom that was presented to the Human Rights Council deserves a sharp rebuke. While appearing reasonable at different junctures, the report is nothing but a frontal assault on religious autonomy and religious freedom. No wonder it was criticized by senior Vatican officials.

The report by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief, Ahmed Shaheed, is more than tendentious: it is a polished ideological attack on our most foundational human right. Indeed, the report reads like a manifesto for LGBT rights. It is not the business of the United Nations to impose

its secular, and indeed troubling, vision of sexuality on religions around the world.

One of its most glaring problems is the decision to link cases of violence committed in the name of religion—which are properly condemned—with instances of non-violent beliefs and practices that are seen as problematic by militant secularists. The conflation of violent acts with non-violent “discriminatory” ones is not persuasive. Indeed, by bundling inexcusable behaviors with wholly defensible religious precepts, the report shows its unmistakable bias.

For example, it is one thing to condemn the Islamic practice of stoning adulterers, quite another to lump this barbaric act with the imposition of “modest” dress codes. Similarly, when religious bodies hold to traditional moral beliefs on sexuality, they are entitled to have their convictions respected, not chastised.

It also makes no logical sense to conflate laws which criminalize persons on the basis of their sexual orientation, which is indefensible, with laws that restrict abortion, which are eminently defensible. Worse, it is outrageous for the Human Rights Committee to cite conscience laws, as observed in the United States, as problematic. Such laws are integral to religious liberty.

Another objectionable tactic is to treat nations that criminalize homosexuality with the same brush as nations that object to homosexuality being promoted in their sex education textbooks. The latter is noble. Is the United Nations so thoroughly in the grip of the LGBT community that it can't see the difference between the two?

The report embraces “gender ideology,” namely, the bizarre notion that one's sex is not rooted in nature. It goes further by criticizing nations such as Poland, with its vibrant Catholic community, for rejecting this madness. In doing so,

the international forum discredits itself. It should not bend to ideological whims, especially when they are based on politics, not science.

At least the report does not seek to hide its mentors. It mentions its reliance on feminists and those who work with "LGBT+" persons (it does not say who the + people are). It also cites, positively, the work of a United States organization, the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. They gave away the store on that one.

The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice is not only a rabid pro-abortion group, it is virulently anti-Catholic. It endorsed the Freedom of Choice Act, which the Catholic League successfully fought. This was the most radical piece of abortion-rights legislation ever proposed (the Obama administration was behind it). It would have jeopardized the right of Catholic hospitals and doctors to refuse to perform abortions.

The most serious flaw in this seriously flawed document is its attack on religious autonomy. It makes an obligatory statement saying that "religious organizations are entitled to autonomy in the administration of their affairs," only to effectively undercut this pledge by taking issue with religious norms it finds objectionable. In fact, it cites objections to religious strictures made by feminists, as if religious bodies ought to defer to them.

Its most aggressive assault on religious liberty is the contention that religious dissidents should be on a par with religious leaders. This is what the report means by saying "religious communities themselves are not monolithic." It even goes so far as to say that the rights of dissenters must be afforded "an enabling environment." Maybe a big sign on church property that says "Welcome Mutineers" might work.

The sages who wrote this report should practice what they

preach. They can begin by inviting Bill Donohue, as one of their dissenters, to join their forums, permitting him to checkmate their grandiose proposals. After all, we're all equal. Aren't we?