

MEDIA BARRAGE ON THE CHURCH; THE QUEST FOR DIRT

The year ended with a barrage of media stories on the Catholic Church, the likes of which we've not seen for some time. What made this flurry of negative stories so different is that they were mostly non-stories. In other words, the media ran articles about clergy sexual abuse that failed to uncover anything new.

There is no new wave of sexual abuse stories bursting on the scene. Knowing this to be true, the media reported on old cases of abuse that dated back to World War II. Obviously, many of the accusers, and the alleged offenders, are dead. So what was the point, other than to shame the Church?

Then there were stories based purely on anecdote. Journalists use anecdotes to embellish a story, to give it a human face, amidst lots of number crunching. But that is not what happened in year-end reporting. The stories went nowhere.

Another round of stories focused on priests who have been laicized for misconduct. The media faulted the Church for not "supervising" ex-priests, as if it had the legal authority to do so.

There were "investigative" reports with Catholics who went before diocesan review boards; these panels are charged with determining whether an allegation is true or not. As with any such probe, we expect to learn of a range of experiences, from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. But not this time. In one major story, only negative comments were reported.

In every instance, we fought back, setting the record straight. We also enlisted the support of those who receive our emails, and they did not hold back. We know because we read what the media outlets said in their defense.

We also did something the media abhor: We investigated them. To be exact, we sought to see how they handled employees who were let go for sexual misconduct. As you might expect, they did not keep tabs on them, much less “supervise” them, yet they were quick to condemn the Church for not policing former priests accused of sexual improprieties.

We checked to see if other religious organizations were subjected to this kind of scrutiny. None were. We checked to see if some secular institutions experienced a barrage of similar media stories. None did.

We have not seen the end of this. There are 15 states that are in the process of investigating the Catholic Church for past instances of wrongdoing, and five others may elect to do so. They will harp on old cases, and make it sound as if nothing has changed.

This needs to be called for what it is—a scam.

CHRISTMAS ATTACKS

The Christmas haters made their presence felt this past season; their antics varied considerably.

Vandals struck Catholic churches throughout the country: arson, burglary and theft were among the most common offenses. Crosses were smashed, obscene inscriptions were left, and satanic displays were also featured.

A third-grade enactment of the nativity scene was banned when atheists went ballistic. The Oklahoma school was intimidated by the threat of a lawsuit.

Pornographic images, created with Christmas lights, were

displayed by a woman on the rooftop of her home in Kansas.

Netflix aired a movie about Jesus that depicted him as a homosexual.

Vulgar Christmas jokes were told by late-night TV talk-show hosts.

Attempts were made to rename Christmas parades.

On the other hand, there were signs of progress. Our side has set anchor for about a decade, refusing to cave in to bullies.

Surveys show considerable support for displaying religious symbols on public property, with African Americans leading the way. As usual, it is well-educated white people, who consider themselves to be the most tolerant, who are the most intolerant. Many naturally incline to censorship.

These attacks on Christmas constitute hate speech. We know what they hate, so take it as a sign that they haven't won.

MEDIA MAKE UP DIRT THEY CANNOT FIND

A recent NBC poll of Catholics who work for the Church found that 64 percent do not believe the media have been fair in their coverage of the clergy sexual abuse scandal. If you want to know why, just read this issue of *Catalyst*.

There are still good reporters and editors, but unfortunately there are too many who are not to be trusted. I was recently interviewed by NBC for a national story on the Church—it was rolled out in print and on TV in various towns and cities

across the nation over several weeks. I was also interviewed by the Associated Press (AP). In both cases, I was treated fairly and quoted fairly. So I am not saying that everyone who works in the media is guilty of being unfair to Catholics.

At the end of 2019, beginning in October, there was one story after another printed in newspapers and posted online that were uniformly negative about the Catholic Church. Why the onslaught? It is always hard to establish motive, but let me take a shot. It is the lack of contemporary dirt on the Church that is driving these stories.

As I have said repeatedly, of the over 50,000 members of the clergy (priests and deacons), there was a whopping total of *three* substantiated charges made against them in the last year that we have data for. That translates into .006 percent. In other words, the scandal, at least in the United States, is largely behind us.

The media read these reports and know that what I have said is true. The Catholic media do as well, and so do those Catholics who prepare the annual audits for the bishops. But in all three instances, there is silence. They are reluctant to admit the great progress that has been made.

Why? The Catholic media and those who issue the reports don't want to seem triumphant. That's part of it. The other part—the most important reason—is they are afraid that if they raise the flag acknowledging progress they will be branded as being insensitive to victims. So they zip it. That's understandable, but regrettable: we are called to tell the truth, not shade it.

The secular media have a different motive. They want to keep the scandal alive. Why? To discredit the Church's moral voice. For what purpose? Secularists don't want to be told they are acting immorally, particularly when it comes to sex. If they can shame the Church by reporting on new dirt, they will do

it. But given that there is almost nothing to report, they switch gears and start *making up* dirt.

Here's how the game is played. They start by reporting on old cases of abuse. Of course, this could be done to any institution where adults and minors interact, but there is no interest on the part of the media to explore old cases of sexual abuse that have taken place in other religions, never mind in the public schools. Indeed, there is little interest in reporting on fresh dirt in the public schools, never mind revisiting news stories from the late 1940s.

Another game is to blame the Church for not monitoring priests who have been kicked out for sexual abuse. So what? No one does this. Does anyone think that the media keep tabs on its molesters? And by the way, the Church is always blamed when it keeps accused priests on in some capacity. Now it is being blamed for not tracking them when they are released. That's a Catch-22: the Church cannot win.

Did you know that some who represent the Church by serving on diocesan review boards are known to vigorously question alleged victims? Is not that their job? If a reporter were accused of sexual misconduct, and he claimed innocence, would he not want the accuser to be vigorously grilled by lawyers? Or would he expect them to act like altar boys?

I said at the outset that NBC and AP treated me fairly. What both reporters told me (I spent an hour with the NBC reporter and at least 20 minutes with the AP journalist) is disturbing. They said they called all over the country asking bishops and their communications directors to comment—beginning with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops—and none would.

I understand their reticence. Too many bishops, priests, and lay persons have been burnt by unfair reporters, sometimes seriously so. But if our side doesn't speak at all, how can we plausibly claim that the media are one-sided?

A few years ago, one of those do-nothing lay Catholic “organizations”—it employs “senior fellows” who conveniently work from home—was conducting training seminars for Catholics wishing to speak to the media. So what ever happened to that initiative? It died on the vine, just like so many of their projects.

We need to fight back and let our voice be heard. Loudly. This is not a time to speak softly. That’s been tried and it’s a loser.

2019 YEAR IN REVIEW

Bill Donohue

The following is an excerpt from a longer piece that is posted on our website under Annual Reports/Year in Review.

When the year began, I was anxiously awaiting an opportunity to defend the Catholic Church in one of those storied debates sponsored by the Oxford Union. The debate was scheduled for February. But in early January, about a month after being invited, I was disinvited.

We learned that some sources in the U.S. notified those in the U.K. about me, giving them information they deemed problematic. Why invite someone who may win when the pretext of the debate was to put the Catholic Church on the defensive? So while the Oxford Union proved to be cowardly, we took their decision as a backhanded compliment. It was a smart move on their part. It was also intellectually dishonest.

On the education front at home, students from Covington Catholic High School in Kentucky were slammed by the media for

abusing an Indian activist in our nation's capital at a March for Life event. A video of the event surfaced showing the activist approaching the students, looking for a confrontation. We called out those who unfairly attacked the students, and there were quite a few who did, including Catholics. The students behaved well, unlike the activist, the media, and pundits.

When those in the arts, education, the entertainment industry, and the media go after Catholics, they usually assault our sensibilities. Bad as that is, nothing is worse than having the heavy hand of government chime in: the power of the state is unparalleled.

In this regard, there was bad news and good news in 2019. The bad news is the extent of such assaults at both the state and federal levels. The good news is the Catholic League was on the winning side in case after case.

Senators Kamala Harris and Mazie Hirono showed their anti-Catholic colors by attacking a Catholic nominee for a job on the federal bench. Brian Buescher was nominated to serve on the U.S. District Court of Nebraska, but his alleged crime was his membership in the Knights of Columbus.

The senators reckoned that there was no place in government for practicing Catholics. To wit: The Knights accept the Church's teachings on marriage, the family, and sexuality, and that is a non-starter for those wedded to the gay and pro-abortion agendas.

We were among the first to come to bat for Buescher, and our effort paid off. After much haggling, he was seated on the court in August.

There was a Trump nominee for a seat on the U.S. District Court for Western Michigan that we took issue with. Michael Bogren said there was no difference between Catholic farm owners refusing to rent their property for the purpose of a

gay wedding and the Klan's right to discriminate against blacks.

We contacted every member of the Senate Judiciary Committee expressing our concerns about his remarks, calling on the chairman of the Committee, Sen. Lindsey Graham, to reject his nomination. Bogren got the message—the tide was turning against him—and he withdrew his nomination on June 11.

When Ralph Northam, the governor of Virginia, appointed an out-and-out anti-Catholic bigot, Gail Gordon Donegan, to a state council on women's issues, we went into high gear: we launched a massive protest, enlisting everyone on our email list. Three days later she resigned.

Rep. Brian Sims is another anti-Catholic bigot. The Pennsylvania legislator badgered an elderly Catholic woman for eight uninterrupted minutes because she was praying outside a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic. His behavior, which was unprovoked, followed an occasion where he aggressively attempted to intimidate teenage girls, hoping to stop them from protesting against abortion.

We contacted the Chairman of the Committee on Ethics, seeking censure. When that effort failed (the operative code dealt with conflict of interest issues), we redoubled our efforts. This time we supported a resolution to censure Sims broached by Rep. Jerry Knowles. After the summer recess, Sims, feeling the pressure, did something he previously refused to do: he apologized to the woman whom he victimized.

Our most satisfying victory of the year was the massive email campaign we orchestrated opposing an effort by a California lawmaker to break the seal of Confession.

This scurrilous attempt to allow the government to encroach on the religious rights of Catholic priests and their penitents was met with a frontal assault. California State Senator Jerry Hill introduced a bill that would require the clergy to report

suspected child abuse or neglect to the authorities, without regard to circumstances.

Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez led the fight and we stood side-by-side with him. Hill was forced to amend his bill, but while it was an improvement, it was still objectionable. On June 12, I wrote to Hill about his bill.

“Regarding SB 360, you have been quoted as saying that ‘the clergy-penitent privilege has been abused on a large scale, resulting in underreported and systemic abuse of thousands of children across multiple denominations and faiths.’ Could you please provide my office with documentation to support that claim? I will not be coy: I don’t believe you can. But go ahead and prove me wrong.”

He never replied. What was he going to say?

We continued to fight Hill, and succeeded in eliciting over 7,000 emails, letters that were sent to those on both sides of the issue. On July 8, on the eve of a scheduled hearing on his initiative, he withdrew his bill.

Dana Nessel, Michigan’s Attorney General, has it out for Catholics. In February, she held a press conference on a state investigation into allegations of clergy sexual abuse. She hit below the belt when she told residents to “ask to see their badge and not their rosary” when contacted by investigators.

We unloaded on Nessel on several occasions, and the good news is that both lawmakers and judges finally caught on to her act.

Michigan State Rep. Beau LaFave called her out for saying that a retired Catholic judge should not have been hired by Michigan State University to address sexual abuse. She complained about his ties to the Catholic Church, as if that should be a disqualifier.

A federal district court judge in Michigan who upheld the religious freedom of a Catholic foster care and adoption agency specifically cited Nessel's "religious targeting" of Catholics. He was unstinting in his rebuke of her anti-Catholic bigotry.

In Pennsylvania, for the second consecutive year, the Catholic League filed an *amicus curiae* brief in the courts defending the rights of priests. We appealed to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in support of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown decision to fight a Superior Court's use of a grand jury report as the starting point in triggering the statutes of limitation. It was unprecedented: it sought to change the practice of allowing the clock to start at the time of the injury. At the end of the year, a decision was still pending.

Perhaps nothing caused more excitement in Catholic circles in 2019 than the 6,000-word essay by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI on the origins of clergy sexual abuse; it was published in April. He was attacked by Catholic left-wing intellectuals for daring to cite the role of the sexual revolution, the role of homosexual priests, and the role of dissent in the Church, as causative agents of the scandal. We were delighted to defend him.

Media bias is nothing new but when *USA Today* ran a lengthy story in early October singling out the Catholic Church for fighting unjust legislation, and the Associated Press (AP) followed within 24 hours with a flawed survey of former priests accused of sexual misconduct, it made us wonder what was going on.

The idea that the Church should not defend itself the way every other organization does was mimicked by the *Star-Gazette* in upstate New York; it appeared the month after the *USA Today* piece ran. We also learned that even before the *USA Today* story ran, CBS and NBC, as well as internet sites, were screaming about all the money the Church was paying for

lobbyists. Yet all of these organizations do not hesitate to acquire the best defense attorneys money can buy when they are in the hot seat.

In November, the Wisconsin affiliate of National Public Radio did a hit job on the Church by dragging up old cases of abuse. Is there any institution in the nation that could not be subjected to the same scrutiny? In December, CNN weighed in with an incredibly inane story on old cases.

For years the media have been lecturing the Church about keeping molesting priests in ministry for too long. What happens when the abusers get the boot? The media complain that the Church is required to police them. How about other employers? Are they expected to “supervise” ex-employees who have been fired for sexual misconduct? No. The “rule” only applies to the Catholic Church.

After AP ran its story in October, similar stories appeared the next month in the *Denver Post*, *USA Today*, and WCP0-TV Cincinnati (the ABC affiliate). When we researched if there were any stories like this done on non-Catholic organizations, we found none.

AP did an investigation into the way diocesan review boards handle cases of alleged abuse. It suggested that defense attorneys hired by the Church were somehow unfair when they grilled the accusers. That is what they are supposed to do.

There are so many wholly indefensible comments made about priests on TV. In 2019, no one was more obscene than Trevor Noah of “The Daily Show.”

Noah got so vulgar and vicious on his Comedy Central show that in the spring we hand-delivered a searing letter to 22 top executives at Viacom (the owner of Comedy Central) asking them to rein him in. “There are other options we can take,” I said, “and I will not hold back. But I thought I should at least apprise you of this matter now in the hope that we won’t have

to pursue other options.”

Noah got the message and pivoted: He laid off the Church.

As expected, organized atheists attacked Christians at Christmastime, but what was different in 2019 was the brazenness of these groups—they attempted to cash in on Christmas.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State sent out a survey as part of its bid to gain new membership; it portrayed those who support religious liberty as proponents of discrimination. Freedom From Religion Foundation ran a full-page ad in the *New York Times* that demonized Christians for exercising their First Amendment right to religious liberty. They accused them of trying to impose a “theocracy” on the nation.

In both instances, these religion-hating organizations—they hate Christians the most, holding a special place for Catholics—used Christmas to raise money while bashing us. It was a new low.

The year 2019 led the Catholic League into battle on many fronts, and we came away with many key victories. This is a tribute to the Catholic League staff and, importantly, to our supporters, without whom we would never be able to score a single victory.

PURSUING OLD CASES OF ABUSE IS AN INJUSTICE

Church-suing lawyers celebrated the holidays with a boatload

of new cases, all in the name of justice. In reality, more injustice than justice will be rendered. The steeple-chasers are jumping on the bandwagon effect of the Pennsylvania grand jury report that was issued in 2018.

A comprehensive news story by the Associated Press details how 15 states have enacted legislation to suspend the statute of limitations to allow the pursuit of old cases of sexual abuse. Why is this unjust? Here are seven good reasons, beginning with Pennsylvania.

Grand jury reports are rarely made public, and with good reason: grand jury members hear only one side of the story—defendants have no voice—and there is no cross examination of witnesses. So the likelihood that an indictment will be granted is quite good. It is because the scales of justice are weighted so heavily against the defendant that Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro should have followed established legal practice and not have released the grand jury report. That was injustice #1. The rights of accused priests were summarily ignored.

Injustice #2 was the initial seating of the grand jury. If established legal practice had been followed from the beginning, there would have been no state grand jury investigation. The entire process began when Shapiro's predecessor, Kathleen Kane (who was subsequently sent to prison for leaking grand jury reports, etc.) fielded a request from Cambria County District Attorney Kathleen Callihan to conduct a statewide investigation of the Catholic Church.

What Callihan did was unusual. When she learned of a case of sexual abuse dating back to the 1990s committed by Brother Stephen Baker at a Catholic high school in Altoona-Johnstown, she could have commenced her own probe. Instead, she pitched it to Kane. Would she have pitched one case of sexual abuse that took place in a public school decades ago to Kane, or would she have pursued it herself? More important, her office

did not nail Baker—his bishop did. It was Bishop Mark Bartchak who told Callihan about him. Had he kept his mouth shut and handled the matter internally—the way almost every other institution in the United States did in the past *and still does today*—there would have been no grand jury.

Injustice #3 is the wave of lawsuits that are engulfing the Church across the nation; it is estimated that more than 5,000 new cases will be pursued, costing the Church more than \$4 billion. If Bishop Bartchak had not contacted the local authorities, and if they did not give the case over to the chief law enforcement in the state, and if he did not release the grand jury report, there would have been no tidal wave of state grand juries launched against the Catholic Church. In other words, the Church is being sabotaged because Bishop Bartchak, unlike others, did what he was supposed to do.

The suspension of the statute of limitations is injustice #4. This is a fundamental 5th Amendment right of due process, one that organizations that are as disparate as the Catholic League and the ACLU can agree on. How can a defendant have his rights protected in cases that extend back decades? Were there any witnesses in the first place? If there were, are they still alive? How accurate is their recall? Moreover, there is a really good chance that the accused priest is dead.

Injustice #5 is the cherry picking that is going on. Most of the lawsuits that have been filed target the Catholic Church. Why is this? For the same reason why most of the billboards and radio advertisements seeking clients cite the Catholic Church and not the public schools or other religions.

Fighting the public school bureaucracy takes time and its records on miscreant employees are not as detailed as those kept by the Church. Most religious bodies do not have a centralized structure, nor do they have established record keeping protocols the way the Catholic Church does. This makes it difficult to probe them. In other words, the Church is a

much easier target. Just as important, there is a clique of Church-hating lawyers who will do anything they can to destroy it.

Injustice # 6 is punishing the innocent: There are millions who depend on Church services, agencies, and institutions for their welfare. By diverting Church funds to pay for the legal fees of cases involving dead or laicized priests, many of the needy will be deprived of the care they need.

Injustice #7 is the failure to make the guilty pay. How is justice served when those who should pay for their offenses will never be prosecuted? To wit: only two of the 301 priests (and others) named in the Pennsylvania grand jury report have been prosecuted.

This is a scam. There will be lots of money exchanged—the lawyers will cream a third of the loot right off the top—but little in the way of justice will be achieved. By any measure, this is not a defensible outcome.

WHY DOES CNN HATE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

In the more than 26 years Bill Donohue has spent at the Catholic League, never has he read a more irresponsible, and just plain dumb, report on clergy sexual abuse in the Catholic Church until he read the CNN Interactive report, “Pedophile Priests Operated at this California School for Decades.” It was featured on the front page of CNN’s website.

To begin with the title is inaccurate: none of the molesting priests in the story are pedophiles—all are homosexuals. How

does Donohue know this? Because every one of these alleged victims was a teenager at a high school. Quite frankly, CNN is involved in a cover-up. It wants to deflect attention away from homosexual priests, who account for the lion's share (80 percent) of the abuse. Less than 5 percent of the abusers have been pedophiles.

As Donohue has said many times (just recently to NBC), the clergy abuse scandal is long over. In the last year we have data for, there were three substantiated cases of abuse made against over 50,000 members of the clergy. That comes to .006 percent, which proves his point.

CNN also proves his point: virtually all the cases it discusses occurred many decades ago, extending back to the 1950s.

Why is CNN doing a big story on old cases of Catholic clergy sexual abuse? Kids are being raped in the public schools all over the nation, and it is going on right now as we speak, so why did CNN not do a big story on that? And if the subject is pedophilia, why not probe Hollywood—it is rich with source material.

Why did CNN choose one Catholic high school out of the entire country to describe the offenses of sick homosexual priests who abused teenage boys decades ago? Because it could not find any new dirt, that's why.

The CNN story further maligns the Church when it offers a totally false quote from Patrick Wall, an angry ex-priest who can always be counted on to slam Catholicism. "Other religious institutes are reporting out lists of credibly accused, they're saying who they are, when they knew about them, where did they work, everything else."

This is a bald-face lie. Which religions? Name them! There may be an occasional release of accused names from a few denominations, but no religion has outed more abusers than the

Catholic Church. And where is the analogue to New York Archbishop Cardinal Timothy Dolan? He outed former cardinal Theodore McCarrick. What minister, rabbi, or imam can CNN name who has outed one of his own senior clergy members? They sure didn't do it at CBS or NBC.

It is embarrassing to note that CNN put five reporters on this non-story. They clearly spent too much time Googling and not enough time speaking to practicing Catholics. This explains why they write about the "Hierarchy of the Secular Clergy," an esoteric term used in some canonical texts; it draws distinctions between members of the clergy. But this is not the way Catholics speak about the hierarchy.

What the reporters were trying to get at, in their own obtuse way, was the distinction between diocesan priests and order priests. The former constitute two-thirds of all priests; the latter comprise the other third. The diocesan priests are under the authority of a bishop; religious order priests are not—they have their own hierarchy.

Why does this matter? Because it shows how clueless these reporters are. "The hierarchy of the Catholic Church that most people are familiar with is called the 'secular clergy.'" Really? Why don't one of these five reporters stand outside a Catholic church on a Sunday and ask the parishioners if they even heard of such a thing as the "secular clergy"?

To say CNN is not a religion-friendly media outlet is too kind. This kind of reporting—sifting through old stories looking for dirt on the Catholic Church while participating in a cover-up—smacks of hatred.

PA GRAND JURY REPORTS MAY BE ABOLISHED

The table has been set for grand jury reports in Pennsylvania to be abolished. That was the recommendation of the Investigating Grand Jury Task Force.

The panel was established in 2017, a year before Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro issued his discredited grand jury report on Catholic priests in the state. While the task force recommendation can do nothing to change what Shapiro did, it vindicates the position of the Catholic League.

Last year, we filed an amicus brief supporting the right of 11 priests, all of whom argued that if their names were made public on a list of accused clergy, it would violate their reputational rights under the state constitution. We won. On December 3, 2018, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled in a 6-1 decision that the grand jury report could not make public the names of the priests.

A grand jury report is not proof of anything. That is why it is common practice not to make public its findings. The accused do not have a chance to defend themselves and there is no cross examination of accusers or witnesses.

The Grand Jury Task Force recommended abolition of what it called a “deeply flawed” system. That system allows grand juries to issue reports that critically assess those who have not been criminally charged. Not only do prosecutors control the proceedings and evidence, the panel said, all they have to do is meet a “preponderance of evidence” standard; they noted that test “can be too effortlessly satisfied.”

Shapiro was hot under the collar when he learned of the report. He singled out the Catholic Church, made wild generalizations, and used his authority to smear the Church.

He is a disgrace.

WCPO CHURCH PROBE SMACKS OF BIAS

The ABC affiliate in Cincinnati, WCPO, recently launched a three-month investigation into Ohio's Catholic dioceses and religious orders seeking to learn how they track priests and brothers who have been accused of sexually abusing minors.

The "I-team" did not investigate any other religious body in the state, nor did it launch a probe of any secular institutions. Yet it is precisely in the public sector where most of the sexual abuse is taking place.

What did it find? It compiled a list of 92 priests and religious brothers who were accused of sexual abuse by one source or another. From the interactive report online, we learned that 60 (65%) are dead.

In its four-part series, it offers a short anecdote of 16 priests and one brother. We did our own tally and here is what we found.

- 7 priests are dead
- 4 have been laicized
- 1 has been removed from ministry
- 1 is awaiting trial
- 1 has been permanently suspended
- 1 is on administrative leave
- 1 has an unknown status
- The one brother is dead

In other words, they are either dead or are inactive. If this were the conclusion of a probe of the public schools, it would be the end of the story. But because it is the Catholic Church that has been selectively put under the microscope, it isn't.

In fact, in the Overview, the report even admits that an indictment of a priest in August was the first time in nearly a decade—in the *Tri-State area*—that a member of the clergy has had an accusation made against him. It would be helpful to know how many public school teachers in the Tri-State area have been accused of sexual abuse in the last decade. But apparently the WCP0 I-Team has little interest in finding out.

The report correctly notes that the Catholic Church isn't required by law to supervise priests who are no longer in ministry. What it should have said, to be more accurate, is that *no institution* is required by law to track, *never mind supervise*, any former employee who was terminated because of sexual misconduct. Not even at WCP0.

So what's the big deal? Shaming. Shaming the Catholic Church—that's what this contrived story is all about. Take, for example, how the report handles the case of Rev. Daniel Pater.

Pater was bounced five years ago by the Vatican for sexually abusing a teenager. But a month after he was fired, he took a job as the director of music for a small Episcopal Church in Lincoln Heights. WCP0 finds this scandalous. Guess who it blames? The Catholic Church. Why didn't the Protestant church ask Pater about his background? Isn't it up to the prospective employer to do some digging? Since when does the burden fall on the organization that kicked the guy out? This is bunk.

What is driving this report is the desire to suspend the statute of limitations for these crimes, allowing alleged victims to sue even if the offense occurred in the 1940s. And as we have seen in other states where this game is played, the

law either does not apply to the public schools, or if it does the steeple-chasing attorneys have no interest in fighting the bureaucracy: they prefer to squeeze the Catholic Church, for reasons both financial and ideological.

It is the family where most sexual abuse of children takes place. Yet no one—not a single attorney—will publicly state that he is available to represent those women whose live-in boyfriend, or the stepfather, has raped their son or daughter. That's because the rapacious lawyers go after the big bucks, hoping to sink the Catholic Church.

"Some may accuse us of revisiting accusations from decades ago that were painful to Catholics," WCPD says. "But our motives are simple: to ensure that the public has more complete information on priests who have been credibly accused of child sexual abuse than local Catholic Church leaders had been willing to provide."

This is wholly unpersuasive. The predicate is false: The sexual abuse of minors is taking place right now in the public schools and universities, yet the reporters are not providing the public with "more complete information" on teachers and professors.

In December 2016, *USA Today* released a study of all 50 states grading them on how they handle sexual abuse in the public schools. On the measure of "Sharing misconduct information," the Ohio public schools received an "F." In 2017, AP studied the same issue and found that in Ohio, "The state education department did not collect information on sex assaults in schools."

In other words, the public schools in Ohio are an utter disgrace in handling this issue. If they don't collect information, and don't share whatever they know about their molesting teachers, it stands to reason that they don't track, much less *supervise*, them.

Ohio's problem with sexual misconduct extends to the university level.

In 2018, it was reported that "Ohio University has more rapes and sexual assaults in general than similar schools in Ohio." This was the finding of Clery Act reports.

In 2019, AP noted that "An Ohio State team doctor [Dr. Richard Strauss] sexually abused at least 177 male students over nearly two decades, and numerous university officials got wind of what was going on but did little to stop him." The report, which was issued by the university, said that "Ohio State personnel knew of complaints and concerns about Strauss's conduct as early as 1979 but failed for years to investigate or take meaningful action."

There is plenty of rich material on sexual abuse in Ohio's public schools and public universities, never mind what is going on in the Tri-State area. The only thing lacking is the will, and the courage, to launch a probe.

NBC SURVEY OF CHURCH EMPLOYEES IS REVEALING

There have been many polls of Catholics, but until now there has not been a survey of those who work for the Catholic Church. NBC has filled that void.

Those who work for the Church are listed in the *Official Catholic Directory*. NBC Owned Television stations around the nation distributed the survey to more than 32,000 employees listed in the volume, 2,700 of whom responded. It included nearly 500 priests and deacons, more than 280 religious

sisters and brothers, along with nearly 1,900 lay employees, the majority of whom were women.

NBC was honest enough to admit that self-select surveys carry a bias that scientific sampling avoids. The latter allows for everyone in the population, or the universe which the sample generalizes about, to have an equal chance of being selected. However, in surveys of the kind NBC undertook, it is entirely acceptable to proceed this way, as long as the limitations are acknowledged.

The survey covers several issues: the sexual abuse scandal; married priests, ordaining women, same-sex marriage, and birth control; fidelity to core Church teachings; and an assessment of Pope Francis' positions on current issues. Of special interest to the Catholic League is the first issue.

Respondents were asked if sexual abuse is "still a major problem." Almost 4 in 10 (39%) said it is; 14% said it "is no longer a major problem"; and 46% said this was never more of a problem for the Catholic Church than it has been for other institutions involved in the care of minors. Nuns were the most alarmed, with 56% reporting that sexual abuse is still a major problem today.

NBC interviewed Bill Donohue for this survey on November 8. The reporter, Chris Glorioso, was very professional. There were no "gotcha" type questions or highly tendentious remarks.

Donohue was asked to comment on all of the issues mentioned, but the one NBC chose to report was his reaction to the response of Church employees to the sexual abuse scandal. Here is his answer as quoted in the transcript.

"This is a result of the poisoning of the public mind. Most of the bad guys, most of the priests who molested, are either dead or they're out of ministry. That's not an opinion, that's a fact."

The basis for Donohue's comment are the annual reports on this issue published by the National Review Board of the bishops' conference. Over the past decade, the average number of credible accusations made against the clergy in the year in which the data were gathered averaged in the single digits. In the last report, of the 50,648 members of the clergy, .006 percent (three of them) had a substantiated accusation made against them. No institution in the nation where adults interact with minors can beat that number.

Why, then, are four in ten Catholics who work for the Church under the impression that the scandal is still ongoing? And why are nuns the most uninformed?

The "poisoning of the public mind" that Donohue refers to is a function of negative perceptions about the Church as promoted by grand jury and attorney general reports, the media, and the entertainment industry.

The government reports, particularly the Pennsylvania grand jury report, give the impression that the scandal is still ongoing even though most of the alleged offenses mentioned in those documents happened long ago; most of the molesters are in fact either dead or out of ministry. And remember, since no cross examination was allowed, these cases represent alleged crimes: they do not represent convictions.

The media have given much coverage to these reports, and while most stories usually have a line or two about these being old cases, the impression given is that not much has changed. Adding to the misperceptions are late-night talk show hosts who constantly ridicule priests as if they are all molesters. This is bigotry, plain and simple.

Why are nuns the most gullible? Some might say they are more sensitive to the victims than others are. Even if this were true, the problem remains: nuns are the most likely to accept the contrived government reports (e.g., the public schools are

never investigated for sexual abuse, even though that is where much of it occurs today), never mind the biased reporting and the skewed commentary that are attendant to them.

Half of all the Church respondents were 60 years of age or over, and it is no secret that many of them lean liberal-left (this is especially true of nuns), making them the most likely to be critical of the way the Church has handled the scandal. It appears they are less persuaded by the evidence, or are unaware of it, than others. Either way, this is troubling.

When asked about feeling comfortable allowing a child to go on an overnight retreat supervised by a member of the clergy or a person of trust in their parish or organization, roughly half of the Church employees said there was at least one chaperone with whom they would not feel comfortable. Yet 81 percent believe their parish or organization has handled the issue of abuse properly.

This is not surprising, nor is it problematic. Most Catholics have not had any personal experience dealing with a molesting priest, yet may be wary of allowing a young person to go on an overnight retreat. If this question were asked of non-Catholics in a slightly different way—"Would you feel comfortable allowing young people to go on an overnight camping trip with adult men from your community?"—it is likely that many would not feel comfortable, at least not with all of them.

When respondents were asked if they think media coverage of the scandal has been mostly fair, 64% said no. Diocesan priests were the most critical of the media.

The NBC survey shows that some in the media are still capable of being non-partisan. More should be.

WISCONSIN PUBLIC RADIO'S HIT JOB ON THE CHURCH

Why is the public paying for public radio? Have we a shortage of media outlets these days? That is the real question. For now, however, we must deal with their abuses.

Recently, Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR) ran a story on the Catholic Church that was much ado about nothing. It tried hard to find new instances of priestly sexual abuse and wound up with two, both of which are being contested in the courts. Indeed the first tale it rolls out is of a woman who says she was abused in 1965, but never said anything about it for decades, until, inexplicably, her memory was jogged.

Too bad the reporters are so incurious. Repressed memory is regarded by psychiatrists as an unreliable concept of no scientific value. Indeed, what they have found is that the more horrific the past experience is, the more likely the victim will never forget it.

The reason why WPR's story is almost exclusively on old cases of abuse is because the Catholic Church has long since cleaned up its act. It found, however, someone from Catholic circles to challenge this verity.

It quotes the head of the National Review Board, the body appointed by the bishops to issue annual reports on this issue, as indicating that this problem is still ongoing. Francesco Cesareo, commenting on the latest data, said, "These current allegations point to the reality that sexual abuse of minors by the clergy should not be considered by the bishops as a thing of the past or a distant memory."

One cannot fault WPR for quoting him—what he said feeds its narrative. But it speaks badly of both of them that they find this assessment persuasive. Cesareo noted that “the most recent audits uncovered 26 new allegations from current minors, three of which were substantiated and seven of which were unsubstantiated.”

He didn’t do the math, so we did. Of the 50,648 members of the clergy, .006 percent (three of them) had a substantiated accusation made against them. *There is no institution in the nation that can match that—not a single religious or secular entity has such a low percentage of accusations made against their current employees.* In other words, Cesareo’s dire conclusion is unwarranted and is indeed undercut by his own data. This should have been evident to WPR.

The data also implode the unsubstantiated observation by WPR that “parishioners continue to come forward with fresh accusations.” They manifestly do not—the data indicate just the opposite. What we are hearing about are old cases just now being resurrected.

It does not help WPR’s credibility to cite the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), a rogue outfit (it is not an organization) that has consistently lied and whose leadership had been totally discredited.

WPR cites the Pennsylvania grand jury report which found “an estimated 300 priests who had abused about 1,000 children in six of the state’s eight Catholic dioceses.” This is factually wrong.

These cases, which extend back to World War II, are all based on *allegations*, not proven instances of abuse. Indeed, the accused, most of whom are dead or out of ministry, never had a chance to defend themselves, and, of course, none of the accusers were subjected to cross examination. In the end, only three priests were prosecuted.

WPR blithely notes that a proposed Clergy Mandatory Reporter Act would do away with the religious exemption afforded the confessional. "Some Catholics fear this will compromise the sanctity of the confessional," it says. Some? No practicing Catholic would ever say anything otherwise, and no priest would ever comply. Journalists, psychiatrists and lawyers all depend on confidentiality protections when they deal with their sources, patients, and clients. The priest-penitent relationship is no less serious.

If WPR were really interested in doing an exposé on the sexual abuse of minors—one that is going on in real time—it would do some digging into the Wisconsin public schools.

In December 2016, *USA Today* did an investigation of sexual abuse in the public schools, by state, and found that Wisconsin merited an "F" in "Sharing Misconduct Information." In other words, when molesting teachers are shipped off to some other school the new school is never apprised of what they are getting. It is so common in the public schools that it is called "passing the trash."

There is plenty of trash for WPR to probe. But first it must get over its fixation of digging up old dirt about the Catholic Church.