

# AP'S "INVESTIGATION" IS FARCICAL

The Associated Press (AP) says it conducted an "investigation" of the way Catholic dioceses determine whether an accusation of sexual abuse by a priest is credible or not. It says it probed the diocesan review boards and consulted grand jury and state attorney general reports. On this basis it concluded that the review boards have failed.

It would be more accurate to say that AP has failed. It provided no data, just anecdotes. Where is the summary data combed from the diocesan review boards? Moreover, every anecdote that AP offers is critical of the Church. Did the reporters find no instances where the system worked well? How many were there? What criteria did they use to collect their information? Or did they simply report the most negative comments they could find?

Everyone has an opinion of his dentist. Some have good experiences and others do not. If we wanted to know how patients feel about their dentists we would want to interview a sample of them. Then we would offer a tally, broken down by how favorable their treatment was. That would be a real investigation.

This is not what AP did. It did not sample those who have gone before a diocesan review board to see how they rated their treatment. Which explains the lack of summary data.

When AP did an investigation of sexual abuse in the public schools in 2007, it published the evidence culled from its effort, and then peppered its probe with anecdotes. That is the way it is supposed to be done. But that is not what AP did in this report on the diocesan review boards. It did nothing but offer anecdotes, *all* of them negative.

If an investigation of dentists reported only the unfavorable accounts, would anyone conclude it was fair? That is why this AP investigation is farcical. There are many other holes in this report.

The report is critical of having defense attorneys who represent the Church on review boards. It suggests this could be a conflict of interest. It also objects to the boards operating in "secret," and that they go by different names. Furthermore, it quotes those who were ill-treated by the board. Objections are also raised about having higher standards of proof for deceased priests accused of abuse.

If there is a single thread that is evident in all of these criticisms it is the assumption that the accusers are always right and that the Church should just accept what they say. *Nowhere in this report of 4630 words is there even a hint that accused priests have rights.* They are assumed to have none.

Sexual abuse does not take place in public, making determinations of guilt or innocence difficult. They are even more difficult when the alleged offense took place decades ago. They are next to impossible to resolve when the accused is dead. This never seems to cross the minds of the reporters.

Of course, the Church employs defense attorneys: the charges against the accused are serious and the accused has state and constitutional rights that must be observed. It is curious that neither AP, nor anyone else, ever raises conflict of interest issues with lawyers who make millions suing the Church, and who offer huge donations to professional victims' groups, who in turn provide the attorneys with new clients.

Does AP know of any institution in the nation, religious or secular, that conducts investigations of accused employees in public? Are they not *always* done behind closed doors? Why, then, the jab at the Church for operating in "secret"? We don't need any more stereotypes feeding the worst instincts of

the Church's enemies. And, yes, dioceses vary in the way they name their review boards. Only those with an animus against the Church would ascribe malicious motive to this unremarkable practice.

AP's most extensive anecdote cites a middle-age man who was allegedly mistreated by the Church. But was he?

The review board in St. Petersburg, Florida ruled against him, saying it could not substantiate his story of being abused by a priest. He's angry. So? Does he have a right to be? He complains that when he was questioned by the review board, the chairwoman interrupted him when he repeated himself. So what?

When he was asked to recall some specifics regarding the place of the alleged abuse and whether anyone else was there, he started to cry. So? Is this supposed to be proof that he is telling the truth? Why couldn't it be read as an admission that his tale was coming apart? We don't know. What we do know is that the accused can't defend himself—he's dead.

The AP report just assumes this alleged victim is telling the truth, providing zero evidence that the review board unjustly rejected his case.

If some review boards raise the bar on cases where the accused is deceased, asserting a higher level of proof, why is that unfair? Would it be fair to the priest's siblings, or his nephews and nieces, that their brother or uncle—who cannot defend himself—was found guilty without clearing a high bar?

Finally, offering as proof testimony taken from grand jury reports is absurd. Grand juries hear one side of the story—the side of the accuser—and none of them is subjected to cross examination. Therefore, what is typically reported are truths, half-truths, and lies. It would be like releasing only the testimony of the accused who claims he is innocent without ever disclosing the accuser's account. Everyone would see that as a game. It is also a game to focus on grand jury and state

AG reports.

AP is capable of doing excellent work. This is not an example of it.

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## **BLOOMBERG BOMBS ON KEY SOCIAL ISSUES**

It was New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani who turned New York around after the disastrous administration of his predecessor, David Dinkins, and it is a credit to Michael Bloomberg that he continued the quality of life improvements instituted by Giuliani. But on two key social issues—abortion and religious liberty—the presidential candidate was a total bomb.

Bloomberg is one of the most radical pro-abortion politicians in American history. When he first ran for mayor of New York in 2001, he pledged to force everyone training to become an obstetrician or a gynecologist in a city hospital to learn how to perform an abortion. It was NARAL's New York City office that pushed him to accept this outrageous policy. Bloomberg issued an executive order on this issue, but in the end he allowed for moral and religious exemptions.

In 2012, the Susan G. Komen Foundation decided to stop funding Planned Parenthood. The pushback from the pro-abortion community was severe, and three days later it reversed its decision. But in that short interim, Bloomberg was so angry with what happened that he personally donated \$250,000 to Planned Parenthood. The previous year he came to bat for Planned Parenthood when Congress considered cutting \$75 million.

Bloomberg's passion for abortion allowed him to appropriate \$15 million from a civic facility revenue bond transaction that benefited Planned Parenthood. In 2012, the proceeds of the bond were used to finance the renovation of 104,000 square feet of space in the building that housed the abortion giant, supplying it with equipment and furnishing. The new national headquarters was publicly funded even though the Planned Parenthood Federation of America posted a budget of over \$1 billion in 2009-2010.

On religious liberty issues, Bloomberg's record was similarly awful.

He did not endear himself to Irish Catholics in 2005 when he said he wanted to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade so he could pressure the organizers to allow homosexuals to march under their own banner. His press secretary explained his boss' reasoning by saying, "The mayor believes the best way to change an organization is to do so from within." So here we had an agent of the state—the chief executive of New York City—injecting himself into a religious event so he could promote a secular agenda that would undermine its cause.

The courts have long ruled that religious groups have a right to use public facilities, yet Bloomberg denied the right of an inner-city Christian church to hold religious services in a public school on Sundays, setting up a court challenge. He lost in federal district court in 2005, but his censorial effort was not lost on supporters of the Bronx Household of Faith.

Sometimes Bloomberg acts cowardly when confronted with religious liberty issues. He did so in 2007 when a midtown hotel agreed to display in its store-front window a 6-foot, 200-pound anatomically correct chocolate sculpture of Jesus during Holy Week. The Catholic League protested and public opinion forced the hotel to shut down the exhibit. But the best Bloomberg could do was to say the display should be

ignored.

He was similarly agnostic when the owner of the Empire State Building refused to illuminate the building in blue-and-white to honor the centenary of Mother Teresa's birthday in 2010. The Catholic League assembled 3,500 protesters in the street outside the iconic building—the owner had previously recognized the 60th anniversary of Red China's genocidal regime—but Bloomberg did not want to get involved. He simply said that the owner should “be consistent.”

In 2011, the Staten Island Ferry Terminals were bereft of holiday displays. Not only were religious symbols such as nativity scenes and menorahs banned, but Bloomberg approved the censoring of secular displays, such as Christmas trees, as well.

Bloomberg's biggest insult to people of faith was the way he handled the 9/11 ceremonies on the tenth anniversary of the bombings. He banned the clergy, from all religions, from participating: He would not allow a priest, minister, rabbi, or imam to make a short statement. He made matters worse when he had the gall to say that “government shouldn't be forcing” religion “down people's throats.” But somehow it was okay for him to shove his secular values down the throats of the faithful.

He was also duplicitous. The same mayor who invoked separation of church and state to institute a gag rule on religious speech was already on record promoting the building of a mosque near Ground Zero. He was entirely understanding of the move by American Atheists to sue New York City over two steel beams shaped like a cross that were found in the debris of the Twin Towers disaster; the atheists objected when the cross was moved from St. Peter's Catholic Church to its new home at the 9/11 Memorial.

Bloomberg's policies on abortion and religious liberty are not

known to most Americans. Now that he has set his sights on the White House, it is time his sordid legacy is widely known.

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## **PELOSI DEFENSIVELY INVOKES HER RELIGION**

As House Speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi was leaving her press conference recently, reporter James Rosen asked her, “Do you hate the president, Madame Speaker?”

Pelosi was livid. She spun around and, pointing at Rosen, said, “I was raised in a Catholic house. We don’t hate anybody—not anybody in the world. So don’t accuse me of that.” Rosen replied that he never accused her of anything. Red hot with anger, she returned to the podium where she warned him, “don’t mess with me.”

Regarding President Trump, she labeled him a “cruel” man. She then went back to the well. “As a Catholic,” she said, “I resent you using the word hate in a sentence that addresses me.”

Whether Pelosi hates the president, or anyone else, is impossible to say, though labeling him “cruel” surely invites speculation.

What bothers many practicing Catholics is her selective invocation of her Catholic status. Here are a few examples.

- Pelosi is a champion of abortion rights, for any reason, and at any time of pregnancy, including instances when a baby can be killed who is 80 percent born. [Note: The U.S. bishops recently named “the threat of abortion” as the “preeminent

priority” for Catholics.]

- Pelosi rejects the Church’s teachings on marriage, holding that two men can marry and raise a family (adopted children, of course) in a manner that is no different from the normal arrangement of a man and a woman.
- Pelosi works tirelessly to support bills like the Equality Act that would devastate religious liberty while also undermining the Catholic Church.
- Pelosi will never support school vouchers for indigent minorities, consigning them to public schools that wealthy white people like her wouldn’t set foot in.

Pelosi is such a rank hypocrite that she not only selectively, and defensively, wears her religion on her sleeve, she has the gall to call herself a “conservative Catholic.”

She would be well advised either to stop rejecting Church teachings on core moral issues, or stop playing the Catholic card to justify her opposition to them.

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## **WHITE DEMOCRATS HAVE A RELIGION PROBLEM**

The Pew Research Center recently released a survey on religion’s role in society. Of particular interest to the Catholic League are those Americans who are religion-friendly versus those who are not.

The majority of Americans believe that churches and religious organizations (a) do more good than harm (b) strengthen morality in society, and (c) mostly bring people together. That is a good sign. But this is not true of Democrats in general, and of white Democrats, in particular.

While a clear majority of Republicans (71%) believe religion does more good than harm, only 44% of Democrats believe this is true. Republicans are also more likely to see religion as an agent that strengthens morality (68%) versus only 41% of Democrats. Does religion mostly bring people together? Yes, say 65% of Republicans; just 39% of Democrats feel this way.

When broken down by race, it is clear that white Democrats differ sharply with black Democrats. Regarding the issue of religion doing more good than harm, 57% of blacks say this is true while only 39% of whites agree. The majority of blacks (52%) contend that religion strengthens morality in society and that it mostly brings people together. Just a third of whites think this way about these two issues (35% and 32%, respectively). Hispanics fell in between on these matters.

It is striking that a plurality of white Democrats see religion as mostly pushing people apart (36% feel this way as opposed to 32% who think religion brings people together). Only 21% of black Democrats maintain that religion mostly pushes people apart.

The relative hostility on the part of Democrats to religion—largely driven by whites—is not lost on the public. When asked if the Republican Party is generally friendly toward religion, 54% agreed but only 19% said the Democratic Party was.

Which professions are the most unfriendly to religion? University professors and news reporters and news media. It is hardly a secret that the vast majority of professors and reporters are Democrats and that they are not exactly known for being religion-friendly.

What makes this situation so sad is that throughout the twentieth century, up until the time of Reagan, the Democratic Party was the home for most Catholics. But given the Party's positions on abortion, marriage, religious liberty, and other

moral issues, many Catholics have strayed, becoming either Republicans or independents.

Looks like the Dems have a religion problem, especially white Democrats.