

FBI-CATHOLIC SPY RING WAS BIG; NEW INFO IS ALARMING

We have known for years about an anti-Catholic cell group in the FBI that was operative under President Biden. It spied on practicing Catholics, not just those who have been dubbed “radical-traditionalist Catholics” (RTCs). We now know, thanks to FBI Director Kash Patel, and Senate Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley, how widespread it was. Indeed, the extent of this unconstitutional probe was far greater than we were led to believe by former FBI Director Christopher Wray.

On February 9, 2023, Bill Donohue expressed his initial concerns about the FBI’s investigation of RTCs. He had a hunch that this probe was a ruse, and that the Bureau was really interested in targeting practicing Catholics. He asked, “What’s next? Will it be a war on ‘Catholics who are orthodox?’” It turned out he was right. The FBI went after “mainline” Catholics, not just RTCs.

Wray has insisted all along that the Richmond field office of the FBI was the only office that was involved in this anti-Catholic witch hunt. What Grassley has now revealed proves how untrue this is.

The Richmond memo, detailing the Catholic spy operation (which was first made public by an FBI whistleblower), was distributed to over 1,000 FBI employees across the country before it was publicly disclosed. In fact, the FBI produced at least 13 additional documents and five attachments that made plain its anti-Catholic bigotry. That it relied on information from a hate group, the Southern Poverty Law Center, makes this unseemly caper all the more despicable.

Grassley even revealed a second FBI memo that was drafted for distribution by the Richmond field office. The Iowa Republican

noted that “The draft memo repeated the unfounded link between traditional Catholicism and violent extremism, but was never published due to backlash following the Richmond Memo’s public disclosure. The existence of this second memo contradicts former FBI Director Christopher Wray’s testimony that the Richmond field office only produced ‘a single product.’”

The new batch of documents on the Biden FBI Catholic spy ring makes it clear that those responsible for this obscene gambit need to be held accountable. Wray said he was “aghast” when he learned that “mainline” Catholics were being targeted, and former Attorney General Merrick Garland said he was “appalled.” They need to be subpoenaed to find out why they did nothing about it.

Remember, Catholics who are “pro-life,” “pro-family” and who believe there are only two sexes were called “domestic terrorists” by Biden’s FBI.

Those responsible for this outrageous violation of the First Amendment rights of Catholics need to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. We need to know the whole truth.

ANTIFA PROBE NEEDED

A group of Christians recently held a pro-family rally in Seattle and were attacked by Antifa anarchists for doing so.

This is exactly the kind of incident that President Trump’s Commission on Religious Liberty needs to investigate. We contacted their lawyers, and they agreed to do so.

On May 24, a Christian pro-family group, Mayday USA, held one of its #DontMessWithOurKids rallies in Seattle. They were

there to combat the radical transgender movement which is exploiting vulnerable young people. It didn't take long before they were assaulted by Antifa.

They wore their signature black-clad garb and masks, and some exposed themselves publicly. The mayor, Bruce Harrell, a Democrat, blamed the pro-family group, saying they "inspired violence," yet all 23 of those arrested were from the Antifa gang.

The anarchists waved transgender flags and threw water bottles and other objects at the police. Some jumped the police barrier and assaulted the cops. They called their protest "Keep Your Bibles Off Our Bodies," saying their goal was to fight "fascist family values."

One of the pastors who led the pro-family rally, Russell Johnson, wrote that the Seattle mayor "owes Christians in WA State an apology for his bigoted remarks after folks who were holding a peaceful worship event at Cal Anderson Park were violently assaulted for the high crime of expressing their deeply held religious beliefs in the form of a permitted worship event on city property."

The pastor thanked us for our support.

POPE LEO XIV STRESSES CHARACTER FORMATION

Exactly one week after being elected, Pope Leo XIV spoke to Catholic teachers, making plain that his idea of education transcends the ABC's. He implored them to "dedicate yourselves to the formation of the young with enthusiasm, fidelity and a

spirit of sacrifice.”

He specifically spoke to the issue of values. “What, in the world of youth today, are the most urgent challenges to be faced? What values are to be promoted?”

From a Catholic perspective, the values that young people adopt must be grounded in obligations to others. This is difficult these days given the cultural emphasis on self-absorption. Indeed, focusing “on the other” is a radical idea in many parts of the world.

The Holy Father nicely summarizes the challenges that await young people. “Think of the isolation caused by rampant relational models increasingly marked by superficiality, individualism and emotional instability; the spread of patterns of thought weakened by relativism; and the prevalence of rhythms and lifestyles in which there is not enough room for listening, reflection and dialogue, at school, in the family, and sometimes among peers themselves, with consequent loneliness.”

In sounding the alarms over individualism and relativism, Leo sounds more like Saint John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI than Pope Francis. His statement comes at a time when parents are struggling with the allure that technology has for their children.

A new study of young people and their parents found that “Two-thirds (67%) of parents fear they’re losing precious moments with their children due to screen addiction.” Indeed, parents spend almost 100 hours fighting with their kids over screen time every year. It is so bad that 41 percent of moms and dads are afraid they’re “losing their little ones’ childhood to technology completely.”

Screen addiction is isolating, resulting in the loneliness that Leo warns about. Social media may bind some people together, but it also causes much consternation, especially

for girls.

The pope's comments on the loneliness that so many young people are experiencing is underscored by a survey from Tufts University on the mental status of men and women. It found a significant difference between liberals and conservatives, and much of the gap is explained by the prevalence, or the absence, of religious beliefs and practices.

Almost half (45 percent) of those who describe themselves as politically liberal say their mental health is poor, as compared to less than one-in-five (19 percent) who identify as conservative. Surely the liberal worldview which sees oppression as ubiquitous has something to do with this dreary outcome. But there is more to this than being angry and forlorn.

We have known for a long time that the more religious a person is, the better that person's mental *and physical* health is. A Pew survey found that 86 percent of conservatives identify with a religion, and religious people are more likely to describe themselves as "very happy." Liberals tend to be secularists and they miss out on the sense of belongingness that religious beliefs and practices afford.

A news story on this subject recorded the sentiments of Fay Dubinsky, a 28-year-old mother of two. "People my age, their life is about them, and serving themselves, and always seeking out more pleasure. I grew up Jewish and religious, and I think that's probably one of the reasons that I'm not depressed or anxious. I have so much meaning in my life, and that's not typical of my generation."

The values-centered approach favored by Pope Leo speaks to the necessity of character formation. There needs to be a national discussion about this issue. Unless parents and teachers pay as much attention to the acquisition of traditional moral values as they do standard pedagogical concerns, they are

doing young people a disservice. Developing the right character in young people is not an easy task. It takes work, and plenty of it.

Stanford University professor William Damon faults the public schools for their refusal to provide for citizenship education. He notes that the Obama administration “closed down the Department of Education’s character education desk as soon as it took office.”

This was a very serious attack on young people. “Although most parents would like to see schools impart values such as honesty and responsibility to their children,” Damon writes, “character education in public education has been hindered by progressive resistance to instruction that makes claims about right and wrong in the face of cultural variation (even when such claims focus on values such as truth and obligation that virtually all cultures respect).”

Damon is right. The problem is not the parents—it’s the progressive professors and activists who falsely claim that ideas about right and wrong vary widely by culture. In fact, anthropologists have long known that there are hundreds of cultural universals, seminal ideas about morality that are commonly held.

What Pope Leo XIV told Catholic teachers needs a much bigger audience. All students, in every school, public, private or parochial, need character formation. An educated, but virtue starved, student is no asset to society.

CAMDEN BISHOP THROWS IN THE TOWEL

For seven years, the Diocese of Camden fought attempts by the New Jersey Attorney General to empanel a grand jury to examine allegations of clergy sexual abuse extending back to 1940. Every Catholic organization that was contacted this past winter refused to submit an amicus brief in support of the diocese, with the exception of the Catholic League. We regret doing so given the timidity of Bishop Joseph Williams.

Two lower courts, the trial and appellate courts, agreed with the diocese that state law prohibits empanelling a grand jury to examine allegations against private individuals and private institutions. But on June 16, the Supreme Court reversed these rulings, holding that the diocese cannot block such proceedings. The state can now go forward, if it chooses to do so. As for now, the situation is moot: the Supreme Court held there is nothing to review.

The Catholic League's beef with Bishop Williams stems from his decision on May 5 to walk away from this case. He did so exactly one week after diocesan lawyers, and our attorney, Russell Giancola, addressed the Supreme Court. The diocese's lawyers never contacted Bill Donohue or our attorney—we found out from priests who read about it on May 6. And Bishop Williams never responded to Donohue's letter. This is the thanks we get for trying to help. It seems some on our side never learn.

Below is the text of Donohue's letter.

May 15, 2025

Most Rev. Joseph A. Williams
Bishop of Camden
631 Market St.

Camden, NJ 08102

Your Excellency:

In late winter, I was asked by attorneys for the Diocese of Camden if the Catholic League would be interested in filing an amicus brief in defense of the diocese. They learned that we had successfully defended priests in Pennsylvania and wanted us on board.

I immediately called lawyers in Pittsburgh whom I had worked with before and was able to secure counsel. On March 14, I signed an engagement letter with Russell Giancola; he works at the Pittsburgh office of Leech Tishman. I mailed him a check for a retainer deposit, and when additional funding was later needed, I provided it.

At issue was the right of New Jersey prosecutors to launch a grand jury investigation of priests who had been accused of sexually abusing minors. Under New Jersey law, grand juries are established to investigate public agencies such as prisons and police departments. Targeting private individuals or private institutions are not permitted. Therefore, going after the Catholic clergy—investigating alleged molestation of minors dating back to 1940—is unwarranted.

It seemed fairly straightforward, and indeed the Camden Diocese won in the lower courts on two occasions. Another round of court challenges occurred on April 28 of this year. Our attorney was given the opportunity to address the court and he did. So far so good.

On May 6, a New Jersey priest contacted me—not your lawyers or anyone working for you—with the news: you pulled the plug on the proceedings. It is true that you were new to the diocese, but you knew the history of this case.

After seven years of fighting this issue, and only a week after the last court date, you asked your attorneys to inform

the state Supreme Court that you no longer wanted to prevent a grand jury from being impaneled.

Some are cheering your decision. I am not. Our attorney was told that no organization—save for the Catholic League—was interested in filing an amicus brief in defending your diocese; professional victims' groups were lining up on the other side.

In the May 2 edition of *Catholic Star Herald*, you expressed grave reservations, and a clear sense of uneasiness, over this case. In the May 9 edition, you explained your decision to withdraw.

You made it clear that you felt it was hypocritical of the diocese to preach transparency while seeking to deny a grand jury probe. But was it not hypocritical of you to preach the merits of due process for priests and then abandon them at the last minute?

Grand juries are one-sided: they do not allow for cross examination of witnesses. So anything can be said about any priest and he has no right to defend himself, including you. This hit home with us when the Catholic League won in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court by defending the reputational rights of priests who said they were unfairly maligned in the grand jury report.

To be sure, all of those who claim to have been victimized are entitled to their day in court. Make no mistake about my position: There is no excuse for sexually abusing anyone, never mind minors. But not all priests who have been accused are guilty, and they, too, are entitled to their day in court.

In this case, the central legal issue had nothing to do with sexual abuse—it had to do with an attempt to override state law on the conditions that allow for a grand jury to be established. No other religious organization was to be subjected to a grand jury, and no public school was either.

The latter is critical because state law allows for a grand jury probe of public institutions, *yet no state executive or legislator has ever had any interest in doing so—they are only interested in going after the Catholic Church, and it is a private institution.*

You said that one of the reasons why you changed your mind was your meeting with an alleged victim. You are to be commended for doing so. But I noticed in your May 2 column you said that you were “consulting survivors, fellow bishops, legal experts and diocesan officers” about what to do. Too bad you didn’t include parish priests, some of whom have contacted my office expressing their dismay.

I put my sociological training to task when I wrote *The Truth about Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes*, published by Ignatius. I know, and certainly you know, that almost all the guilty clergy are either dead or have been dismissed from the priesthood. The hunt for abuse cases extending back to before the U.S. entered the Second World War—when no other institution is subjected to the same scrutiny—is not about the pursuit of justice. It is about sticking it to the Catholic Church.

I would appreciate hearing from you about this matter.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President

TIME TO PROBE ABUSE IN NJ SCHOOLS

The duplicity of probing Catholic dioceses for the sexual abuse of minors, while allowing the public schools to run rampant, has recently been most evident in New Jersey. Here is our response.

June 18, 2025

Hon. Matthew J. Platkin
New Jersey Attorney General
25 Market St.
Trenton, NJ 08611

Dear Attorney General Platkin:

There is no crisis of the sexual abuse of minors in the Catholic Church today—anywhere in the nation—but there is one extant in New Jersey's public schools. It is time to commence a grand jury to investigate the extent of it.

To my first point, recently released data by investigators charged with accounting for the sexual abuse of minors conducted by the Catholic clergy found that between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, there were exactly two substantiated cases made against 48,176 members; this comes to 0.004 percent. This is not the figure for New Jersey—it is the figure for the United States.

Your office has been laboring for seven years to empanel a grand jury to probe Catholic dioceses on this issue. On June 16, the New Jersey State Supreme Court ruled that this can be done, even though state law says that such proceedings can only be brought against public institutions. The Diocese of Camden, which we supported in an amicus brief, threw in the towel, leaving the door open to a grand jury probe.

If you are going to continue to go after the Catholic Church, where there is no crisis, you surely must go after the public schools, where one exists today. You won't have to worry about state law—grand juries can be authorized against the public schools. But for some reason, they never are. You can now correct this double standard.

Are you aware of what is going on in New Jersey's public schools?

- In April 2025, it was reported that six former Cherry Hill students accused the school district of failing to protect them from a teacher who sexually abused them four decades ago. Six lawsuits have been filed in Camden County Superior Court since 2023, half of them in April. The lawsuits also allege that Cherry Hill school district officials failed to make required reports of suspected abuse to the state's child welfare agency.
- In January 2025, a Middle Township Elementary School teacher in South Jersey, who gave birth to a child whose father was her student, was accused of sexually abusing the student in her home.
- In December 2024, matters got so bad in Paterson that officials from the federal Department of Education had to step in. For five years school officials allegedly failed to address sexual harassment, including sexual assault, despite numerous complaints.
- In April 2024, a Mercer County high school teacher was charged with sexually assaulting a student. This allegedly happened multiple times at Hamilton High School West.
- In February 2024, a substitute teacher who works in Camden County was charged with the sexual assault of a 14-year-old girl multiple times.

It gets worse. In November 2024, a panel of judges found that two school districts, South Orange-Maplewood and Upper Freehold Regional, cannot be found "vicariously liable" for the sexual abuse of children in their schools. The judges

ruled that school districts could not be sued for the teachers' conduct when they allegedly sexually assaulted students.

Catholics deserve an even playing field. It is outrageous that school districts cannot be sued when their teachers molest their students, but Catholic dioceses can. More outrageous is the non-stop investigation of Catholic institutions—when all the data show that this problem has long been resolved—while the public schools get a pass, even though that is where this problem continues today.

If you, or state lawmakers, want to start a probe of this problem in the public schools, be sure you go back to 1940 looking for offenses. That is what your office is doing to Catholic dioceses. If you do not, singling out Catholic institutions for a grand jury investigation smacks of religious profiling, which in this case amounts to anti-Catholicism.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President

cc: New Jersey state lawmakers

TRUMP'S DOJ SUES OVER THE CONFESSIONAL

The state of Washington is being sued by the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Civil Rights Division for violating the First Amendment right of priests to maintain confidentiality in the

Confessional. The law, which was signed by Gov. Bob Ferguson on May 2, is due to go into effect July 27.

The Catholic League was the first lay Catholic organization in the nation to write to Washington legislators about this issue.

On February 10, Bill Donohue raised the following question to the lawmakers, "What broke?" He specifically asked, "where is the evidence that child molesters—in any state—report their crimes to priests in the confessional? We have been studying this issue for decades but we can't name a single instance where this has happened. If any lawmaker has evidence to the contrary, you have an obligation to make it public." Not surprisingly, no one did.

Next to weigh in was the DOJ. On May 5, Harmeet K. Dhillon, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, and Michael E. Gates, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, wrote to Gov. Ferguson putting him on notice that they are taking this issue seriously. To that end, they asked for selected documents. We thanked the Trump team for their decision the next day.

On May 20, Donohue wrote to Sen. Noel Frame, the most vocal supporter of this attack on the Sacrament of Reconciliation. His main complaint was the encroachment of the state on religion, as witnessed by her comment that the Catholic Church should change Canon law teachings on the priest-penitent privilege. Donohue returned the favor by saying Washington's law legalizing doctor-assisted suicide should be changed to mirror the Canon law position.

In its lawsuit against Washington, the DOJ argues that the bill "unconstitutionally forces Catholic priests in Washington to choose between their obligations to the Catholic Church and their penitents or face criminal consequences, while treating the priest-penitent privilege differently than other well-

settled privileges.”

This line of argument is persuasive. It has long been accepted as a legal privilege to guard the confidentiality of attorney-client, doctor-patient and psychotherapist-patient, as well as the privilege afforded the priest and his penitent. Indeed, the latter has been accepted law since it was first broached in *People v. Phillips* in New York, an 1813 ruling that set the table for subsequent decisions. The Supreme Court cited the priest-penitent privilege in both the Watergate tapes case *United States v. Nixon* (1974), and in *Trammel v. United States* (1980).

We commend the Trump administration for standing up for the rights of priests.

DO CATHOLICS WANT A MORE INCLUSIVE CHURCH?

A recent Pew Research Center survey of Catholics concluded that they want the Catholic Church to be “more inclusive.” But do they?

No sooner are we told that “Most U.S. Catholics Say They Want the Church to be ‘More Inclusive’” when we learn how seriously qualified that conclusion is. What matters is whether Catholics are practicing or not.

It needs to be asked: If Catholics do not practice their religion, can they really be counted in a poll on Catholics?

As Pew reports, practicing Catholics and non-practicing Catholics have little in common. The former are much more

accepting of Church teachings on an array of issues; the latter are not. For example, the majority of Catholics who attend Mass weekly say the Church should not allow women to become priests, and two-thirds say the Church should not recognize gay and lesbian marriages. Those who are not regular Church-goers favor both.

The survey found that 53 percent of U.S. Catholics who attend Mass weekly say the Church should stick to its traditional teachings, even if that means it gets smaller. This was exactly the position taken by Pope Benedict XVI. Indeed, he believed that a smaller Church was a better Church. Commenting on this observation, Pope Francis called Benedict a “prophet” for predicting the Church would become a smaller, but more faithful, institution.

This vision of a smaller but better Church flies in the face of a “more inclusive” Church.

Moreover, three surveys commissioned by the Catholic League reveal that despite the strong secular bent of the dominant culture, most Catholics—especially those who regularly attend Mass—do not want to belong to a Church that “goes with the flow.”

This contradicts the conventional narrative about Catholics wanting more “inclusivity.” It also contradicts the notion that the Church needs to be more “relevant.” In fact, the more “relevant” any religion is today, the more irrelevant it is in the eyes of its adherents—they are losing members the fastest. Meanwhile, orthodox strains within every religion are doing the best.

Why does it matter so much to survey houses like Pew that they keep on polling Catholics to see if they reject the Church’s teachings, especially on women and sexuality? Because it provides ammo for those who are pressing the hierarchy about the need to change and get with the times.

This smacks more of a political agenda than a scientific enterprise. The latest Pew survey proves it.

BOOK ON CHURCH IS SERIOUSLY FLAWED

Philip Shenon, *Jesus Wept: Seven Popes and the Battle for the Soul of the Catholic Church* (Knopf)

Every now and then along comes a book on the Catholic Church that causes quite a stir. This is certainly true of *Jesus Wept: Seven Popes and the Battle for the Soul of the Catholic Church*. Written by former *New York Times* reporter Philip Shenon, it has been hailed by most left-wing critics of the Church as must-read. Shenon also covered the clergy sexual abuse scandal for the Daily Beast, a radical opinion website.

The book is strewn with inaccuracies, some of which are minor (he gets Vatican departments confused), others of which are very serious (e.g., his rendering of historical events). The fact that he lists over a dozen editors and colleagues at Knopf, which is a distinguished publishing house, makes his blunders all the more mindboggling. But the buck stops at the top. Shenon is ultimately to blame.

The first error begins after the dedication page, before the text begins. Shenon lists three quotes, one of which is from Pope Francis. “Who am I to judge?” That is not what he said. But it fits the narrative of Church critics who have misquoted the pope so that they can make the case that he was commenting on homosexuality. Not true. The accurate quote reads, “Who am I to judge him.” The pronoun changes everything—he was referring to one particular priest who had accusations of

abuse made against him.

Shenon can be fair. He credits Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI for speaking with compassion for homosexuals suffering from AIDS. But even there he flubs when he adds, "even as they rejected their sexual orientation." No, they rejected the behaviors that they engage in, not their status as homosexuals.

"The Vatican had always portrayed the so-called doctrine of priestly celibacy as eternal and irreversible, but it was neither. It is not demanded in the Gospels, nor was it as a way of life followed by the twelve apostles." The second sentence is accurate but the first is not.

Leaving aside the snide reference to "the so-called" doctrine, priestly celibacy is not a doctrine of the Catholic Church. It is a discipline, one that was not invoked in the early Church and can be reversed today. Not to know the difference between a doctrine and a discipline would be astounding for a college student studying theology, never mind an author who professes to be an expert.

A lot can be understood about anyone who writes a book about the Catholic Church by learning who he regards as a hero or who he sees as a villain. Shenon likes dissidents, not traditionalists. For example, he admires Sister Theresa Kane and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, precisely because they struggle (that's putting it mildly) with a host of Church teachings.

Similarly, he likes Hans Küng, the embittered ex-Catholic theologian. He contrasts him favorably to Pope John Paul II, the brilliant philosopher whose contribution to the Catholic Church made him a saint. After the first year of John Paul's pontificate, Küng took aim at him in the *New York Times*, faulting him for becoming "the darling of the masses and the superstar of the news media...already a sort of living cult

figure for some Roman Catholics, well nigh unto something like a new messiah for our time.” This is more than condescending—it reeks of jealousy.

Shenon’s grasp of Church history is appalling. He speaks about “the imprisonment of Galileo in the seventeenth century because he rejected the church’s view that the sun rotated around the earth.” The fact is Galileo was never imprisoned. He spent his time under “house arrest” in an apartment in a Vatican palace, with a servant. More important, his work was initially praised by the Catholic Church: Pope Urban VIII bestowed on him many gifts and medals.

Galileo did not get into trouble because of his ideas; after all, his ideas were taken from Copernicus, a priest who was never punished (on the contrary, Copernicus’s theory found a receptive audience with Pope Clement VII). What got him into trouble was presenting his unverified claims as fact—that was the heresy.

Shenon writes that during the Inquisition, “people accused of heresy were regularly burned at the stake” on Vatican orders. Wrong again. It was the secular authorities—not the Church’s authorities—that burned heretics. In fact, the Church saw heretics as lost sheep who needed to be brought back into the fold. Those suspected of heresy were subjected to an inquiry, hence the term *inquisition*. But the secular authorities saw heresy as treason; anyone who questioned royal authority, or who in any way challenged the idea that kingship was God-given, was guilty of a capital offense. Shenon has swallowed the moonshine of the “Black Legend.”

The Church’s response to the Holocaust is also badly misrepresented by Shenon. The old canard about Pope Pius XII being “silent”—it has been thoroughly debunked—surfaces again. Not only did the *New York Times* commend Pius in two editorials for *not being silent* at that time, the Vatican archives underscore his heroics.

What Shenon says about Mother Teresa is despicable. He says that "Her private correspondence, made public after her death in 1997, showed she was tormented by uncertainty about the existence of heaven—and even of God. She felt no presence of God whatsoever in her life."

To be sure, Mother Teresa confessed to having "dark nights," times when she no longer felt the presence of Jesus in her life. When this story broke in 2007, I wrote to Father Brian Kolodiejchuk, her advocate for sainthood, about this issue.

He agreed with my comment, made on TV to Mother Teresa critic Christopher Hitchens, that "there is a profound difference between 'feeling' and 'believing.'" He added, "Though Mother Teresa did not *feel* Jesus' presence in the Eucharist, her firm belief in the Real Presence cannot be questioned..." He offered many examples, taken from her letters and behavior, to buttress this point.

On the issue of sexuality, Shenon is just as delinquent. He accuses Pope Paul VI and Pope Benedict XVI of being opposed to "sexual freedom." What Paul was railing against was the sexual exploitation of women by men—that would make him a feminist in some circles—and what Benedict was complaining about was libertinism, or sexual license. The real giveaway here is Shenon's bewilderment with Benedict for opposing sex-reassignment surgery. If this has to be explained, the man is clueless.

Similarly, Shenon cites the criticism that Benedict received from gay activists for his comments on homosexuality. Of course they would deny what Benedict said, which is that homosexuals have a "strong tendency toward an intrinsic moral evil." This may sound harsh to some, but telling the truth is more important than appeasing people, especially when doing so would be dishonest.

Shenon finds fault with the Vatican for sounding the alarms

over a book, *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*. He says the book “gently questioned church teachings on birth control, homosexuality, and masturbation.” Not quite.

The author, Father Anthony Kosnik, was a member of the Catholic Coalition for Gay Civil Rights and an avid dissenter from Church teachings on sexuality. He said it was important *not to accept* what the Church teaches about homosexuality, maintaining that we need to see homosexual acts in morally neutral terms. He even went so far as to question the validity of condemning bestiality.

There was nothing “gentle” about this—he offered a perverse understanding of sexuality. Worse, his book was required reading in some seminaries in the 1970s and 1980s.

Shenon’s interpretation of events involving miscreant priests is easily refuted.

Throughout the book, Shenon writes about pedophilia when discussing clergy sexual abuse. In fact, pedophile priests accounted for less than four percent of the molestation of minors—eight-in-ten cases of abuse were committed by homosexuals. To contend otherwise is simply a cover up of gay crimes.

It does not matter that many homosexual priests who abused postpubescent males did not identify as homosexuals. Self-identification is not dispositive. To wit: when adult men have sexual relationships with adolescent males, they are engaging in homosexuality. It is intellectually dishonest to claim otherwise.

Shenon even labels Father Marcial Maciel Degollado a pedophile. This is astonishing. There is no wiggle room for him on this. Maciel was a drug-addicted predator who fathered several children, raped at least sixty postpubescent boys, and had sex with at least twenty seminarians. Shenon has no idea

what he is talking about.

He mentions the case of Peter Hullermann in 1980 who was transferred by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's staff (later Pope Benedict XVI) from the German city of Essen to Munich for psychiatric care after he admitted to molesting a postpubescent boy. He was then allowed to continue his duties as a priest. He went on to molest more boys.

Here is what Shenon left out. At the time, counseling sexual offenders was considered the right thing to do—not to punish them—and this was the considered judgment of those who identified as liberals. Everyone could be saved by therapy, they said. They were wrong, but this was the conventional wisdom. In any event, it was Ratzinger's deputy who arranged Hullermann's transfer to a new parish. There is no evidence that the future pope approved it.

Cardinal Ratzinger, in his Vatican capacity under Pope John Paul II, is also accused of mishandling the case of Stephen Kiesle.

In 1978, Kiesle was convicted of sexually abusing two boys in California and was suspended by his local church. Cardinal Ratzinger said he could not defrock Kiesle because no one under 40 could be laicized, and the priest was in his thirties. However, the day before his 40th birthday, he was defrocked.

Shenon hammers Ratzinger again for his handling of a Milwaukee priest, Lawrence Murphy. No one doubts he was wicked: he abused as many as 200 deaf boys extending back to the 1950s. What can be contested—indeed refuted—is the charge that Ratzinger bore some of the blame.

Though Murphy's crimes took place in the 1950s, none of the families contacted the civil authorities until the mid-1970s. After a police investigation, the case was dropped. Fast forward to 1996—that was the first time the Vatican learned of

the case. Ratzinger could have simply dropped the case given that the statute of limitations had expired. But he didn't: he ordered an investigation. While the inquiry was proceeding, Murphy died.

In the beginning of his book, Shenon correctly notes that the enemies of Pope Benedict XVI called him, "God's Rottweiler." In 2012, the *New York Times* called me "The Rottweiler's Rottweiler." I wear that nickname as a badge of honor. I will always defend him from those who seek to malign him.

The Catholic Church has a long history of accomplishments. It also has its dirty laundry. When assessing any institution, it is important to get the facts straight. What Philip Shenon has done is a disgrace. He seeks to discredit the Church, but his sloppy—even horrendous—scholarship renders him an unserious critic.

TRANSGENDER CRISIS MARKS PRIDE MONTH: PART I

June was Pride Month, but this year, more than ever before, it was in everyone's interest to confront the transgender crisis.

In reality, there is no such thing as a transgender person—there are only males and females—but there is a small percentage of people who falsely claim that they are of the other sex. Unfortunately, there has been a significant spike in the number of sexually confused persons who misidentify themselves as transgender.

Between 2014 and 2023, there was a 68 percent increase in the number of adults who identify as transgender. Among 18 to 24

year olds, there was an increase of 422 percent. It's not just in the U.S. where this problem exists. In England, between 2011 and 2021, among those aged 18 and under, there was a 50-fold increase in the transgender population.

This is obviously due to social and cultural factors, yet when honest scholars have pointed this out, they have been silenced. This happened to Brown University professor Lisa Littman. She found conclusive evidence of the effects of social media on young people considering a sex transition. She received such a hostile backlash that her own university pulled the promotion of her work, yielding to the cancel culture.

It is astonishing to hear well-educated Americans say that if a man identifies as a woman he should be allowed to compete against women in sports and shower with them. Last November, when Rep. Nancy Mace said that Rep.-Elect Sarah McBride, who is male, was male (he identifies as female), NBC host Yamiche Alcindor called Mace out, saying she "baselessly accused" McBride of being male. A genital check would have proven the journalist wrong.

This ideological poison has also affected the brain of Bill Kristol. He used to know better, but as part of his intellectual evolution, from right to left, he is now convinced that transgender persons exist and that we need to affirm their status. His father, Irving, whom Bill Donohue knew and respected, must be looking down at him in bewilderment.

Transgender mania has also surfaced among some Catholic notables. Father James Martin, who ministers to the sexually confused, was aghast when Arlington Bishop Michael Burbidge issued a Pastoral Letter in 2021 saying, "No one 'is' transgender." Martin went off the rails. "The worst kind of marginalization, the worst kind of discrimination and the worst kind of hatred is to claim that someone doesn't exist."

No, what is really wrong is to claim that someone who is of one sex belongs to the opposite sex, simply because he says so. If he said he was a giraffe, would that make him one?

It is not surprising that given his cast of mind, Father Martin supports men using women's bathrooms, providing, of course, they say they are female. So when Sam exposes himself to Sally in the locker room, the good Jesuit declares that Sally has no rights.

It is not helping Sam to encourage him to believe that he is a girl. Indeed, it may be hastening his death. According to the CDC, it was learned in 2023 that one in four transgender high school students said they had attempted suicide in the past year. This compared to 11 percent of normal girls and 5 percent of normal boys.

It is important to note that their suicidal behavior is not a reaction to their being unaccepted. On the contrary, it is a function of their refusal to accept what nature has ordained.

The Department of Health and Human Services recently released a comprehensive review of minors who have undergone medical treatment in pursuit of changing their sex. They suffer from infertility, sexual dysfunction and heart disease. Puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and surgeries create a host of serious psychological and physiological problems, some of which can never be reversed.

This was driven home in June when the Supreme Court ruled, 6-3, that Tennessee had a right to restrict sex-reassignment treatments, including surgery, for minors. They said that recent scientific evidence raises serious questions about the benefits of puberty blockers, hormone treatment, and the like. Indeed, the harm that is being done is now the real issue.

The medical professionals who encourage, or engage in, these practices, need to be held accountable. Ideally, they should be banished from the profession. But under the Biden

administration, not only did they support these medical malpractices, they took out their anger at those who objected by seeking to punish innocent children.

It has been commonplace in schools for decades to give students a free lunch. This is especially appreciated by poor parents who find it difficult to pay for their children's lunch. But the transgender maniacs working for the Biden administration proposed new rules in 2022 that would end school meal programs in schools that did not abide by their radical LGBTQ curriculum. Some two dozen states blocked this initiative in the courts, but at the end of 2023, the zealots tried again, issuing rules that would victimize poor minority students by taking away their food.

The Trump administration is putting the brakes on this extremism, and the American people have turned against the Democrats who are promoting it. But hard-core ideologues do not listen to reason, which is why this issue is not over.

TRANSGENDER CRISIS MARKS PRIDE MONTH: PART II

In this second installment on the transgender crisis that marks Pride Month, we turn our attention to transgender activists and their sympathizers who are trying to destroy women's rights.

Segregation is seen by many as a dirty word, but in reality it depends on the circumstance.

For example, most Americans support the Olympic games, notwithstanding the fact that it is a showcase of segregation.

Having separate games for men and women is just common sense, but common sense is no longer commonplace, at least among self-identified liberals.

Their allegiance to transgenderism is so strong that it allows them to pursue this bizarre ideology even at the cost of destroying sports for women and girls. They want the men to win, relegating women to a second class status. That is why those who support transgenderism are today's misogynists, taking their place alongside the ultra-macho rednecks who sought to keep women in their place for decades.

In December, Charlie Baker, the president of the NCAA, testified before a senatorial committee defending the NCAA policy of allowing men to compete against women; he cited a lack of clarity from the courts on this issue. Sen. Josh Hawley ripped into him, saying, "Let's dispense with that canard. No federal court has ordered the NCAA to include biological men in women's sports."

In February, President Trump bailed Baker out. The NCAA head honcho congratulated Trump for providing student-athletes with "a clear, national standard." Trump's executive order, "Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports," bars men who falsely claim to be a woman (so-called transgender women) from competing against women. Baker never took a principled stand; instead he allowed Trump to get him off the hook.

The resistance to Trump's defense of women's sports is still strong in some parts of the country. Just recently, men were allowed to compete against women in high school events in Oregon and California.

Fortunately, two female athletes in Oregon who competed in the high jump refused to stand next to a male on the medal platform at the state championship recently.

In California, a male athlete who competed against females won the high jump and triple jump. President Trump blasted

California Governor Gavin Newsom for allowing this travesty of justice, and his Assistant Attorney Gen. Harmeet Dhillon put the offending school districts on notice: they must “certify in writing” that they will no longer allow men to compete against women in women’s sport, or risk legal liability.

While the struggle for justice in women’s sports continues in the United States, it is making progress internationally.

Last fall, the United Nations issued a report that found that more than 600 female athletes have been unfairly beaten by men in women’s sports. This amounts to a loss of more than 890 medals in 29 different sports.

Moreover, the report detailed cases of severe injuries that women athletes have had to endure by competing against men. They have had their teeth knocked out and legs broken. Worse, they have experienced skull fractures and neurological damage from concussions. The report also cited the lack of privacy for women in the locker rooms, a subject that transgender activists refuse to even acknowledge.

These policies would not exist absent support from academicians.

Every honest person knows that sex is binary: there are but two sexes. This means there are but two genders, because gender is a sociological term—constantly misinterpreted as a biological one—that refers to the social roles that are considered appropriate for males and females. Yet there are those in scientific circles, no less, who insist that science is wrong. They falsely claim that there is a continuum of genders. This fiction is entertained by once reliable publications such as *Nature*, *Scientific American* and *National Geographic*.

Transgender activism is evident at the highest levels in the scientific community. We learned last year that after the National Institutes of Health awarded millions of dollars to

researchers examining the health benefits for children who were prescribed transgender puberty-blocking drugs, the lead researcher of the study concealed findings because the results supported critics of this exploitative practice. In short, she screwed the taxpayers for political reasons.

The elites are obviously important, but they may not have the last word on this matter. It's hard to prevail against overwhelming public opinion.

A poll released after the presidential election revealed that nearly three-in-four voters said it should be illegal to subject children to sex-altering procedures; it was a 10 percent increase in just three months. Several recent polls indicate that approximately two-in-three adults oppose allowing males who identify as transgender to compete in girls' sports and share locker rooms and bathrooms with them. And 77 percent of Americans do not want teachers to discuss gender identity and the possibility of being born in the wrong body in the early grades.

The Catholic League believes that encouraging minors to transition to the other sex—which is biologically impossible anyway—is a child abuse, pure and simple. The good news is that the elites are on the defensive.