

VICTORY IN NORTH DAKOTA; BILL TO BUST CONFESSIONAL PULLED

Once again state lawmakers attempted to bust the seal of the confessional, and once again they withdrew their bill under pressure from the Catholic League.

Two years ago it was California lawmakers who tried to violate our sacramental right. Last year it was Utah. This year it was North Dakota. All three bills were introduced citing the need to uncover information about the sexual abuse of minors allegedly learned in the confessional.

The bill's co-sponsor, Sen. Judy Lee, asked that the legislation be withdrawn. Inforum, a media outlet that covers the Fargo-Moorhead area, took note of the role of the Catholic League.

"In a Jan. 20 letter, William Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, said that legislation to break the seal of the confessional was a 'direct assault on our faith.'" Grand Forks Herald also cited our campaign, as did other North Dakota media outlets.

In the letter that the reporter referenced, Donohue raised three questions.

"Can you identify a single instance—just one will do—where it was later learned that a grave injustice was done to a victim of clergy sexual abuse owing to the failure of a priest to disclose what he learned in the confessional?"

"Can you identify anything learned by the recent 18-month investigation of the Catholic Church by the Attorney General of North Dakota that justifies such an egregious violation of the First Amendment rights of the Catholic clergy and the Catholic laity."

“Can you explain why you have given a pass to the lawyer-client privilege and the exemption afforded psychologists and their patients?

Do they not learn of sexual abuse behind closed doors?”

Here is how we won. We enlisted the support of our email base of supporters [see our website on how to join] and they contacted Sen. Lee asking her to pull her bill. We also contacted all North Dakota lawmakers.

There is no evidence that victims of sexual abuse are being ignored by lawmakers—anywhere in the nation—because of the Catholic sacrament of Reconciliation.

Therefore, bills that target the confessional are not only unconstitutional—a clear violation of the free exercise of religion encoded in the First Amendment—they do nothing to bring justice to minors who have been abused.

We are proud of this important victory. When the state seeks to sabotage our sacraments—on wholly contrived charges no less—the religious liberty implications cannot be more serious. As such, this is a win for all religions.

Thanks to those who contacted the North Dakota lawmakers. They got the message, loud and clear.

VICTORY OVER TWITTER

Three hours after we listed the email address of a key official at Twitter, asking our subscribers to protest its decision to freeze the account of a Catholic media outlet, Twitter reversed itself and unlocked the account.

Catholic World Report (CWR) is a respectable Catholic media outlet. On January 24, it received notice from Twitter that its account has been locked for hateful conduct. CWR appealed but lost.

CWR posted the following tweet on January 19. “Biden plans to nominate Dr. Rachel Levine, a biological man identifying as a transgender woman who has served as Pennsylvania’s health secretary since 2017, to be HHS Assistant Secretary for Health.”

It was obvious that Twitter took offense to CWR’s description of a ‘biological man identifying as a transgender woman.’

This provided an opening for the Catholic League. Bill Donohue did not mince words. “Twitter is a menace to freedom. It needs to be reined in by the Congress.” To punctuate his point, Donohue quoted Pope Francis saying gender ideology is “demonic.” Would that make the pope a purveyor of hate speech? Donohue asked, “I dare Twitter to silence the Holy Father. Let’s get this settled right now.”

Meanwhile, we asked our subscribers to demand that Twitter reinstate CWR. We made this request at roughly 1:00 p.m. on January 29. Three hours later, after being pounded by our supporters, Twitter notified CWR that its account was being unlocked.

This was a major victory for free speech.

ASSAULTS ON CATHOLICS SPIKE

William A. Donohue

In the December edition of “President’s Desk,” I wrote a piece

titled, "Buckle Your Seat Belts—Again." I referenced a "President's Desk" essay I wrote in December 2008 wherein I noted that we were smack right in the middle of a culture war. I added, "the culture war is about to explode."

My point was that the victory by Barack Obama and Joe Biden would embolden the left, and that would not bode well for Catholics. Whenever progressives take command of Washington, their influence is felt way beyond the Beltway. This time around, with Biden in the White House, I predicted matters would get worse.

Looks like I was right. Just read this issue of Catalyst for evidence.

North Dakota lawmakers wasted no time sponsoring a bill that would break the seal of the Confessional. We wasted no time marshalling our resources, asking our base of email supporters to jam their email accounts. We pushed back hard and they eventually capitulated. But the fact that in 2021 we are still fighting to protect the sacraments of the Catholic Church from government bullies is not a good sign.

Similarly, it was not a good sign when pro-abortion protesters crashed St. Joseph's Cathedral in Columbus, Ohio during a pro-life Mass. Columbus Bishop Robert Brennan, who was the celebrant, acted responsibly, as did the local police; the church-busters were quickly removed. But again, why are we faced with such a Nazi-like event in 2021?

Twitter has a reputation of censoring conservative voices on the internet. Over the winter, it censored Catholic World Report (CWR), a reputable Catholic publication, for the crime of noting that Biden appointed "a biological man" who identifies as a transgender woman to a senior health post in his administration. That was true. Moreover, there was nothing hateful, as Twitter charged, about the article. But its description of the sex of the official was apparently too much

for the tolerant ones at Twitter.

Ironically, our defense of the publication did not lead Twitter to cancel us. Maybe that is because I quoted the pope saying gender ideology is “demonic.” Do they really want to take on the Holy Father?

We were the only Catholic organization to come to the defense of CWR. We did more than that—we won. Literally three hours after we asked our email subscribers to contact Twitter, CWR had its account unlocked.

Catholics get blamed for everything. When a Oklahoma Protestant Christian school expelled an eight-year-old for telling another student that she had a crush on her, a gay media outlet from the United Kingdom reported that it was a Catholic school. False. It was just assumed that if there was something that homosexual activists did not like, the culprit was probably Catholic. We forced them to correct the record.

It would help if Catholics in public office spoke up about these issues. But we don’t have much in the way of leadership.

As noted in this issue of Catalyst, almost all Catholic Democrats in the Congress are pro-abortion. President Biden, as everyone knows, is rabidly pro-abortion, and he, too, claims a Catholic status. Where does this leave Catholics? How can we depend on Catholics in the House, the Senate, and the White House to defend Catholics when they won’t defend the right to life?

I am happy to note that many bishops have spoken up. Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez, president of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, expressed his dismay with President Biden for his executive orders on abortion. Kansas City Archbishop Joseph Naumann and Cardinal Timothy Dolan of the New York Archdiocese have also been outspoken; many others have as well.

For their courage, these bishops were attacked by the National Catholic Reporter, a rogue media outlet that is about as Catholic as the Mafia. Regrettably, this publication is popular with dissident Catholic faculty on college campuses, and is a favorite among some staffers at the bishops' conference. This is one more reason why otherwise good Catholics in the public eye are reluctant to speak out: they have been intimidated by delinquent members of the Catholic media.

The assault on free speech, duly cited in this issue, is at an all-time high. We are dealing with a phenomenon much more invidious than McCarthyism. To prove this point, consider that in 1996, Nicholas von Hoffman, a liberal columnist for the Washington Post, examined recently released archival information about the McCarthy era and, despite misgivings about the Wisconsin senator, concluded that he was "still closer to the truth [about Communist infiltration in Washington] than those who ridiculed him."

We don't need to be lectured today about blacklisting during the McCarthy era. That was child's play when compared to the censorial powers of Apple, Amazon, Google and Twitter. These Big Tech companies, which are strongly tied to the Biden administration, have censored many of those who hold to traditional moral values, and that certainly includes Catholic organizations.

We at the Catholic League have no options. We either fight back or we close up shop. But if Covid didn't kill us, nothing will.

BLACKS EXCEL IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Bill Donohue

Catholic League members who received our February appeal will remember that I was not too happy when Ben & Jerry's, the ice cream company owned by two left-wing radicals, and Colin Kaepernick, the failed quarterback turned left-wing activist, teamed together to push an invidious message: "I Know My Rights."

The one thing young men and women do not need to learn these days—this includes whites as well as blacks—is more chatter about their rights. They are consumed with their rights. What would be refreshing is a lesson on their responsibilities, i.e., their duties to themselves and others. That's where Catholic schools have long excelled, especially with black students in the inner city.

Six black Catholics are formally candidates for sainthood. Here is a quick look at two of them and their ties to Catholic schools.

John Augustus Tolton was born a slave in Missouri in 1854. He was raised a Catholic by his mother, and despite his slave status, she instructed him, "John, boy, you're free. Never forget the goodness of the Lord."

Thanks to the intervention of an Irish priest, Fr. Peter McGirr, Tolton was allowed to attend St. Peter's Catholic School, an all-white parish school in Quincy, Illinois. The priest baptized him and prepared him for Holy Communion. Tolton felt the presence of God and wanted to become a priest. However, no seminary would have him because he was black. Fr. McGirr did not give up and arranged for Tolton to pursue the priesthood in Rome. After six years of study, he became a

priest in 1886, at the age of 31.

Tolton died in 1897 while on a retreat. He was America's first black Catholic priest, a man who overcame great odds and gave his life to the poor, the sick and the hungry. Known as "Good Father Gus," he is sure to become a saint.

Elizabeth Lange was born in Cuba, but she made her way to Baltimore in 1813. She used whatever resources she had to educate her fellow Caribbean immigrants, even while living as a black woman in a slave state. In 1828, Fr. James Hector Joubert asked her to start a school for girls of color; this was done at the behest of Archbishop James Whitfield.

Elizabeth knew she was called by God to serve the Catholic Church. She founded a religious order and was first superior of the Oblate Sisters of Providence. Sister Mary Lange, as she was called, founded St. Frances Academy in 1828 and was Principal and Superior of St. Benedict's School in Fells Point, an historic Baltimore neighborhood, in 1857. She also founded an orphanage and a widow's home.

While Fr. Tolton and Sister Mary Lange may be among the most prominent black Catholics to leave their mark on Catholic schools, there are many more like them, not as well known, who also made valuable contributions.

What made Catholic schools so special to black Americans in the 19th century was their evangelizing appeal. Missionaries to North America evangelized the Indians, but did not seek to convert black slaves. Free blacks were evangelized, the most common venue being Catholic schools. Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and New Orleans were home to many Catholic schools that served a black student body.

In 1866, right after the Civil War, bishops gathered in Baltimore for the Second Plenary Council. They forthrightly addressed the plight of former slaves, pledging to use Catholic schools as the conduit to evangelization. New

Catholic schools opened up during this period in Baltimore, Savannah, and St. Augustine.

In 1878, Father John Slattery, rector of St. Francis Xavier Church in Baltimore, argued that the only way to increase conversions among African Americans was through the black clergy. And the best way to do that, he said, was to expand the number of Catholic schools. While he had some success, he did not achieve as much as he had hoped. But things changed in the early part of the 20th century.

In 1914, Xavier Academy opened in New Orleans as a black Catholic school; Blessed Katherine Drexel was responsible for garnering financial support. In the early 1930s, the school became a college. The success of Xavier University was a double-edge sword: it simultaneously provided black Catholics with a first-class educational experience while also allowing other Catholic colleges and universities to continue with their segregated ways. Desegregation of Catholic institutions of higher education, like so many other American entities, did not take place until after World War II.

A surge of African American elementary and secondary students in Catholic schools—both in the North and the South—took place between 1930 and 1960. It was these low-cost schools, staffed mostly by nuns, that helped create a positive “Black Catholic identity”; they were home to a new evangelization.

Academic Excellence in Inner-City Catholic Schools

When I was honorably discharged from the U.S. Air Force in 1970, I had only one year of college under my belt. I stepped on the gas and two years later graduated from New York University. I then went to the New School for Social Research for my masters; I worked part-time as an athletic coach at an affluent Catholic school in New York City. When I only had a semester left before receiving my masters, I sought full-time employment.

I applied for jobs in accounting. That is what I was trained to do in the Air Force; I was computer literate. I was offered some good paying jobs but my heart wasn't in it. I did not want to be an accountant. Instead, I took a much lower paying job in a dangerous inner-city school, St. Lucy's in Spanish Harlem. I never regretted it. After getting my masters, I went back to NYU for my Ph.D. while working full-time at St. Lucy's. I later took a college teaching job in Pittsburgh, and received my Ph.D. in 1980.

I mention this because I saw first-hand the great good that Catholic schools do in poor minority neighborhoods. My students were Puerto Rican and African American. Their mothers (fathers were absent) sent their children to St. Lucy's for four reasons: safety, discipline, academic excellence and religious instruction. They were not disappointed.

It is hard for middle-class white people to identify with some of these conditions. But inner-city schools are typically in high-crime neighborhoods. I had my share of run-ins with dangerous men, as well as gangs.

The public school across the street was so engulfed in violence that the City of New York had to close it. Meanwhile, St. Lucy's students, who lived in the same neighborhood, did well.

Don't believe the nonsense about Catholic schools in the ghetto being more self-selective, choosing students who are less likely to be a problem in the classroom. When I worked at St. Lucy's just the opposite was true: recalcitrant public school students were often "dumped" on Catholic schools. We did our best with them, which was invariably better than what the public schools did with them.

When I took over in 1993 as president of the Catholic League, New York Archbishop John Cardinal O'Connor was making an offer to New York City. Send me your lowest-performing 5 percent of

students in the public schools, he said, and we'll put them in Catholic schools where they will succeed. City officials never responded.

We have known for decades that students from Catholic schools outclass their public school counterparts, and this is especially true of Catholic schools in the ghetto. In 1982, sociologist James Coleman and two other scholars published the results of their study comparing Catholic school students to those in the public schools: the former were one grade ahead of the latter in mathematics, reading and vocabulary. The biggest difference was between Catholic and public school students in the inner city.

What accounted for the gap? Catholic schools maintain a more rigorous academic curriculum and insist on discipline in the classroom. Another major factor was the administration of education. Catholic schools had many fewer administrators; the public schools were top heavy with bureaucratic norms.

Even the public school establishment knows how superior Catholic schools are. In 1993, the New York State Department of Education issued a report on academic achievement in the public schools and Catholic schools. The difference was huge: Catholic students way outperformed public school students.

Does religion play a role in the academic success of Catholic schools students? Yes, a study published in 1999 by William H. Jeynes of the University of Chicago found that "very religious black and Hispanic students outperformed less religious students in academic achievement." What makes this study so valuable is that it shows why charter public schools—which have learned a lot from Catholic schools—are still no substitute for Catholic schools, despite their success compared to traditional public schools.

In 2018, the National Center for Education Statistics released its 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress results

for reading and mathematics in grades four and eight. Catholic schools excelled, and not by a small degree: Catholic school students were much more proficient on every measure.

In 2018, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute published an important study showing the critical factor that school discipline plays in determining academic success.

Students in Catholic schools were less likely to be disruptive than those in other private schools or in public schools. They exhibited more self-control and were more likely to control their temper, respect others' property, accept their fellow students' ideas, and handle peer pressure. Self-discipline was a hallmark of Catholic schools. As with other studies, this one demonstrated the virtue of religious instruction in making for academic success.

Few things bother me more than hearing so-called progressives complain about racial inequality while steadfastly opposing school choice. No one who does not support charter schools and parochial schools as realistic options for minority students should be taken seriously as a champion of the poor.

Why don't we have school choice? Why does President Biden oppose it?

Sol Stern is a Jewish New Yorker who has done some of the best work on Catholic schools in the inner city. After examining all the reasons put forward by liberals why they oppose school choice, he concluded the number one reason was the power of the teachers' unions.

"It's hard to escape the conclusion that one of the most powerful reasons liberal opinion makers and policy makers ignore Catholic schools—and oppose government aid to them—is their alliance with the teachers' unions, which have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the campaign coffers of liberal candidates around the country."

Stern wrote this in 1996. Matters have only gotten worse. His observations are a sorry commentary on the subject of academic achievement among minority students.

Catholic schools have done so much good, especially among young men who routinely fail in the public schools. They learn about their responsibilities, not their “rights.” That is why they succeed, leaving the Ben & Jerry’s and Colin Kaepernick crowd behind.

MEDIA BLACKOUT OF NAZI-LIKE EVENT

In the 1930s, Nazis routinely invaded religious services at synagogues. There have been many copycat events in the United States since that time, most of which have taken place in Catholic churches. The latest incident took place on January 22, the 48th anniversary of the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion-on-demand.

The venue was St. Joseph Cathedral in Columbus, Ohio. While Columbus Bishop Robert Brennan was celebrating a pro-life Mass, a group of protesters stormed the cathedral. They held up pro-abortion signs and chanted anti-Catholic slogans, leaving Catholics in attendance in a state of shock.

Bishop Brennan thanked the Columbus Police for acting swiftly to restore order and before anyone was hurt. He also expressed his admiration and thanks to those who endured this event.

There are two major stories here. One is the decision by anti-Catholic protesters to crash the Mass; the other is the media blackout.

One TV station, 10WBNS (the local CBS affiliate), covered this story. One local paper, the Columbus Dispatch, made mention of what happened. Catholic News Agency, LifeSite and Breitbart also did a story on the protest. That was it.

Where were the major media outlets in Ohio? Where was the Associated Press? Where were the cable TV news stories?

When a Nazi-like event takes place in 2021, and the media respond with a yawn, it means either they don't care what happens to Catholics or they find it vaguely amusing. That would be the generous view.

A less generous interpretation would be that the church busting was deserved. The media are on a roll demonizing what they call White Christian Nationalists, an ill-defined group of people who are allegedly seeking to take command of America. So when fascists crash a Catholic Mass—especially one that honors pro-life Catholics—it is hard for the media to get worked up about it.

A recent poll shows that less than half the public trusts the media. That lack of trust is a function of distorted news stories, instances when editorializing is substituted for hard news. It is also attributable to glaring instances of omission. Add what happened at St. Joseph's Cathedral in Columbus to the latter list.

CATHOLIC SCHOOL FALSELY ACCUSED

It was a quick turnaround. We protested a false story and it was immediately corrected.

Maggie Baska was named a reporter for PinkNews, a gay media outlet from the UK, on January 27, 2021. She no sooner was hired when she proved to be a total incompetent, falsely accusing a Catholic school of something it never did.

On that same day, Fox23News reported that an eight-year-old girl had been expelled after she told another student that she had a crush on her. The story was accurate. The school was Rejoice Christian School in Owasso, Oklahoma. Two days later CNN ran a column on this news story. It, too, was accurate.

On February 1, an article on this story was posted on the website of pinknews.co.uk by Maggie Baska. The headline read, "Eight-Year-Old Expelled from Catholic School after Telling Another Girl She Had a Crush on Her."

False. Rejoice Christian School is not a Catholic school. The error was not limited to the headline: the story said the girl "was expelled from her Catholic school..." This bogus account was picked up by other media sites.

Even a secular reporter should know that Catholic schools typically identify as Catholic, not "Christian." That should have been the first clue that something was wrong.

PinkNews labels itself "the brand for the global LGBT+ community and the next generation. Our mission is to inform, inspire change and empower people to be themselves." How about just getting news stories right?

We asked PinkNews to correct its story. It did. Thanks to those who emailed the UK media outlet.

DEMONIZING WHITE CHRISTIANS

Much to the chagrin of the Christian left, they have never been able to gain traction. This accounts, at least in part, for their animus against conservative Christians, who, unlike those on the left, carry significant political and cultural weight. The most recent manifestation of the Christian left's hostility to conservative Christians is their invention of Christian nationalism.

It always helps to have a bogeyman. Christian nationalism was not discovered—it was created out of used cloth. Formerly known as the “Religious Right” or “Christocrats,” today's bad guys are different in that they evince a strong racist edge. White people are the problem. To be more specific, it is white conservative Christians, many of whom are Trump supporters, who are an existential threat to our democracy.

Who believes this nonsense? Americans United for Separation of Church and State believes it. It blamed Christian nationalists for the Capitol riot of January 6. So did several True Believers in Christian nationalism, including professor Andrew Whitehead, one of the more prominent exponents of this fiction.

Christianity Today columnist Tish Harrison Warren is also on board. The violence, she said, can be “laid at the feet of the white American church.” The “white American church?” Who speaks this way? Is there an “Asian American church?” Or a “people of color American church?”

David French is a white evangelical critic of Christian nationalism, but unlike most of these partisans, he hasn't gone off the deep end. For example, he doesn't seem to know what the “white American church” is anymore than the rest of us. “It is rare to find an outright Christian nationalist church. There's not a huge wave of Christian nationalist

churches.”

This seems odd. If we can't locate where the bogeyman hangs out, isn't it possible he doesn't exist? After all, communists were reliably found hanging out at the offices of the Communist Party. Why can't anyone locate the address of Christian nationalists? Whitehead suggests that's because they're everywhere. “Christian nationalism is pervasive across all segments of U.S. society,” he says. Still, it doesn't make sense that no one can find their headquarters.

Paul D. Miller was featured last month in an interview he gave to Christianity Today on this subject. He is a professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service; he is also finishing a book on Christian nationalism. Those are impressive credentials. Too bad he can't get his facts straight.

Miller cites a book by Whitehead and Samuel Perry on Christian nationalism, “Taking America Back for God.” They contend the country is split between advocates and detractors of Christian nationalism. They call the most rabid advocates of Christian nationalism “ambassadors,” saying they make up 19.8% of the population. In his interview, Miller said the authors contend that “52% of all Americans are what they call ambassador.”

How could Miller screw this up? It's not hard to figure out. In his enthusiasm to show how omnipresent the bogeymen are, he conflated the ambassadors with the “accommodators,” the less rabid supporters of Christian nationalism; they constitute 32.1% of the public. That's how Miller concluded that the majority of Americans are radical Christian nationalists.

If someone believes that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are divinely inspired, does that make him a Christian nationalist? Whitehead and Perry say it does. Miller goes so far as to say “that put[s] you high up on the scale of Christian nationalism.”

That would seem to make Thomas Jefferson, not exactly a practicing Christian, a Christian nationalist. The author of the Declaration made four references to God in our founding document. He spoke of "the laws of nature and nature's God"; "the Creator"; "the supreme judge of the world"; and "the protection of Divine Providence." And, of course, he said our inalienable rights come from our "Creator," not government.

Was the U.S. Supreme Court giving voice to Christian nationalism in 1892 when it declared, "This is a Christian nation"? Or was it simply making an historical observation? No matter, to advocates of the cancel culture, such a remark needs to be excised.

Are those who sing patriotic songs Christian nationalists? What about those who display the American flag? Or how about those who say the Pledge of Allegiance? Miller says all three are examples of Christian nationalism. He just indicted most Americans.

What about left-wing Christians who pledge their allegiance to the poor? Are they Christian nationalists? No, insists Miller. What about Christians who are pro-life or who defend religious liberty? According to Miller, they are true Christian nationalists.

Looks like David French is a Christian nationalist after all. The mild-mannered critic of Christian nationalism maintains, "I haven't changed my perspective on things like being pro-life or believing in strong religious freedom protections."

Miller was asked what pastors can do to help stop Christian nationalism. His answer was precious. They can ask the faithful, "How much time are you spending a day listening to Fox News and talk radio?"

Who knew that Rush was the real bogeyman all along?

RESISTANCE TO POPE'S PLEAS GROWING IN U.S.

There is nothing new about the Catholic Church's opposition to abortion or human trafficking, but what Pope Francis said about them on February 8 is worth a closer look.

The pope decried the fact that many nations are retreating on these key life issues. What he said bears application to the vector of change apparent in the United States.

The pope said "it was painful" to observe that "under the pretext of guaranteeing presumed subjective rights, a growing number of legal systems in our world seem to be moving away from their inalienable duty to protect human life at every one of its phases." Calling the right to life "a foundational human right," the Holy Father said, "If we deprive the weakest among us of the right to life, how can we effectively guarantee respect for every other right?"

Among those other rights, he noted in a separate forum, is the right to be free from exploitation. He pointedly mentioned the plight of those who suffer from human trafficking, the most vulnerable among us. He encouraged all of us to continue "praying and fighting together" in hopes of ridding ourselves of this horrendous condition.

Unfortunately, in the United States we are going backwards on both issues.

President Biden is determined to be the most pro-abortion president in American history. He spent his first few weeks in office rolling back many restrictions on abortion enacted by the Trump administration. Moreover, never has Biden, or anyone

on his staff, called the right to life “a foundational human right.”

Just as disturbing are the Biden administration’s policies governing border security. Let’s be honest: He is bent on relaxing the strictures that worked to stop the caravans of Central Americans from crashing our borders. Now they are back. Who is leading them? Human traffickers. They traffic in women, children and drugs.

Biden professes to be a “devout” Catholic, and it would be unfair to question his personal relationship with God. But he can be judged on his abortion policies, and on that score he fails miserably. As for human trafficking, no one champions its cause. But that matters little. What matters is whether the policies being promoted act as a deterrent or a lure.

Pope Francis has a right to expect more fidelity to his teachings from those who wear their Catholicism on their sleeve than from those who do not. And he certainly should expect more from them than those who are not Catholic.

HOW CATHOLIC ARE CONGRESSIONAL CATHOLICS?

In the 117th Congress, Catholics comprise 29% of the seats, the largest of any religious affiliation. Moreover, both the Speaker of the House and the president identify as Catholic. But just how Catholic are these Catholics?

We reviewed the scorecard of incumbent representatives and senators as tallied by National Right to Life and NARAL, the two most authoritative sources measuring congressional support

for the right to life and the right to abortion, respectively, in the nation. For newly elected members, we consulted their stated record on this subject when they were candidates. Here is what we found.

There are 77 Democrats in the House of Representatives, who claim a Catholic identity, 71 of whom have a perfect pro-abortion record, and many of the newly elected members made supporting abortion a key part of their campaigns. Of the 57 Republicans who claim a Catholic identity, 37 have a perfect pro-life voting record; six have a mostly pro-life record; 12 newly elected members espouse a pro-life record; and one, a former Democrat, has a pro-abortion record.

This means that 95% of the Catholic House Democrats are pro-abortion and 98% of the Catholic House Republicans are pro-life (it remains to be seen whether the new Republican Representative from New Jersey, Jeff Van Drew, will flip on abortion and become pro-life).

In the Senate, there are 14 Catholic Democrats, 11 of whom have a perfect pro-abortion record (two have a perfect pro-life record). Of the 11 Catholic Republicans, 9 have a perfect pro-life record; one is more pro-life than pro-abortion; and one is pro-abortion.

This means that 79% of Catholic Senate Democrats are pro-abortion and 91% of Catholic Senate Republicans are pro-life.

Some argue that a congressman's record on social justice issues is a more accurate gauge of his Catholicity. The problem with that contention is that it is much more difficult to make comparisons on such matters. To wit: Catholics who favor more government welfare programs contend that their position is better aligned with Church teachings, yet Catholics who oppose more government dependency maintain that they are more faithful to the Church's teachings on the poor. Climate change is another issue that is difficult to score.

Ultimately, whether one is a “good Catholic” depends on factors of a more intimate nature. But it is not wrong to suggest that elected Catholic officials who maintain a decidedly pro-abortion voting record are an embarrassment to Catholics. They most certainly are. After all, the right to life is the most foundational of our natural rights. This is not an observation—it is a fact of life.

BIDEN STIFFS THE POPE

On November 12, Pope Francis called President-elect Joe Biden to congratulate him on his electoral victory. He surely thought that the incoming president would make Catholics proud to have one of their own in the White House. One wonders what the Holy Father now thinks of Biden.

On January 28, the White House announced that Biden will issue an executive order that rescinds the Mexico City Policy, the rule that bars U.S. foreign aid to international non-profit organizations that provide for abortion or abortion counseling. This policy was first implemented by President Ronald Reagan in 1984 and has been revoked or reinstated by Democratic and Republican administrations, respectively, since that time.

Biden will also ask the Department of Health and Human Services to begin the process of rescinding the Trump administration’s Title X family planning rule; among other things, it denies funds to Planned Parenthood and other abortion mills.

This is not the first time that Biden has departed from Church teachings on life. On January 22, the 48th anniversary of the Supreme Court’s decision to legalize abortion, Biden and Vice

President Kamala Harris heralded the ruling, saying they were “committed to codifying Roe v. Wade.”

In response, Kansas City Archbishop Joseph Naumann, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee (USCCB) on Pro-Life Activities, said, “It is deeply disturbing and tragic that any President would praise and commit to codifying a Supreme Court ruling that denies unborn children their most basic human and civil right, the right to life, under the euphemistic disguise of health services.”

Biden has a real problem with the most basic moral teachings of his professed religion.

On January 20th, his first day in office, Biden issued an executive order allowing males who claim to be female the right to compete with females in high school and college sports; they can also use the same shower facilities.

The chairman of five bishops’ committees, led by Cardinal Timothy Dolan, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Religious Liberty, responded by saying this decision “threatens to infringe the rights of people who recognize the truth of sexual differences or who uphold the institution of lifelong marriage between one man and one woman.”

A few days later, Biden issued an executive order repealing President Trump’s ban on transgender persons from serving in the military. He provided no evidence that women who claim to be male will have no effect on real men in their living arrangements and daily operations.

According to Pope Francis, Biden’s policies on transgender persons are not simply in violation of Church teachings—they are the work of Satan. “Gender ideology is demonic!” The pope made that remark to emphasize that gender theory fails to recognize “the order of creation.” Indeed, he even went so far as to say that “gender ideology” was reminiscent of “the educational policies of Hitler.”

Biden's choice of January 28 to announce his pro-abortion executive orders makes him look like a rogue Catholic. This day was the National Prayer Vigil for Life. This USCCB event took place at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.

On Biden's first day in office, White House press secretary Jen Psaki was asked by a reporter for EWTN about the president's plans to overturn the pro-life policies of his predecessor. "I will take the opportunity to remind all of you that he is a devout Catholic."

Looks like this "devout Catholic" has no problem stiffing the pope.