

# CONFRONTING OUR FOES; TIDE IS TURNING

The attacks on the Catholic Church are running at a fever pitch this spring, but so is our resolve: we are confronting the foes of Catholicism head-on, scoring impressive results.

Our full-page ad in the *New York Times* on April 11, which also ran in the April 17 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, elicited a tremendous response. While we are not here to defend wrongdoing by those on our side, we are ready, willing and able to defend our side when they are unfairly maligned. And they have been—in spades.

The survey on clergy abuse for 2010 turned up a total of seven credible (but not proven) allegations against over 40,000 priests. There were a whole lot more allegations, but they dated back decades. We know something is fishy when there is a 42 percent increase in allegations found to be unsubstantiated, or false, in one year.

Many in the media continue to put the worst possible face on this issue, while underplaying the good news. Most important, they never seem interested in doing a story on all the priests who have been found innocent, many of whom have had to suffer the indignity of having their good name dragged through the mud.

There is no lawyer more out-of-control than Minnesota zealot Jeffrey Anderson. In the matter of a week, he managed to sue the Philadelphia Archdiocese and the Vatican: he brought a “wrongful death” suit in a case where a man killed himself a year after his accusations were found wanting; and Anderson tried to hold the pope culpable for an alleged incident dating back to 1960 in Wisconsin!

Then there is the utter hypocrisy. Almost all of the media outlets in this country do not have a “zero tolerance” policy of their own regarding sexual misconduct in the workplace, some have editorialized against these policies when applied to the schools. The fundamental problem with “zero tolerance” is the tendency to lump minor infractions with serious violations.

We were also happy to expose SNAP, the professional victims’

group: it turns out that the same group that is constantly condemning the Church for not doing enough about sexual abuse was working with a psychiatrist who was knee-deep into child pornography. He is now in prison.

We will continue to fight this issue of unfairly smearing the clergy. The cherry-picking over old cases has got to end. While the foes of the Church may intimidate others, they only embolden us. The tide is turning, and they know it.

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## LADY GAGA FLOPS

To demonstrate that it is not just the United States that is celebrity-crazy, consider that a quick telephone interview with Bill Donohue by a reporter for Hollywood Life resulted in his comments being posted all over the world. The subject? Lady Gaga.

Lady Gaga, a pop-star with a strange following, released her "Judas" video in April where she plays Mary Magdalene. "This is a stunt," said Donohue, "people have real talent, and then there is Lady Gaga."

Donohue had other things to say: "Lady Gaga tries to continue to shock Catholics and Christians in general. She dresses as a nun, she gets raped, she swallows the rosary. She has now morphed into a caricature of herself."

As the Catholic League chief pointed out, "Gaga is increasingly irrelevant." Like Madonna, whom Gaga mimics, she is an ex-Catholic. He wondered, "Is this the only way to jet up her performance?" When asked if he was upset with her latest act, Donohue said, "Maybe if she had more talent we'd be more offended. She has gone to the well too many times."

It is a sign of the times that people like Lady Gaga garner so much attention. Their goal of pushing the envelope is so juvenile, so thoroughly immature, that it fails to excite anymore.

While we would rather address serious issues, such as those found in this edition, we will not ignore the pop culture when asked to respond. After all, it is not as though the pop

culture is without influence.

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## STRAIGHT TALK ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In place of the usual “President’s Desk” article on this page, and the review/essay section on pp. 8-9, we are instead running the Catholic League advertisement that I wrote which appeared in the April 11 edition of *The New York Times*. The same ad ran in the April 17 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*.

This is an important statement, and it is one that is appropriately issued by a Catholic lay organization. We are here to support the Catholic Church, led by the bishops, and at times like these they need all the support they can get. Their enthusiastic response to this commentary, as well as the kudos we have received from beleaguered priests across the nation, is most gratifying. We are in this fight for the long run.

Click [here](#) to view the ad.

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## ANOTHER BOGUS VATICAN LAWSUIT

In April, the notorious anti-Catholic lawyer Jeffrey Anderson brought another lawsuit against the Vatican. Anderson has tried several times to sue the Vatican over alleged abuse cases that date back decades. He has never won. Nor will he win this time. That’s because his charges are bogus.

Anderson accused Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now the pope, of knowing about the conduct of a Wisconsin priest, Rev. Lawrence Murphy, who allegedly abused Anderson’s client in 1960. The lawsuit, filed last year, was procedurally defective and

therefore went nowhere. Now the proper channels have been pursued, but the end result will be the same.

The fact is that the Vatican was never notified of Murphy's behavior, which involved many boys extending back to the 1950s, until 1996. The Vatican could have ignored the case, maintaining that the statute of limitations had expired, but instead ordered a trial. The judge in the trial, Father Thomas Brundage, has already testified that Ratzinger's name never came up during the proceedings. The trial was called off once it became clear that Murphy was near death; he died soon after.

Anderson knows he will lose again, but losing is no deterrent to his ambitions. Obviously, his dream is to take down the pope.

The man who is being treated as a hero in this case is, in fact, no hero at all. It is being widely reported that the Vatican was notified about Murphy in 1996 by the former Archbishop of Milwaukee, Rembert Weakland. What is not being reported is that Weakland, who left the archdiocese in a homosexual and financial scandal, knew about Murphy's behavior long before the mid-1990s. There is evidence, in the form of a 1980 letter written by the Coadjutor Bishop of Superior, Wisconsin, Raphael M. Fliss, to the Vicar for Personnel, Rev. Joseph A. Janicki, saying he had discussed Murphy's record of abuse with Weakland. But Anderson will hear none of it—he's out to get the pope.

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## **VATICAN AND U.S. DIFFER ON GAY RIGHTS**

In Geneva, representatives from the Holy See and the U.S. recently differed on the need for a declaration protecting homosexual rights. The Obama administration introduced a declaration that pledged to end discrimination against homosexuals around the world. But a Vatican spokesman noted

that the language of the statement is problematic.

In December 2008, the outgoing Bush administration opposed a French resolution at the U.N. General Assembly on the issue of homosexual rights because it feared that the loosely worded document might make it difficult for American states to reject gay marriage. The Holy See concurred saying that terms like “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” were contentious because they “find no recognition or clear and agreed definition in international law.” Thus, they would ineluctably create “uncertainty in the law.” Now the Obama administration has chosen to adopt the identical terms in its declaration.

The Holy See said in 2008 that it welcomed attempts “to condemn all forms of violence against homosexual persons as well as urge States to take necessary measures to put an end to all criminal penalties against them.” And just recently, a Vatican official said that “A state should never punish a person or deprive a person of the enjoyment of any human right based on the person’s feelings.” But he hastened to add that behavior is different, meaning that “certain kinds of sexual behaviors must be forbidden by law.” He offered by way of example pedophilia and incest.

The main difference between the Obama administration and the Vatican lay in their respective approaches to homosexual marriage: the American government has repeatedly shown no interest supporting efforts to maintain the traditional understanding of marriage. At stake is the right of nations which reject homosexual marriage to maintain their standards without undue pressure from those which embrace it. And that is exactly what will happen if overly broad language is adopted.

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# CATHOLIC VIEWS ON GAY

# MARRIAGE

Do Catholics support homosexual marriage? According to the Public Religion Research Institute's recent study, it depends on how Catholic they are. Those who attend Mass a few times a year think it's fine (59 percent); those who attend once or twice a month are mostly opposed (43 percent support it); and those who attend weekly or more are not fans (26 percent). In other words, there is a positive correlation between Mass attendance and adherence to the Church's teachings.

This makes perfect sense: Catholics who are Catholic in name only can be expected to entertain a secular vision of morality, i.e., one that prizes radical autonomy. Those who are serious about their religion look to more authoritative sources for guidance.

A recent ABC News and *Washington Post* poll disclosed that, for the first time, the majority of Americans favor homosexual marriage (53 percent). It should be kept in mind, however, that public opinion polls are not an accurate barometer of serious public sentiment: there have been more than 30 state initiatives on this subject, and never once have voters elected to support same-sex marriage.

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## NEW DATA ON CLERGY ABUSE

On the same day we ran our *New York Times* ad, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released its 2010 Annual Report on clergy sexual abuse.

In 2009, there were six credible accusations made against over 40,000 priests during that year; in 2010, the number was seven.

As usual, most of the accused are homosexuals: 83 percent of the alleged victims were male, and three-in-four were postpubescent. This is consistent with what we have known for years. In other words, it is a lie to say the Catholic Church has suffered from a pedophilia problem. Those who say that

this number reflects the greater access priests have had to altar boys are wrong: the more priests have access to girl altar servers, the more likely they are to choose males (there has been a slight uptick in male victims over the past decade).

As usual, the cases date back decades: two-thirds occurred between 1960 and 1984, and three-in-four of the offenders are now dead or have been laicized. The most common time period for new allegations made in 2010 was 1970-1974. That this was when the sexual revolution was at its height is no coincidence. Nor is it a coincidence that the discovery of AIDS in 1981 effectively ended the sexual revolution—not a change in mores.

While this is good news, it is still disconcerting to see hundreds of alleged victims coming forth every year—with their lawyers in tow—expecting that their allegations of what happened many decades ago can somehow be substantiated. Just as distressing is the tendency to call the cops over such matters as “kissing girls on the top of the head,” etc.

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## SPINNING THE ABUSE REPORT

Following the report on clergy sex abuse in 2010, the reaction from the media was varied.

“New Sex Abuse Allegations Down Slightly in 2010” was the main headline in the Catholic News Service (CNS) story, but the *National Catholic Reporter* wasn’t happy with this positive connotation. Ergo, it ran the CNS story under the banner, “505 Sex Abuse Allegations in 2010.”

Reuters misleadingly reported that “there were 428 new allegations of sexual abuse against a minor in 2010, seven of which related to child abuse that was said to occur during the year.” The 428 figure is for dioceses and eparchies; when religious institutes are counted, the number is 505. The number of seven refers to the total number of credible accusations made of incidents alleged to have happened in 2010.

AFP, the global news agency, reported that “Allegations of sexual abuse involving the Roman Catholic clergy in the United States rose sharply last year to nearly 700 from around 400 in 2009.” While there were 653 allegations, the number deemed credible was 505. AFP offered the unsubstantiated number and then rounded it up from 653 to 700. It was also wrong to report that “only eight were deemed credible.” The correct figure is seven. The number eight represents the disaggregated number reported by dioceses and eparchies, but does not factor in religious institutes: “None of the new allegations reported by religious institutes in 2010 involved children under the age of eighteen in 2010,” the report said. When weighted and averaged, the number is seven.

Huffington Post took the cake for getting it wrong. It ran the news story by the Religion News Service (RNS) but instead of using the RNS headline, “Catholic Bishops Report Seven Abuse Cases During 2010,” it managed to spin it with, “Catholic Bishops Report Increase in Abuse Accusations.” Wrong. The number of credible accusations declined.

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## **NEWS FLASH: PRIESTS HAVE RIGHTS**

The rights of priests have been under siege for some time now and recently the attacks against them reached a fever pitch.

In a vicious editorial, the *Seattle Times* said that 37 priests in the Philadelphia archdiocese have been allowed to continue in ministry despite a finding of sexual misconduct by a grand jury. But the grand jury did not find anyone guilty—they weren’t empowered to do so. Moreover, most of the accused were initially investigated and cleared even though 24 were recently suspended on a second look. Most important, if mere accusations are the new bar for contacting the cops, then this should apply to all institutions.

Archbishop Dolan, head of the bishops’ conference, recently



reaffirmed the “resolve to deal firmly” with offending clerics. For this he was condemned by the National Survivor Advocates Coalition, for engaging in a “shellgame.” BishopAccountability.org, took aim at the Bridgeport diocese for not listing the names of “accused priests.” SNAP expressed anger at the Philly archdiocese for doing what it is entitled to do—pay the fees of an accused cleric.

In the *National Catholic Reporter*, Jamie L. Manson ripped into Dolan for his remarks on “60 Minutes” in which he correctly said that the scandal is “over with.” Unhappy with the Church’s teachings on sexual ethics, she spoke derisively and disrespectfully of the archbishop. Here’s the real problem: this newspaper wins annual awards from the Catholic Press Association, and Manson was given an award from the same group last year.

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## PHILLY ARCHDIOCESE BLAMED FOR SUICIDE

In 1980, Daniel Neill complained that Rev. Joseph J. Gallagher fondled him when he was an altar boy at St. Mark’s in Bristol, Pennsylvania. His accusation was not deemed credible by the principal of the school, and so the case was dismissed. Moreover, the boy’s parents did not sue the school.

Fast forward to 2007. Neill, knowing that a grand jury had been impaneled to look into old cases, decided to report his alleged abuse to the Philadelphia Archdiocese. Not surprisingly, the investigators could not substantiate an uncorroborated accusation of an alleged act of abuse that occurred 27 years earlier, and so they dismissed the case. In July 2008, Neill was notified of the decision, and a year later, in June 2009, he killed himself. End of story? Not quite. In April, Neill’s family sued the archdiocese, blaming it for the suicide.

Neill’s family is represented by the most anti-Catholic lawyer

in the nation, Jeffrey Anderson. He is leaning on the recent grand jury report, perhaps the most specious in modern times. It held that the investigators should have deemed Neill's claims credible, but offered no evidence to support its position. Indeed, it either distorted the truth, or it lied. Here are the facts. The grand jury report ("Ben" is Neill's pseudonym) says that Neill's account was based on "the corroboration of other witnesses." Wrong. There was no corroboration by anyone. While the report says there were a few altar boys who said that they, like Neill, had discussed masturbation in the confessional, "none of them said they were molested by Father Gallagher." More important, the report never said that even one of these friends was witness to—or even heard about—the alleged abuse. And indeed the only person Neill said he discussed his travails with at the time was the priest's sister. Why he chose only her is not known, but what is known is that the grand jury reported that she was mentally retarded.

What is really outlandish is the way the media continue to give high profile to these gold-digging lawyers and their newly discovered "victims."