

# BENEDICT HITS A NERVE; CRITICS GO BALLISTIC

On April 11, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI released a 6,000-word essay on the origins of the clergy sexual abuse crisis. While many Catholics praised it—we certainly did—his familiar foes went bonkers.

Who are his familiar foes? Mostly left-wing Catholic intellectuals, pundits, and activists who are in a constant state of rebellion against the Church's teachings on sexuality. That so many of them teach theology at Catholic colleges and universities shows how deep the crisis is.

The critics focused on several issues. They were all united on one thing: Benedict should just shut up. They kept citing his pledge to "remain hidden to the world," and accused him of undercutting the authority of Pope Francis. All of a sudden their professed interest in dialogue withered.

In fact, all that the retired pope did was complement what the February summit in Rome did—he balanced the subject of clergy abuse by addressing its causes; the summit focused on the role of bishops in enabling the scandal. Of course, the sitting pope knew exactly what was about to be published; he was not undercut.

Bill Donohue released an 1,100-word defense of Benedict on April 17, taking on sixteen of the retired pope's critics.

The critics are living in a state of denial. They do not want to even mention the word "homosexual," much less probe the relationship between homosexual priests—who committed 80% of the abuse—and what to do about it.

They also want to negate the effects of the radical changes in our culture, which began in the 1960s. Indeed, they act as

though the scandal happened in a social vacuum. Some argue that sexual abuse occurred before the 1960s, which of course it did, but they fail to mention that its incidence was miniscule—the explosion occurred during the time of the sexual revolution.

Benedict's foes want to focus exclusively on the enabling bishops, and not the abusing priests. That's because it is impossible to dodge the issue of homosexuality when discussing the latter. All they want to do is talk about clericalism, which has never motivated anyone to sexually assault another human being.

Left-wing critics of Benedict also deny that moral theology collapsed in the 1970s. Not only did it happen, it was their ilk who promoted it.

The failure of Benedict's critics to address the spiritual dimension of the scandal is another problem. This is inexcusable. Benedict nicely outlined the diminution of respect for the Eucharist, and other matters.

The attacks on Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI are unfair. We are honored to defend him.

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## **IS FOX NEWS CHANGING?**

On April 15, shortly before Neil Cavuto's show on Fox News aired at 4:00 p.m. ET, Bill Donohue was asked if he would go on with him, by phone, to discuss the Notre Dame fire. He agreed.

Here is what Bill said. He was trying to put the issue in context.

“Well, Neil, if it is an accident, it’s a monumental tragedy, but forgive me for being suspicious. Just last month, a 17th century church was set on fire in Paris. We have seen Tabernacles knocked down, crosses have been torn down, statues have been smashed.”

Neil said, “Bill, we don’t know that, we don’t know. So if we can avoid what your suspicions might be, I do want to look at what happens now.”

After another exchange, Bill went back to his point saying, “I’m sorry, when I find out that the Eucharist is being destroyed and excrement is being smeared on crosses—this is what’s going on now.” Neil cut him off saying, “Wait a minute, Bill. I love you dearly, but we cannot make conjectures about this so thank you, Bill. I’m sorry, thank you very, very much.”

The next day, Bill released the following statement to the media.

“I have known Neil for a long time. He’s a good guy. But what he did yesterday was unfair. My guess is he was following the marching orders from above.”

We hope Fox News is not losing its nerve. We sure don’t need another politically correct voice on TV.

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## **BENEDICT XVI ANALYZES ROOTS OF THE SCANDAL**

**William A. Donohue**

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has released a lengthy essay on the

roots of clergy sexual abuse that is illuminating and courageous. It is illuminating because he shows how forces inside and outside the Church came together to create the problem, and it is courageous because he speaks the truth about matters that are already causing an uproar.

Benedict is no stranger to this subject. He previously condemned the “filth” in the Church that allowed for the scandal, and he did more to remove miscreant priests than either his predecessor or successor. He defrocked some 800 priests, including the notorious Father Marcial Maciel Degollado. Now he tackles the issue again, this time with a blend of sociological and theological observations that are profound.

The Pope Emeritus starts with a macro sociological perspective, one that places the abuse scandal in social context. It is simply impossible to understand what happened, he says, without referencing the force of the sexual revolution.

It is not a coincidence that sexual abuse flourished in the Church at the same time that celebrations of sexual libertinism flourished outside the Church. The latter helped set the stage for the former. It was the triumph of moral relativism—the denial of moral absolutes—that helped to cripple the Church.

Benedict puts his finger on a harsh reality: Dissent in the Church peaked at the same time that the scandal unfolded. Catholic moral theology, which was always grounded in natural law, was abandoned in exchange for a more relativistic approach, one that denied the existence of evil. This was taught in the seminaries at the time. Not only that, but books by Benedict were censored.

When pornographic films are shown to seminarians, and a gay subculture is tolerated, Benedict notes, it is hardly

surprising to learn that sexual misconduct will grow by leaps and bounds. "In various seminaries homosexual cliques were established," he writes, "which acted more or less openly and significantly changed the climate in the seminaries." The climate that emerged was toxic.

As the lead story in this issue of *Catalyst* makes plain, the retired pope is being hammered by left-wing Catholics. They will do everything they can to stop all discussion on why homosexual priests committed most of the offenses. That so many of them are willing to deny the obvious is sickening.

A doctor cannot resolve an illness unless he makes an accurate diagnosis. The same is true of social problems. Benedict is right to point out the corrupting influences that took place inside and outside the Church. It is not by accident that it was a radical redefinition of liberalism that created the scandal, and now the same folks are back denying their contribution to it.

At bottom, Benedict stresses, the scandal is rooted in a crisis of faith. When the very existence of God is questioned, and when moral certainty dissipates—even with regard to foundational principles—then mere opinion becomes the new norm. This is a dangerous slope; it resulted in many sins, including priestly sexual abuse.

Some readers may think that Benedict exaggerates when he writes about pedophilia being seen as legitimate "only a short time ago." But it was. Indeed, in some quarters, especially among intellectuals and celebrities, it still is. Recall that just recently Barbra Streisand justified Michael Jackson's alleged sexual abuse of children.

"His sexual needs were his sexual needs, coming from whatever childhood he has or whatever DNA he has. You can say 'molested,' but those children [two of his alleged victims], you heard them say, they were thrilled to be there. They both

married and they both have children, so it didn't kill them." Streisand subsequently walked back her statement.

"Why did pedophilia reach such proportions?" Benedict poses the question and then nails it with precision. "Ultimately, the reason is the absence of God." Once that happens, evil can triumph.

He provides an example. A chaplain who sexually abused a girl altar server "always introduced the sexual abuse he was committing against her with the words, 'This is my body which will be given up to you.'" If that is not evil, then the word has no meaning.

Benedict recognizes that the Church is a much better place today than it was at the height of the scandal. Reforms can and should be made, but he stresses the folly of trying to reinvent the Church. Indeed, he sees such proposals as the work of the devil. "The idea of a better Church, created by ourselves," he says, "is in fact a proposal of the devil, with which he wants to take us away from the living God."

What we need, Benedict argues, is greater respect for the Eucharist and the establishment of "habitats of Faith." The appropriate corrective to sexual abuse, or any other plague on the Church, cannot be achieved absent a renewal of faith, grounded in eternal moral truths. Anything less will miss the mark.

Thank God we still have the seminal voice of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI to guide us. He is indispensable.

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# MOVING FORWARD

**Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York**

*The following is an excerpt from an address given by Timothy Cardinal Dolan before the Metropolitan Club in New York City on April 8.*

You have patiently sat through my past conversations with you as I have spoken of all the good the Catholic Church has done—our schools, charities, services for the homeless and hungry, welcome of refugees, healthcare efforts, our cathedral, advocacy for kids, babies—born and pre-born—the poor, families, our elders.

So, as I've discussed with you before the good we've done, honesty moves me to talk about the bad: the sexual abuse of minors by clergy.

Can I begin with the obvious? I mourn the grave damage that many victims—we count over 300 brave victims who have come forward—and their families have endured.

I repent for the sins and crimes of the priests—almost all of whom are deceased, and those living permanently removed from ministry—who have abused, and for my predecessors in the past who did not always act with the rigor justice requires in removing these perpetrators.

It has brought about not only deep wounds in the survivors and their families, but has seriously hurt our faithful people, and our loyal priests—the towering majority of whom have led virtuous, faithful lives—and has damaged the credibility of the Church in the wider community.

Lent, this season of repentance, provides me a fitting opportunity to renew the contrition we feel. There can be no excuses.

*In the past*, Church leaders did not always see what was uncomfortable to see, nor listen to voices of victims, parents, brave virtuous priests, sisters, and sensitive lay people that yearned to be heard about dangerous clerics.

*In the past*, some offending priests were at times transferred to yet another parish, or left in their assignment, only to tragically reoffend.

*Back then*, law enforcement officials were not always informed of the crime for which an offender should have been arrested.

*Back then*, there were rarely any background checks or safe environment training.

*Back then*, I am also afraid to admit, we were not always as open and up front as we should have been with our people.

*In the past*, the Catholic Church was not the example of the vigilant, professional approach prioritizing the safety of young people at all costs that we should have been.

For me to say this in front of you causes me sorrow and shame, just as it does on occasions when I meet with victims and their families, as I often do.

This expression of shame and sorrow is appropriate as we commence the penance and intense prayer of Holy Week beginning this Sunday, Palm Sunday.

Our elder brothers and sisters in the faith, our Jewish neighbors, will also then observe Passover, and their belief reminds us convincingly that God can indeed rescue us from darkness, sin, and death, as He indeed did save the Hebrews in Egypt. God can guide us to renewal, reform, a new land.

I told you before how things were done *back then*. What about *now*?

Only three instances of substantiated sexual abuse have been



alleged to have occurred in the archdiocese since 2002. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, at the request of the bishops, conducted a comprehensive independent study of clergy abuse in the United States, and found that the annual number of incidents of sexual abuse by priests peaked in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and then declined sharply after 1985.

One incident is way too many, but the sharp drop in the past three decades reflects changes in attitudes and policies that were terribly slow to come, but are now firmly in place.

In June 2002, the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* adopted the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, usually called ***The Dallas Charter***, which affirms the Church's commitment to sustain and strengthen a safe environment for children and youth.

Under Cardinal John O'Connor and Cardinal Edward Egan, my predecessors, our diocese had already enacted a number of protective measures. The Charter was the starting point for all that followed. It set out a series of practical and pastoral steps to which the archdiocese remains deeply committed.

Now, whenever the archdiocese receives an allegation of abuse—and as I have said the vast majority of current complaints relate to conduct that occurred over 30 years ago or more—it is referred automatically to the appropriate District Attorney. We have *memoranda of understanding* in place with the District Attorneys in each of the ten counties in the archdiocese, and they have our commitment to full cooperation.

Now, when we receive an allegation of abuse, the victim is immediately offered counseling by a professional of the victim's choosing. The counseling is at the archdiocese's expense, as it should be, and for as long as the victim feels it is needed.

Now, if a District Attorney's Office determines that the

allegation is credible, but that it cannot bring a criminal charge because the conduct is time barred, which is almost always the case, it turns the matter back to the archdiocese, and we contract an independent investigation from an outside forensic agency made up of mostly former FBI agents. A criminal conviction requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt; protecting children does not. While this independent investigation is going on, the priest steps aside and his parish is notified.

Now, after this independent investigation is concluded, that data is presented to a Review Board to determine if the allegation is more likely than not true. The board is comprised of a majority of lay people—judges, lawyers, a psychologist, parents, teachers—and a priest and a nun.

Now, if the Board determines that the complaint is substantiated as more likely true, I accept their recommendation and remove the priest from active ministry, and his current and former parishes are notified. If the allegation is found not to be substantiated, the priest is returned to ministry.

Let me read you a part of the letter that I send to parishioners when we receive an allegation, regarding their priest, which the DA has deemed credible:

“I write to share some unpleasant news concerning [your priest]. Although you will undoubtedly find this news disturbing, as do I, I know you would prefer to hear it from me directly...[T]he archdiocese was informed that an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor was made against [your priest] and the district attorney has deemed it credible.

“The archdiocese will now follow its policy and protocols which includes having an independent investigation and referral to the Review Board...[Your priest] has denied the allegation, but will step aside while the matter is

investigated. Might I request your prayers for the person who brought this allegation, and for [your priest]. We will keep you posted."

Similar letters then go to members of past parishes where the accused priest has been assigned. We ask other victims to come forward.

Writing such a letter is not easy. Not writing it would be far worse. Permit me one more example of our current practices.

Now, the archdiocese has a Safe Environment Program that requires training for anyone who works with children, including clergy, employees and volunteers. Now, we require background checks that must be renewed every six years.

All of what I have said so far involves our handling of abuse complaints, and reflects our commitment to diligence and honesty. But the Church also has an obligation to make amends to victims of past abuse, and we are committed to doing that as well.

Three years ago, the archdiocese created an *Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program* (IRCP) to assess claims of past abuse and give compensation to those who were abused. Since then a number of other dioceses have followed our lead and created their own compensation programs.

The IRCP is led by Kenneth Feinberg and Camille Biros, who administered the compensation funds for the victims of September 11, and those of the Boston Marathon bombing, and who are recognized experts in the field.

To date, the IRCP has awarded \$60 million in compensation to 314 victims. That number is heart-breaking, but the fact that there is an effective, autonomous procedure in place to hear complaints and provide some resolution is an important step toward healing, as victims have testified. We continue to invite people to come forward.

You should also know that this past September I asked Barbara Jones, a widely respected former federal judge, to review all of our policies, look into our practices, and make recommendations for their improvement. I want her to let us know whether or not we are indeed keeping the promises we have made. There is always room for improvement.

Before I close today, I want to say a few words about the *Child Victims Act* which the New York Legislature passed and the governor signed into law on February 14, 2019. Most significantly, the act extends the statute of limitations in criminal and civil cases so that victims of child abuse can seek justice.

In his State of the State Address, Governor Cuomo suggested that the “opposition of the Catholic Church” had been an impediment to the law’s passage—that the Church was somehow indifferent to abuse. Maybe it was good theatre, but it was less than accurate, and hardly fair.

To be sure, in the past, the Church had publicly supported robust reform in the laws on the abuse of minors, but had expressed concerns about one part of the act repealing the statute of limitations retroactively, but we were hardly alone in that caution.

Before the Governor spoke, however, we had publicly dropped our opposition. We had asked only that the so-called “public loophole”—a loophole that denied victims abused at public institutions, where abuse is regularly documented, equal access to the courts—be closed.

Sexual abuse is not limited to one institution, and while legislation should include the Church, we should not be singled out. The legislation that was enacted this year covers all organizations, private and public, religious and secular. It therefore had our support.

Jesus taught that the kingdom of God belongs to the children.

For years, the Church was at times sadly less than strict in protecting those young people. No more. Children need safe places to grow, to learn, to play baseball, to thrive, to pray, to prepare for life.

As Dr. Paul McHugh, of Johns Hopkins University, a leading expert in the abuse of the young, has stated “Children are today very safe in the Catholic Church.”

A wise historian said that those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it. I will not forget.

I thank you for inviting me to speak today, and very much appreciate your attention to my remarks.

A Blessed Holy Week and Passover!

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## NEW YORK TIMES COVERS “UNPLANNED”

In the April 9 edition of the *New York Times*, there was a news story about the pro-life movie “Unplanned.” Of course, the term “pro-life” never appeared—such persons were described as “being against abortion rights.” The words were chosen carefully: those who defend human rights *in utero* are against human rights.

The story started with an observation about suburban theatergoers who saw the film the previous week. “A few—a gaggle of nuns in their habits, at least one collared priest—wore their dispositions on their sleeves. Others communicated in muted gestures, dabbed at tears, or lingered for long stretches in the popcorn-strewn vestibule at the AMC multiplex here, as if

still processing the deliberately provocative movie they had just seen.”

The Cambridge English Dictionary defines “gaggle” as “a group of geese” or “a group of noisy or silly people.” We can assume that the reporter, Reggie Ugwu, was not referring to the nuns as “a group of geese.” That would make them “a group of noisy or silly people.”

The silly nuns were in habit. That makes sense given that pro-abortion nuns—Donohue has met more than a few of them—tend to dress like social workers. The priest with a collar (note: even liberal priests wear a collar when they go on TV) was, like the silly nuns, making a statement with his garb, clearly wearing his “dispositions on his sleeve.”

It is true that when people witness a movie about the wanton destruction of babies they tend to well up. Either that or they are sociopaths. And yes, there is much to process about a movie that is “deliberately provocative.” Films that honestly depict bodily invasions tend to be that way.

“Unplanned,” as many know, has been subject to considerable Hollywood censorship. Ugwu accurately recounts how requests for songs to be used in the movie were denied, as were most TV interviews. The film was slapped with an “R” rating, a deliberate act, and the movie’s Twitter account was temporarily disabled. When it comes to explaining why these things happened, Ugwu wears his dispositions on his sleeve.

“Of course, no film is entitled to media exposure.” That’s true. The same could be said about the failure of the *New York Times* to review the movie—like virtually every other major newspaper in the nation (the *Washington Post* being the lone exception)—but that doesn’t empty the discussion. Why the blackout?

Ugwu anticipates this question and has a ready answer. He opines that “the belief among anti-abortion communities that

powerful forces have arrayed against the film has kindled long-smoldering claims of liberal and anti-religious bias in the media and Silicon Valley.”

That Hollywood and the Silicon Valley are liberal and anti-religious is about as controversial as saying the Bible Belt is conservative and religious. Only liars or the ignorant would deny it. They are also intolerant and censorial.

Ugwu noted in a parenthetical remark that Planned Parenthood released a statement saying the movie “promotes many falsehoods.” We checked the full statement, which is three sentences long, and it does not provide a single example of a falsehood. Surely they could cite one.

In the movie, there is an ultrasound picture of the baby flinching when pierced by the abortionist. This scene has upset a lot of people: some are upset at the violence and others are upset because their argument implodes.

Ugwu says that this scene “shows a fetus with a discernible head, torso and limbs frantically squirming away from a doctor’s probe...before being liquefied by suction.” So there is a body other than that of the mother’s. And it moves. Temporarily that is.

He asked a doctor at the “nonpartisan American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists” about this scene and she said that the notion that the baby is “fighting for its life” is misleading; babies at 13 weeks cannot feel pain, she said.

There are two problems here. First of all, there is nothing “nonpartisan” about this woman—she performs abortions. Second, according to a study published in 2013 in the *Journal of Maternal-Fetal Neonatal Medicine*, “As early as 8 weeks the baby exhibits reflex movement during invasive procedures.”

So the question we have for Mr. Ugwu and his “nonpartisan” abortionist friend is, “If the baby cannot feel pain, why does

he or she recoil when pierced?" Don't adults recoil when pierced by a dentist?

We could not help but notice that in the same edition of the newspaper there is an article about a change of leadership at *The Nation* magazine. It noted that the far-left publication was founded by abolitionists in 1865. What it didn't mention is that it strongly defended, and lied about, the mass murders committed by Stalin and Mao. If a magazine defended, and lied about, Hitler, it would surely be noted.

Abortion and communism have much in common: both are stories about the killing of innocents. And in both stories, the paper covered them up. This is what makes the *New York Times* tick.

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## **“UNPLANNED” : FACING THE HORROR of abortion**

*Rick Hinshaw read “Unplanned” and saw the movie as well. He shares with us his insights.*

Abby Johnson's story first exploded onto the American consciousness in late 2009, thanks, ironically, to the machinations—and miscalculations—of the Planned Parenthood (PP) publicity machine.

As is well known now, thanks to “Unplanned,” the compelling, gripping movie taken from Abby's 2010 book of the same name, Abby Johnson in late 2009 had just resigned as director of a Planned Parenthood clinic in Bryan, Texas, after having “come face-to-face with the true horror of abortion.” Planned Parenthood filed a lawsuit and a motion for a restraining order, in effect trying to prevent Abby Johnson from telling



her story. Foolishly, they announced their legal action with a news release—bringing Abby’s story to the attention of the media, and leading Abby and the Coalition for Life to speak to the media themselves to get the truth out before they could be legally gagged. Ultimately, PP’s legal actions were thrown out by a judge, leaving Abby free to fully tell her story, which she does so movingly and powerfully in her book—first published in 2010 and now re-released, by Ignatius Press, in an updated edition—and through the major motion picture released in theaters nationwide March 29.

The book and movie open with the defining moment of Abby’s conversion: the day when, as director of the Bryan PP clinic, she was called in to assist in an ultrasound-guided abortion. This was the first time, in nine years volunteering and working at the clinic, that she had actually assisted in an abortion. What she saw—the desperate, futile struggle of a 13-week-old baby against the abortionist’s suction device, before finally being “crumpled” and “sucked into the tube”—assured that it would also be the last time.

But this was neither the beginning nor the end of Abby’s miraculous story of pro-life conversion. It is also a story of the remarkable interactions between Abby and the pro-life advocates whom she considered her adversaries, but whose love, kindness and prayers, not only for the women entering her clinic for abortions, but for her and the other clinic workers as well, helped to open her mind and heart to the pro-life message.

It is a story of how Abby not only left the abortion industry, but actively joined the pro-life movement, finding there the true commitment to helping women and children that she had previously convinced herself was her mission at Planned Parenthood. And, in sharing her own experience, Abby now provides valuable insights for pro-lifers about how best to change minds and hearts.

As she was drawn, however grudgingly, to listen to the pro-life people who reached out to her, she shows how we, too, must first listen to abortion clients and abortion supporters before we can hope to change their minds and hearts. We must hear from women in crisis what is driving them to make the destructive—and self-destructive—choice of abortion, before we can respond with loving, life-affirming alternatives. We must listen respectfully to those who advocate for abortion, if we expect them in turn to respectfully consider our pro-life responses.

We must remember always that our goal is not simply to win arguments, but to win minds and hearts. Winning the argument is an important part of that, of course; but it must be done in such a way that, when at all possible, opens, rather than closes, minds and hearts. And as we see in Abby's reaction to a few isolated demonstrators outside her clinic shouting "murderer," and holding up gruesome photos of aborted babies, that is seldom accomplished by getting in people's faces. Better to let them see, in us, the face of Christ—as the Coalition for Life people outside Abby's clinic always did—even as we persuade them with all the definitive scientific evidence that affirms the pro-life position.

This is not to say that we should allow abortion advocates—or society at large—to avert their eyes from what Abby correctly describes as "the true horror of abortion." For as she affirms, even with the loving, prayerful persuasion she encountered for years—not only from her pro-life "adversaries," but from her own family—it ultimately took that face-to-face encounter with the brutal reality of an unborn child's destruction to finally drive her out of the abortion industry. And she describes in the book—and we see in the movie—Planned Parenthood's gruesome "POC" room ("products of conception," in PP's antiseptic term; "pieces of children" is what the clinic workers more accurately called it) where abortion clinic workers are required to piece dismembered

babies back together, to assure that no baby parts are left in the mother.

Clearly, Abby means for us to read and see these things, to drive home the awful brutality of abortion. But there is a time and a place, and proper approach, to presenting such compelling evidence. Shoving it in the faces of women in crisis entering abortion clinics is neither the time, the place, nor the way to do it. As we see—and as pro-life sidewalk counselors all across America will tell us—that only undermines their efforts to offer these mothers a loving, life-affirming alternative.

Abby Johnson makes clear that she has learned much and received much from her loving friends across the pro-life movement. She also has much to give, and much to teach us—and she does so, by opening her life and her journey to us in “Unplanned.” See the movie, if you haven’t already; and read the book.

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## **BUTTIGIEG’S DISHONESTY IS ASTONISHING**

South Bend, Indiana mayor Pete Buttigieg is being hailed in some quarters as an honest man who would make a good president. Picking up on this image, he is now selling himself as a committed Christian, one who is much more broad minded than Christian conservatives.

When asked by Kirsten Powers about his favorite Bible verses, his first response was to cite a passage from Matthew: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these...you did for me.”

Who would qualify as being among “the least of these?” Surely those who are unable to defend themselves. Not to Buttigieg—unborn babies fail to make the cut. When asked about late-term abortions on MSNBC, he defended them, citing his objections to “involvement of a male government.”

That was a dishonest answer. Buttigieg knows very well that whether the government is run by males or females, or a combination of both, such characteristics have absolutely nothing to do with judging the morality of late-term abortions. On another occasion he said, “I don’t think we need more restrictions [on abortion] right now.” A more honest answer would have been to say “not now, not ever.”

Buttigieg’s slipperiness was on display last year when he was faced with making a decision to allow a crisis pregnancy center (CPC) to locate next to an abortion clinic in South Bend. Lawmakers approved rezoning, thereby allowing for the CPC, but Buttigieg vetoed the bill. He feigned distress over his decision, offering two reasons why he had to say no. Both were dishonest.

“Issues on the legality or morality of abortion are dramatically beyond my paygrade as a mayor,” he said. Then he should resign. Public figures are expected to make moral judgments about contemporary issues. More important, Buttigieg has no business running for president. If an issue such as abortion is beyond his pay grade, then he is not suited for the job.

Buttigieg, of course, was being dishonest. He has an opinion—he is solidly in the pro-abortion camp.

It was his other reason for banning a CPC that was not only dishonest, it was demagogic. Buttigieg cited potential clashes between the abortion clinic and the CPC. Thus, by sleight of hand he secured the right of the abortion clinic to operate, without allowing women an alternative voice.

Buttigieg offered another dishonest reason for not allowing the CPC to locate next to the abortion clinic. "I saw data that there was about triple the rate of violence or harassment issues when a clinic is located next to a crisis pregnancy center," he said. The implication is that it is the CPC, not the abortion clinic, that is the occasion for trouble.

If there were problems of true harassment or violence accompanying the location of a CPC near an abortion clinic, such stories should not be hard to find, especially from abortion-friendly sources. But they are.

So where are the data that Buttigieg claims he "saw"? "The 2015 Violence and Disruption Statistics" published by the National Abortion Federation lists instances of harassment (e.g., picketing) and some violence, but it attributes none to CPCs.

The one source that appears to back his claim is the "2018 National Clinic Violence Survey," published by the Feminist Majority Foundation. It claims that when a CPC is located near an abortion clinic, the latter is seven times more likely to experience harassment or violence than one located further away.

There are several problems with this study. First, this pro-abortion organization did not simply publish this survey, it conducted it. In other words, it violated a central tenet of survey research: it did not outsource the survey to an independent research institute.

Also, researchers look to see the framing of the questions that respondents are asked. This survey offers none, just capsule summaries.

Perhaps the biggest flaw of all is the failure to consider whether CPCs are more likely to experience harassment or violence when situated near an abortion clinic. There is ample evidence that this is not uncommon. Consider the following

underreported news story.

“An 85-year-old pro-life man was assaulted as he prayed outside a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in San Francisco last Thursday and it was captured on camera. In the 22-second clip, an alleged Planned Parenthood supporter knocks the pro-life advocate, identified as Ron, to the ground, tells him to stay on the ground, then repeatedly kicks him as he tries to take away the ‘40 Days for Life’ banner for which Ron was peacefully protesting.”

This didn’t happen years ago—it happened at the end of last March.

“Clash Outside Planned Parenthood in Naples Sends One Man to Hospital for Injuries.” This was the headline of a story from October, 2018. A 65-year-old man, Joe Alger, was saying the rosary near a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic when he was assaulted.

“The unidentified man got close to Alger’s face and punched him, and Alger was knocked to the ground and punched a second time.” A Planned Parenthood spokeswoman told reporters that “a fight broke out.” Not true. A senior citizen was assaulted by a pro-abortion thug because he was saying the rosary.

Many other examples could be given. Pro-life offices have been torched, and many pro-life leaders have received death threats. Moreover, pro-life supporters on college campuses, especially women, are harassed and intimidated with regularity. It is therefore dishonest for Buttigieg to hold CPCs responsible for harassment or violence against abortion clinics.

Most Americans have never heard of Pete Buttigieg. The media, having found a young homosexual presidential candidate they like, are offering a sympathetic portrait of him. On closer inspection, however, he appears coy and dishonest, and not the least bit interested in serving “the least among us.”

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# BUTTIGIEG'S RELIGION AGENDA

South Bend mayor Pete Buttigieg chose Palm Sunday to announce his presidential bid. It is no accident: It accurately reflects his religion agenda.

"A devoted Episcopalian who fluidly quotes Scripture and married his husband, Chasten, in a church service last year, Mr. Buttigieg is making the argument that marriage is a moral issue." That's the way the *New York Times* described him on April 11.

It is not clear what a devoted Episcopalian looks like. Although the official position of the Episcopal church today has abandoned two thousand years of biblical teaching on the subject of marriage—it accepts marriage between two men and two women—there are many Episcopalians in the United States, including bishops, who consider themselves devout precisely because they have not rejected what the Bible says.

Why is the *Times* crediting Buttigieg for "making the argument that marriage is a moral issue"? No argument needs to be made—it is axiomatic. The paper makes it sound as if it only became a moral issue recently.

What the *Times* is getting at is Buttigieg's bid to cast marriage as a moral issue—even for homosexual unions—so he can seize the issue from evangelical Christians, traditional Catholics, and others. Good luck with that.

The fact is that the Democratic Party has aligned itself with the secularist agenda for the last half century. That agenda is hostile to religious liberty, even if some, such as Barack Obama, have been known for their God-talk skills. The reason Democrats put up with Obama's religion-friendly words is that

they knew he would not make good on them. Deeds are what counts, and on that score, Obama never disappointed his base.

Buttigieg is cut from the same cloth. He will not allow his God-talk to be controlling, because if it did, he would alienate those who like him but have a phobia (or worse) about religion. They need not worry—he is a loyal soldier in the secularist war on religion.

Buttigieg knows that Democrats are leery of talking about freedom these days. They prefer to talk about equality, social justice, climate change, and the like. This explains why he recently told George Stephanopoulos, “when we talk about freedom, I think Democrats need to be much more comfortable getting into that vocabulary. Conservatives care a lot about one kind of freedom and it’s freedom from. Freedom from regulation, freedom from government,” etc.

In the run-up to his presidential announcement, Buttigieg spent a lot of time trashing Vice President Mike Pence. Casting Pence as the bad guy is part of his religion agenda.

By attacking Pence he hopes to steal the mantle of religion. This won’t be easy. After all, Pence supports religious liberty legislation, and Buttigieg does not. So who does the South Bend mayor think he can pick off? Surely not regular church-goers—they support the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

Buttigieg attacks Pence for signing an Indiana law in 2015, when he was governor, that was based on the federal RFRA. That law, which was supported by Democrats and Republicans alike, and signed by President Bill Clinton in 1993, stated that the government could not substantially burden religious exercise without compelling justification; even then it had to be done in the least restrictive way.

Buttigieg could have decided to simply say that he favors gay rights over religious liberty, but that would have deprived



him of seizing the high moral ground. So he elected to set Pence up as his straw man so he could appear to be the real moral agent.

“If me being gay was a choice,” Buttigieg recently said, “it was a choice that was made far, far above my pay grade. And that’s the thing I wish the Mike Pences of the world would understand. That if you got a problem with who I am, your problem is not with me—your quarrel, sir, is with my creator.”

That was a clever, if totally dishonest, ploy. Pence never once criticized Buttigieg for being gay, and if he did, the whole world would have known about it. The difference between the two men is over policy, not one’s persona.

When Buttigieg “came out” in 2015, that is, letting everyone know he is a homosexual, his governor, Mike Pence, said, “I hold Mayor Buttigieg in the highest personal regard. I see him as a dedicated public servant and a patriot.” Those are not the words of a gay basher, and it is malicious of Buttigieg to characterize him as such.

When Buttigieg and Pence first met, the mayor spoke highly of his governor. In 2011, he said that despite Pence being known as a “conservative warrior,” he found him to be “affable, even gentle.” The evidence shows that it is Buttigieg, not Pence, who changed.

“If I saw a restaurant owner refuse to serve a gay couple, I wouldn’t eat there anymore.” We would expect that Buttigieg would say something like that, and not someone like Pence. Yet those are Pence’s exact words, as spoken in 2015.

We know from survey research that most people see a profound difference between denying a gay couple the right to buy a cake in a bakery, and forcing a practicing Christian baker to personalize a gay wedding cake. The former is a matter of discrimination against the gay couple’s equal rights; the latter is a matter of discrimination against the baker’s

religious rights.

Buttigieg disagrees. Fine. Then let him make his case against religious liberty without setting himself up as a religious moralizer. And let him do so without demonizing those with whom he disagrees. That would be the Christian thing to do.

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## **DANA NESSEL OVERRIDES RELIGIOUS FREEDOM LAW**

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel is keeping her campaign promise to put her radical agenda ahead of the best interests of children.

In 2015, Michigan's legislature passed a law to protect the religious freedom of faith-based foster care and adoption agencies, assuring that they wouldn't be forced to choose between their values and their mission to find homes for children. The bill was supported by the Michigan Catholic Conference.

Nessel, outspoken in her opposition to the law, promised that as Michigan's top law enforcement official she would not defend this state law against a pending legal challenge by the ACLU of Michigan.

Now she has made good on that promise. In a settlement with the ACLU, she has decreed that the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services must end state contracts with faith-based agencies, rather than allow them to make child placement decisions in accord with their religious beliefs.

Once again, Nessel demonstrates her contempt for the First

Amendment's guarantee of religious freedom, decreeing that faith-based agencies must check their religious principles at the door before they will be allowed to provide services for children in need.

She also demonstrates her contempt for the democratic process of her home state, arbitrarily overriding a law duly enacted by Michigan's elected representatives.

Worst of all, by excluding faith-based agencies from the state's foster care and adoption program, Nessel shows utter contempt for all the children served by those agencies. As the Michigan Catholic Conference observed, this settlement "does nothing to protect the thousands of children in foster care looking for loving homes."

But that is of little concern to Nessel, an ideological extremist who has repeatedly demonstrated her animus toward the Catholic Church and people of faith. We expect her decision will be challenged in the courts.

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## **NESSEL IS A DISASTER**

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel is a disaster. She can't seem to shake charges of bigotry. Worse, she has no problem condemning bigotry when the victims are non-Catholics. Not to worry, Catholics are taking note of her selective interest in justice.

The latest controversy that Nessel is embroiled in concerns new charges of anti-Catholic bigotry, this time coming from Michigan State Rep. Beau LaFave, not the Catholic League.

He was incensed over a retweet by Nessel that cited the hiring

of a retired judge by Michigan State University to address sexual abuse. The tweet in question noted his ties to the Catholic Church. LaFave further noted Nessel's previous comments attacking Catholicism.

Nessel's communications director, Kelly Rossman-McKinney, tried to deflect criticism of her boss' problems by claiming victim status. She said that when Nessel told parishioners that if investigators contact them, "please ask for their badge, not their rosary," some of the 500 emails were "vile and hateful," noting one anti-Semitic comment.

Those emails were sent in response to our news release condemning Nessel for her anti-Catholic remark; we listed Rossman-McKinney's email address in our statement. Never once did we cite Nessel's Jewish heritage. For good reason: a) it is irrelevant and b) we never knew she was Jewish until now.

What is most striking about Nessel's response is her condemnation of homophobia (she is a lesbian activist), anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia. She cited the latter in reference to some of the comments made about Rep. Rashida Tlaib, the Muslim congresswoman who has made a series of incendiary remarks.

Nessel did not include anti-Catholicism in her list of bigoted genres of speech that she deplores. Maybe that's because of her contributions to it. To wit: She has only been in office for a few months and has already drawn the attention of the Catholic League on several occasions.

On October 2, 2018, before Nessel won the election, we noted that Michigan Catholics had better brace themselves if she wins: She flat out said she would not enforce a religious liberty bill that protected the religious freedom of faith-based foster care and adoption services.

On February 25, 2019, we called her out for her anti-Catholic slur about asking investigators "for their badge, not their

rosary.”

On February 28, 2019, we drew attention to her religious profiling. To be exact, she singled out the Catholic Church for a probe of sexual abuse, never explaining why no other institution was targeted.

On March 13, 2019, after Nessel went on the attack again (this time joined by Governor Gretchen Whitmer), we asked Michigan lawmakers to address the issue of sexual abuse in the public schools. When *USA Today* did a 50-state investigation of sexual abuse in the public schools, it gave Michigan a grade of “F.” Ergo, it was unconscionable not to include the schools in a probe of wrongdoing.

On March 25, 2019, Nessel merited our response again, this time over making good on her campaign promise not to defend a religious liberty law that protects Catholic social service agencies from being encroached upon by the state.

In April Nessel was back in the news for incurring the wrath of a lawmaker about her Catholic problem.

Where this will end no one knows. But bet on the Catholic League to respond.