

FLORIDA BISHOP RIPPED BY FOES; DISSIDENTS ON THE MARCH

Dissident lay Catholics in Southwest Florida, along with some priests, have declared war on Bishop Frank Dewane. He is the Bishop of Venice and is by all accounts a loyal son of the Church. Which is why they are out to get him.

Dewane is drawing the ire of Catholic malcontents, and ex-Catholics, because of his orthodoxy. His critics are largely drawn from the ranks of the elderly, and are overrepresented by ex-priests and ex-nuns. They are being aided and abetted by the media. This occasioned a strong response from us: we took on Fox 4 TV, which covers Fort Myers, Cape Coral, and Naples.

The war on Bishop Dewane started in January when ten priests wrote a letter to the Apostolic Nuncio accusing the bishop of governing by "intimidation, the use of fear, shaming, bullying and other non-Christian behaviors." The letter was made public in May when it was sent to the media, and unfolded in an unseemly manner this fall.

The accusing priests refuse to come forward and let the accused know of their identity. In fact, they never sent Dewane a copy of their letter (he learned of it through the media). To make matters worse, these cowardly priests did not provide a scintilla of evidence: no specific examples of Dewane's alleged "non-Christian" behavior were offered.

Dewane subsequently released a statement saying that the priests' letter "lacks all credibility." Furthermore, he said that the accusations are "sweeping generalities and are simply false or unfounded." The statement concluded, "With the general nature of the unfounded complaints in the letter that was released, one has to wonder who is being bullied by whom?"

To answer the charges in the letter, Bishop Dewane convened a

meeting of all the priests in the diocese. Most priests said that their complaining colleagues should have met with the bishop and handled this matter internally. That's what real men do.

Not surprisingly, Call to Action and Voice of the Faithful, two wholly discredited groups, piled on. In a state of utter desperation, they reached out to Pope Francis, asking him to enter the fray. Their letter to him was replete with unsubstantiated accusations, and loaded with vitriol.

We contacted every parish in the diocese rebutting the charges against Bishop Dewane. Bill Donohue also wrote a detailed letter to Fox 4 TV challenging their professionalism. The station offered a lengthy reply. While it was unconvincing, it was far less partisan than its reporting. We trust they got the message.

As recent issues of *Catalyst* have disclosed, it is open season on the bishops. Unless they are defended by lay Catholics, the battles will never end.

BIGOTED LAWYER LOSES

The Supreme Court of Wisconsin recently responded to the 2011 grievance filed by the Catholic League against attorney Rebekah M. Nett. We asked that she be investigated for making stridently anti-Catholic remarks against United States Bankruptcy Judge Nancy Dreher, and others. We are happy to report that she has lost her license for a year.

The formal complaint we lodged cited the following:

- Nett filed a memo written by her client, Naomi Isaacson,

which said, "Across the country the court systems and particularly the Bankruptcy Court in Minnesota are composed of a bunch of ignoramus, bigoted Catholic beasts that carry the sword of the church."

- The memo called U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Nancy Dreher "a Catholic Knight Witch Hunter." [Note: Dreher is not Catholic.]

- The memo called one bankruptcy trustee "a priest's boy," and another a "Jesuitess."

- For her part, Nett called Dreher and other court personnel "dirty Catholics," adding that "Catholic deeds throughout the [sic] history have been bloody and murderous."

Ed Koch, the former mayor of New York City, must be looking down on us with a smile. He strongly supported our case against Nett. We are delighted that Ms. Nett's Wisconsin law license has been suspended for a period of one year.

GAYS AND GAY ACTIVISTS

William A. Donohue

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1.6 percent of Americans are homosexual. Yet that very small minority projects an influence on our culture that is extraordinary. A few years back, gay reporters at the *New York Times* were bragging how many of them were working on front-page stories. Hollywood studios employ a significant number of gays, especially as writers for prime time and late-night talk shows. Colleges and universities welcome gay faculty, and the corporate world does the same. Indeed, in the big Wall Street firms, hiring gays is not only considered cool—it is a must.

Gay activist organizations, as well as other non-profit civil rights groups, draw support from these elites, and together they help to set the contours of our culture. What the elites and activists want is not more tolerance: they want affirmation. Increasingly, they have made it clear that they will not settle for anything less than a whole loaf. Get it straight: They are not making requests—they are making demands. And they are winning.

Gays are not a monolithic group, but even if they were, there are too few of them to pull off a string of victories all by themselves. To win, the activists must rely on like-minded heterosexuals to score, and there is no shortage of them willing to assist. What do they want? Together with heterosexual activists who share their agenda, they want the wholesale restructuring of society, from marriage and the family to the workplace and the military.

Unhappy with the Judeo-Christian ethos—these activists deplore any sexual ethic that prizes restraint—they want a full-fledged celebration of sexuality. It does not exaggerate to say that there is no conceivable sexual practice, including those that are positively dangerous, that gay rights advocates, and their straight allies, don't counsel. Beginning in the early grades, students are now being introduced to sexual acts that until recently were seen as taboo, even for adults.

Americans are a decent people who want everyone to be treated equally. This includes homosexuals. Whether as a family member, friend, fellow student, or work colleague, nearly all of us have encountered a gay person, and most of those encounters have no doubt been positive, or at least not objectionable. Great. But it is not so great when we allow those relationships to skew our vision of gay activists.

Activists for any cause frequently do not accurately reflect the constituents they claim to represent. Feminist leaders who

are consumed with abortion rights do not speak for most women. Black spokesmen who are against school vouchers are out of step with most African Americans. Gay activists who seek to silence the proponents of traditional marriage are not speaking for most homosexuals.

Advocates for women and minorities run the gamut from moderate to extreme. Unfortunately, moderate gay leaders are hard to find. How many of them have ever condemned church break-ins, men parading nude in the streets, blasphemous attacks in public, and the like? How many have been willing to recognize the religious liberty rights of those they oppose? How many have protested the heavy hand of the state from policing the internal affairs of the Catholic Church?

The reason these gay activists can get away with this is due largely to straights: they cannot see the difference between their gay friends and gay activists. To put it differently, gay leaders get a pass from straights because they are seen through the same lens as their gay acquaintances; they are the only reference base most heterosexuals have. While it is true that most gays do not harbor an agenda (any more than most straights do), it is also true that most gay activists, owing to their extremist stripes, do.

In October, Houston Mayor Annise Parker, a lesbian activist, sought to subpoena the sermons of pastors, looking for "anti-gay" comments. She backed off only because of a threatened lawsuit and bad PR. Also last month, two ordained Christian ministers in a small town outside Boise, Idaho were sued for refusing to perform a gay wedding. If convicted, they face going to prison for three years and a fine of \$7,000. In neither case did a single gay activist condemn these outrageous moves.

The Human Rights Campaign, billed as the nation's largest gay rights organization, is now monitoring Catholic bishops, rating them on their views; eight were selected for special

condemnation. This same group, which is not Catholic, had a contingent in Rome seeking to pressure the bishops. They also held “rosary vigils” in several cities trying to promote the rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender persons.

Saint John Paul II was fond of saying that the Church is not here to impose anything—we are here to propose. No matter, the media paint the Church as the bad guy trying to shove its agenda down the throats of others. The fact is that gay activists, and those who share their libertine vision, are the ones who are bent on whipping everyone else into line.

Today more than ever, Catholics are asked to treat homosexuals with the dignity they deserve. Fine. But there is a big difference between accepting gays as equals and agreeing with the agenda of gay activists.

RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES UNITE

Bill Donohue

Alliances are formed on the basis of mutual interests and needs, and the religious conservative alliance is no exception. There were forces external to each religious community, as well as forces within each community, that made the alliance possible. While today Catholic traditionalists, evangelical Protestants, Orthodox Jews, and others work together on social issues, it was not always that way. It is worth recalling how the current alliance unfolded, especially how Catholics and Protestants put aside theological differences to join forces in the cultural war.

There were two social issues, both the result of Supreme Court decisions, that eventually brought together traditional

Catholics, evangelical Protestants and Orthodox Jews: the ruling banning school prayer in 1963 and the legalization of abortion in 1973. However, in neither case was it clear from the beginning that they would figure mightily in making for an alliance. Yale law professor Stephen Carter is right to say that "after the school prayer cases in the 1960s and the abortion decision in 1973, the banner of religious populism was raised once more." But before evangelicals could unite with like-minded Catholics, an awful lot of ugly historical problems had to be resolved.

In the early 19th century, the only real debate over the role of religion in the public schools was whether the government should fund denominational schools run by various Protestant churches or whether there should be "non-sectarian" schools that featured the King James Bible. Most Protestants eventually accepted the latter, being persuaded by Horace Mann that the common free public school system that he envisioned would not be prejudiced toward a specific Protestant denomination. For Catholics, however, it was a lose-lose proposition.

Not only were Catholic students taught the Protestant version of the Bible, they were assigned textbooks that called Catholics "deceitful," branding the pope a "man of sin, mystery, iniquity, son of perdition." Students were also taught that monasteries were "seats of voluptuousness" where "luxurious pleasures" abounded. Assigned texts on Irish Catholics were particularly vicious. *The Irish Heart* taught students that if the Irish continued to come to America, the nation risked becoming the "common sewer of Ireland." The book said that "the emigration from Ireland to America of annually increasing numbers, extremely needy, and in many cases drunken and depraved, has become a subject for all our grave and fearful reflection."

It was against this backdrop that Catholic schools were founded. No one was more adamant about the need for Catholic

schools than New York Bishop John ("Dagger") Hughes. But he wanted more than parochial schools—he wanted a slice of state funding for schools to flow to Catholic schools—and that is where he met opposition. In a debate in 1840 before the Common Council, Hughes spoke for three hours: he eloquently outlined the anti-Catholic nature of the public schools and the inequitable conditions that Catholic parents had to endure. The opposition, however, proved to be too much, so he set out to establish a new political party to accomplish his goal. But this didn't last, so in the end he decided to go it alone. New York Catholics, many of them Irish and destitute, followed the lead of Bishop Hughes and managed to come up with the money needed to fund their own schools.

Matters got worse for Catholics in the 1850s, and it wasn't just the New York Irish who felt the brunt of things. The nativistic movement was in full swing as the Know Nothing Party gained ascendancy. In Massachusetts, they took control of both houses of the legislature, winning the governor's office as well. The anti-Catholic bigots quickly approved an amendment to the state constitution that barred the use of state funds in parochial schools; they also gained Protestant supremacy of the schools by mandating the King James Bible. Things got so bad in San Francisco that in 1855 Catholic kids were whipped in the classroom if they refused to read the Protestant Bible. No wonder Abraham Lincoln said that if the Know Nothings got their way, the Declaration of Independence would read "all men are created equal except Negroes and foreigners and Catholics."

What the Know Nothings had succeeded doing in Massachusetts—barring the use of state funds for sectarian schools—they sought to do everywhere. President Ulysses S. Grant joined this effort, but it wasn't until Senator James G. Blaine of Maine led the charge that Catholics lost in their bid to secure state funding virtually everywhere. While Blaine failed to get a federal amendment barring public monies for

sectarian schools, most state legislators followed his lead and enacted “baby Blaine” amendments of their own. By 1890, 29 states had passed such laws. Sadly, the fight to get these amendments overturned continues to this day. Indeed, dozens of states still have Blaine amendments on the books, all of them rooted in virulent anti-Catholic bigotry.

A step backward, followed by a step forward, took place in Oregon in the 1920s. In 1922, an initiative was adopted making it a crime for parents to send their children to anything but a public school. No one even tried to hide the anti-Catholic nature of the initiative, the biggest support coming from various Protestant councils and lodges. And, of course, the Ku Klux Klan was active, showing their love for Catholics. But resistance from Catholic quarters was given, especially by the Society of Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. The Sisters sued, and in 1925 the U.S. Supreme Court agreed with them: it was unconstitutional for the state to create an educational monopoly. In a famous line from this case, the high court emphasized that “*The child is not the mere creature of the state; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.*”

Another mixed result, this time reversed—one step forward, two steps backwards—was rendered in the 1947 *Everson* decision. Public monies, the Supreme Court ruled, could be spent to provide bus transportation for parochial school students (it was seen as a safety issue), but there was a hitch: the establishment clause, said Justice Hugo Black in the majority decision, requires that neither the federal nor state governments “can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another.”

Since the Founding, it had been understood that if a law benefited all religions, it could pass constitutional muster. But now the high court was saying something novel: even if all religions benefited equally, it was still unconstitutional for

the government to aid religion. Black came up with the idea that the establishment clause "was intended to erect a wall of separation between church and State" that must be kept "high and impregnable." Jefferson, of course, had penned the "wall" metaphor in a letter he wrote to Danbury Baptists in 1802, but it took until 1947 before such a notion became law.

Two years later, it looked like federal aid to education would be provided to parochial schools. A bill authorizing such aid passed the Senate easily, but it ran into trouble in the House. Entering the fray was New York Archbishop Francis Cardinal Spellman, an avid supporter of federal aid for parochial education. His main opposition came from Eleanor Roosevelt.

The former First Lady wrote in her syndicated column that religious schools "should not receive federal funds; in fact, no tax funds of any kind." In another article, she lectured the Cardinal that the political activities of church leaders "lead people to believe that they are not interested mainly in the spiritual side of the church, but that they have a decided interest in temporal affairs." Spellman shot back accusing her of "a record of anti-Catholicism," a charge that was hardly unfounded given the former First Lady's affection for the work of Paul Blanshard, a notorious anti-Catholic bigot. A compromise of sorts was brooked when Cardinal Spellman settled for funding of "auxiliary services," such as non-religious textbooks, and other "incidental expenses involved in education." Mrs. Roosevelt, though suspicious, accepted the new proposal.

The Protestant opposition to any kind of school choice initiative, whether it be in the form of vouchers or tuition tax credits, fizzled in 1963. This was when the Supreme Court outlawed the public recitation of prayers in the schools; it sent a shock wave through evangelical and fundamentalist quarters. The upshot was the founding of Christian schools. Just as Catholics had founded parochial schools when faced

with implacable odds, many Protestants—now faced with adversity—came to the same conclusion and established their own schools. By 1975, Christian schools were being established at the rate of three a day.

Not everyone, however, was on board yet. At the Southern Baptist Convention in 1978, a resolution was adopted asking President Jimmy Carter to veto any bill that allowed for tuition tax credits, citing First Amendment objections. By the mid-1980s, however, Southern Baptists were pressing President Ronald Reagan to permit tuition tax credits. To show how remarkable this about-face was, consider what Richard Land, head of the Christian Legal Society, said in 1997. Explaining his support for a school choice program in Milwaukee that allowed for state funding of religious schools, Land said of the group's brief that "This case is not about tuition tax credits and vouchers. It is about religious freedom and government discrimination against religion."

Two years later, Richard Cizik, director of the Washington office of the National Association of Evangelicals, admitted that his organization had "really done a 180" on school choice initiatives. But the big news was the alliance between Catholics and evangelicals on this issue. Commenting on this development in 1999 was Grant Wacker, professor of religious history at Duke University Divinity School: "One of the most remarkable changes of the 20th century is the virtual evaporation of hostility between Protestants and Catholics." Wacker understands why. "I don't think it's because Baptists have come to have a great respect for Tridentine theology," he said. "It's because they see Catholics as allies against graver problems."

Wacker is exactly right. The religious conservative alliance is not propelled by theological convictions, but by social developments. No longer at each other's throats, Catholics and evangelicals find common cause against secular supremacists who want to reorder the schools. It is not Protestants who are

fighting to keep the Blaine amendments on the books these days—it's secular activists.

Nathan J. Diament, director of public policy for the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, puts the blame where it is deserved: He cites the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Jewish Congress, and the NAACP (against the wishes of most blacks) as the principal culprits.

The Catholic League has a proud record of establishing alliances with people across faith lines. The culture war cannot be won by our side by going it alone. Fortunately, we have progressed to the point where theological differences do not act as a deterrent to working together on social and cultural issues.

HOLY SEE REPLIES TO U.N. COMMITTEE

Recently, the Holy See replied to a report issued earlier this year by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The Holy See took this U.N. committee to task on three levels: the international body does not understand the reach of the Holy See's authority; it unjustly involved itself in canon law; and it advanced positions on parental rights and sexuality that are unacceptable.

The U.N. committee does not understand the difference between the Holy See, the Vatican City State and the universal Catholic Church. While the Holy See's "religious and moral mission" is universal, it is a mistake of monumental

proportions to conclude that it therefore has universal juridical authority. It is important to recognize that “the Holy See does not ratify a treaty on behalf of every Catholic in the world, and therefore, does not have obligations to ‘implement’ the Convention within the territories of other States Parties on behalf of Catholics, no matter how they are organized.”

The Holy See criticized this U.N. body for the way it “plunged into canon law,” improperly equating this juridical system with that of other member States. Importantly, it emphasized that canon law is a “complex unity of divine positive law, divine natural law and human law.”

On the issue of parental rights, the Holy See took the U.N. committee to task for disregarding the text of the U.N.’s Convention: the text affirms parental rights, yet the committee holds that the U.N. has a right to instruct member states on “sexual and reproductive health” issues. In effect, it is telling the Catholic Church to change its teaching on abortion. And by lecturing the Church to align itself with contemporary “gender” issues, and matters of sexual orientation, it is also showing its contempt for the Church’s autonomy.

In short, those who wrote the U.N.’s report on the Holy See haven’t a clue how the Catholic Church operates. Moreover, they unjustly injected themselves into the internal affairs of the Church.

COMMON CORE’S STRONG ARM

TACTICS

The implementation of Common Core in New York State, one of the first states to adopt it, is an abject failure: academic achievement is regressing. Whatever merits it may have, its most vociferous proponents are out of line when they try to strong-arm Catholic schools into accepting it.

The Council for a Strong America (CSA) is pressuring Catholic educators to adopt Common Core. That wouldn't be so bad if it weren't doing so at the behest of its benefactor, the Gates Foundation, or if it weren't bashing the Cardinal Newman Society (CNS), a respectable Catholic education non-profit, for opposing Common Core. But the fact is that CSA has received \$1.7 million from the Gates Foundation, and its Florida office is hammering CNS for making "strident attacks" on the program. God forbid that Catholic schools exercise their independence by rejecting Common Core.

A little more than half of Catholic dioceses have accepted Common Core, and some are having misgivings about doing so. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops observes that the Catholic education community is split on its utility, noting that it was "developed for a public school audience," and "is of its nature incomplete as it pertains to the Catholic school."

Bill and Melinda Gates have spent upwards of \$200 million promoting Common Core, so a lot is at stake. But instead of having the results speak for themselves, those pushing Common Core—and there is no end to the lobbyists, activists, researchers, unions, think tanks, and politicians who have been paid to get on board—have from the beginning acted more like salesmen than educators. To wit: five respected scholars on the Validation Committee of Common Core refused to sign off on the final version because it was being promoted as a done deal before the committee had a chance to provide its input

noting certain deficiencies.

We have no interest in grading Common Core, but we do object to the tactics being used by its paid advocates to whip Catholics into line.

FLORIDA HACK ATTACKS CATHOLIC JUDGE

Kathleen Oropeza is the president of Fund Education Now, a Florida activist group that is anti-school voucher, anti-charter schools, anti-testing, and pro-union. Her outfit has filed a lawsuit contending that the state constitution mandates “high quality” public education, and that funds distributed to other schools deprive public schools of the monies they need to succeed. The state circuit judge handling this case is Angela C. Dempsey, a Catholic. Oropeza wants Dempsey to recuse herself because of her alleged bias.

Oropeza’s claims are not only without merit—they smack of bigotry. Dempsey is being accused of supporting Catholic Charities, speaking at Catholic schools, and contributing to Catholic causes.

Looks like Oropeza fails her own guilt-by-association test. For example, the case could be made that she should step down from running an education lobby. Why? Because she participated in the Save Our Schools March in Washington, and one of the key speakers at that event was Jonathan Kozol: he is an education guru who embraces the kind of indoctrination that Communist nations like China and Cuba have perfected.

This is a classic case of religious profiling. Oropeza’s

gambit is also ethically and legally objectionable.

SYNOD ENDS ON BALANCED NOTE

The Synod of Bishops ended their two weeks of discussion affirming Church teachings on marriage and the family. The bishops also held out the prospect of making some changes when the Synod convenes again next October. The pope will then offer his own thoughts on the subject.

The final report, which was released on October 18, differed from the interim report that had been issued earlier in the week. The bishops failed to reach a consensus on the subject of divorced and remarried Catholics, as well as the proper response to homosexuals. Regarding the former matter, it was agreed that it deserves further study.

On homosexuality, a proposal to commit the bishops to “welcoming” gays did not pass. Instead, the wording was changed to “pastoral attention to persons with homosexual orientation.” Gone, too, was any mention of the “positive” aspects of civil unions and cohabitation.

The interim report was the occasion of much controversy. It tried to walk a delicate line between embracing the Church’s traditional teachings on marriage while at the same time extending a welcoming hand to those in irregular relationships.

For example, it spoke of “the value and consistency of natural marriage,” maintaining that “unions between people of the same sex cannot be considered on the same footing as matrimony between man and woman.”

On other hand, it said, "Homosexuals have gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community," and that the Church needs to recognize "the positive reality of civil weddings and...cohabitation."

This puzzled many Catholics. To be exact, it was not at all clear what "gifts" homosexuals (or heterosexuals for that matter) bring and to whom. While the data on civil unions are scarce, the same is not true for cohabitation: in most instances, the data show that couples that cohabit before marriage have a higher divorce rate than those who do not. This made many wonder why "shacking up" might be considered a plus.

The lack of clarity was the source of confusion. Catholics from all walks of life contacted us seeking guidance. We offered some key points for consideration.

- Media coverage focused heavily on remarks made about homosexuals, though in the daily Vatican briefings that preceded the release of the report on October 13 there was almost no mention of gays. Indeed, there was only one major speech on this subject out of a total of 265.
- The interim report was not approved by the synod or the pope.
- Almost none of the bishops were even asked to approve the report.
- The report was leaked to the media behind the back of the bishops.
- Three of the 191 synod fathers, or 1.6 percent of the entire body, were mostly responsible for the report. Six new members have since been added to prepare the final report.
- As soon as the report was leaked, it was criticized by 41 bishops.

- Criticisms focused on the failure to support traditional Church teachings, the heightened sense of false expectations, and the moral confusion the interim report has engendered.

By the end of the week, the working groups of bishops expressed their dismay at the false impression that was given by the interim report. This was understandable given that almost none of them were consulted about it. This explains why they took the opportunity to say that the midterm report “does not express a univocal opinion shared by all the Synod Fathers.” When the synod ended, Cardinal Wilfrid Fox Napier of South Africa said that the midterm report was the work of only “one or two people,” thus misrepresenting the body.

The interim report was deficient, the bishops said, in not addressing such issues as adoption and the challenges to the family presented by biotechnology and the Internet. They also said that greater attention should be given to the plight of women and children who are being sexually exploited.

On the subject of homosexuals, the bishops accepted the need to respect their dignity “without however implying that this may indicate a form of approval, on the part of the Church, of their orientation and way of life.” By explicitly calling attention to the “way of life” of homosexuals, the bishops were clearly speaking of the gay lifestyle.

Moreover, the working groups counseled against giving “the impression of a willingness on the part of the Church to legitimise irregular family situations.” Thus did they reject the interim report’s embrace of the “positive” aspects of cohabitation. On the issue of divorced and remarried Catholics, there was a clear split between those who want to perfect current practices and those who want to amend them.

Over the course of the second week, 278 articles appeared in U.S. newspapers and wire stories. The media obsession with homosexuality was evident. Here is the breakdown of the

coverage:

- 80 percent mentioned gays or homosexuals
- 65 percent mentioned divorce or divorced
- 47 percent mentioned cohabitation
- 19 percent mentioned contraception

Over the next year, the final report will be the subject of much discussion. Next year we can expect that the final outcome will be somewhere between the recommendations of the interim report and the final document that was issued at the 2014 synod.

CONFESSION CASE ON APPEAL

The Catholic League, along with many other Catholic organizations, has joined the amicus curiae brief prepared by Catholic Action for Faith and Family that seeks to protect the seal of Confession. The case could reach the U.S. Supreme Court.

The State Supreme Court of Louisiana ruled in July that Father Jeff Bayhi may be compelled to testify whether he was told in Confession about the abuse of a 14-year-old in 2008. The Baton Rouge Diocese quickly condemned this ruling, as did the Catholic League. The diocese then filed a lawsuit prepared by the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

At issue is whether the courts can determine what is a valid religious practice. Catholics hold that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is contingent on absolute confidentiality and that the seal of Confession cannot be compromised.

What is pernicious about this case is the Louisiana Supreme Court's decision that a priest's mandatory reporting obligation may turn not on what the Catholic Church teaches, but on what a jury may decide. In other words, what is at stake is whether the state, via an empanelled jury, can rule on which religious beliefs and practices qualify for constitutional protection.

This is just one more example of the growing contempt for religious liberty as exercised by agents of government. Keeping the state from encroaching on the rights of religious institutions is what the Framers sought, yet in today's society this verity must now be fought tooth and nail.

IS "BLUE BLOODS" COMMITTING SUICIDE?

We've been impressed with the underlying positive message of "Blue Bloods" over the years, as well as its welcome treatment of Catholicism. But after a recent episode of the show, we're now wondering whether CBS is turning on its audience. We were bombarded with complaints following the episode that aired on October 10.

Police Commissioner Frank Reagan could not defend the Church's teachings on homosexuality, so when Catholicism was branded an "anti-gay faith," he replied, "Well, I do believe the Church is a little behind the times on this." Indeed, he went so far as to say, "I do believe the Church is backwards on this. And of all the stands to hold onto. In the midst of the scandals of the past decade." Viewers also met a conflicted Cardinal Brennan, and a proud lesbian, Sister Mary.

The Bible is “anti-gay.” That was the logical conclusion that unfolded in the October 10 episode. The show also misrepresented the sexual abuse scandal: almost all the molesting priests were practicing homosexuals. Moreover, the scandal ended in the mid-1980s, thus showing how far behind the times the show’s writers are. As for the wavering cardinal and the wayward nun—it is what we would expect from writers who have decided to pivot.

Is CBS committing suicide? The audience for “Blue Bloods” has been carefully cultivated, so the price tag for alienating its base is high. Time will tell.