

VICTORY IN VIRGINIA; BIGOTED APPOINTEE RESIGNS

When we learned that Virginia Governor Ralph Northam appointed an anti-Catholic bigot to a state council on women's issues, we went into high gear: we launched a massive protest, enlisting everyone on our email list. Moreover, Richmond Bishop Barry Knestout and Arlington Bishop Michael Burbidge spoke out forcefully against her. Three days later she resigned.

Gail Gordon Donegan is a local political activist and a vicious anti-Catholic bigot. Northam appointed her to the Virginia Council on Women, knowing her background. He is the same governor who earlier this year justified selective infanticide. We demanded that he withdraw her appointment "at once!" Instead, she quit.

It would be hard to outdo Donegan's vile tweets for pure, sustained hatred of Catholics, Catholic priests and Catholic teachings. Here is a sampling:

- "Abortion is morally indefensible to Catholic priests bcuz it results in fewer children to rape."
- Christmas is "the one time of year the Catholic Church is allowed to focus on a little boy."
- "Go tell a Catholic they have dirt on their forehead."
- "Saw a bumper sticker: 'You can't be both Catholic & Pro-Choice.' Add: You can be a pedophile though!"

This is the kind of thing one would expect from a Klansman, not a responsible advocate for women's issues. There is no place for this kind of hate speech in the halls of government.

Northam's initial response to our protest was lame. His spokeswoman said the governor "certainly does not condone this language," a position we labeled "woefully inadequate." We

insisted that the governor step up, arguing that he “must rescind his appointment of Donegan. Anything less will make him complicit in her anti-Catholic bigotry.”

We asked our supporters to contact Northam’s press secretary Alena Yarmosky, providing them with her email address. They did so in droves, driving the decision of Donegan to resign.

The bad news is that an anti-Catholic bigot would ever be appointed to any public position. The good news is that when they are, our side is willing to push back. Victory is sweet.

HARRIS UNHINGED

Following the September 12 Democratic debate, Sen. Kamala Harris criticized ABC panelists for not asking about abortion. The debate, she said, “was three hours long and not one question about abortion or reproductive rights.”

Maybe that’s because no one on the stage was pro-life. Indeed, what separates one Democratic presidential candidate from the other on abortion is miniscule. But if there were a first prize for lusting over abortion, Harris would surely be the winner.

In 2016, when Harris was California’s Attorney General, she bludgeoned pro-life activist David Daleiden. It is not abortion that appalls her—it is people like Daleiden who use undercover videos to expose how abortion operatives harvest and sell aborted fetal organs. Harris authorized her office to raid his home: they seized his camera equipment and copies of revealing videos that implicated many of those who work in the abortion industry.

Earlier this year, Harris defended abortion at any time during pregnancy, right up until birth. She also rolled out her plan to stop states from restricting abortions: she wants abortion laws that are struck down by the states to obtain federal approval from the Department of Justice before implementing such measures.

There is something else going on here. Quite frankly, it is not normal for anyone to have such an extreme fixation on aborting babies. That Harris touts herself as a champion of social justice makes her obsession with abortion all the more sickening.

MISSOURI AG PLAYS POLITICS

Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt has issued a 185-page report on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church committed by priests, deacons, seminarians, and nuns. The Attorney General's office reviewed more than 2,000 files on priests who worked in Missouri since 1945. It also read the files of more than 300 deacons, seminarians, and nuns. News reports and communication gleaned from victims were also accessed.

The alleged offenses (many were never substantiated) range from "boundary issues," such as inappropriate communication, to sexual acts. The report found 163 priests and deacons involved in some form of sexual misconduct. In other words, approximately 8 percent had an accusation made against them, extending back to World War II. Of the 163 accused clergymen, more than half (83) are dead, and most of the offenses are time barred by the statute of limitations. The Attorney General's office is pursuing 12 cases of alleged abuse.

One of the more curious aspects of the report is the failure

to identify the sex of the victims, though it is obvious that most were male. I draw this conclusion because in some cases the report speaks about "her" or "she," yet it rarely uses male pronouns. This is pure politics: the homosexual cover-up continues.

Some news reports, and comments made by professional victims' groups, are making it sound as if the abuse is ongoing. In fact, there is little in the way of misconduct. "Only a small percentage of the abusive priests described in this report are reported to have committed misconduct after 2002 [the year that the bishops announced the Dallas reforms]." Unfortunately, this important fact is not mentioned until p. 133 of the report.

I decided to do some of my own digging, and what I found is not the kind of data that critics of the Church want the public to know about.

I broke down the 163 cases according to the decade in which the abuse occurred (if there were multiple offenses that extended into another decade, I counted only the decade of the initial misconduct).

No date could be determined by the report in eight of the cases; there was one case which did not involve abuse (it was listed because of a failure to report an incident). Some priests were laicized and others simply ran off, abandoning their ministry. Unrealistically, the report says the dioceses should track them down and bring them to justice.

Here are the 154 cases listed by the decade in which the offense occurred.

- 1940s: 3
- 1950s: 14
- 1960s: 33
- 1970s: 51
- 1980s: 33

- 1990s: 8
- 2000s: 7
- 2010s: 3

This is consistent with everything we have learned about clergy sexual abuse. The timeline is clearly associated with the sexual revolution, a phenomenon that infected the Church as well as the rest of society. Most of the abuse took place in the 60s and 70s, and if we include the 80s (when the sexual revolution was trailing off), fully three-quarters (76%) of the misconduct took place during that time. Only 8 percent of the cases were alleged to have occurred in this century.

Since 2002, the report says of the Catholic Church, "it has taken steps towards significant reform," crediting it with strengthening "independent oversight and an integrated approach to supervising all clergy working in Missouri."

While this acknowledgement is appreciated, the report still has a hard time noting just how much change has taken place. It cites the latest report by the National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People, commissioned by the bishops. That report noted that "seventeen years after the approval of the 2002 Charter...existing auditing procedures were not sufficiently thorough or independent."

Yes, improvements can always be made: One incident of sexual misconduct is unacceptable. But the Attorney General's report could have discussed the data from the latest National Review Board report. It should have.

The 2018 National Review Board report covered the period of July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018. During this period, there were 26 new allegations involving current minors. But only three could be substantiated (all three clergymen were removed from ministry). Seven were unsubstantiated; three were unable to be proven; two were referred to a religious order; two were reported as unknown; and three were "boundary violations," not

instances of sexual abuse.

If we consider the three cases that were substantiated, this means that only .006 percent of the 50,648 members of the clergy had a substantiated accusation made against him in that one-year period.

Is there any demographic group, or an institution, religious or secular, where adults intermingle with minors on a regular basis, which has a better record than this?

Will Missouri Attorney General Schmitt now commence a similar probe of sexual abuse in the Missouri public schools? If the real issue is sexual abuse, he will. If it's a matter of "getting the Catholic Church," he will not. If he is like his colleagues in other states, we already know the answer.

THE WESTERN WORLD IS DEEPLY TROUBLED

Bill Donohue

Robert Cardinal Sarah, *The Day Is Now Far Spent* (Ignatius Press)

Many observers have commented on the decline of Western civilization, but among Catholic students of this subject, no one captures the essence of what has happened better than Robert Cardinal Sarah. What makes his analysis so potent is that he is not of the West: He is African. Thus, he can see things that many Westerners overlook.

The Catholic Church faces problems in many parts of the world, but it is in the West where the situation is most serious.

Radical individualism and radical egalitarianism are destroying our Judeo-Christian heritage, leaving our culture corrupted by narcissism and an unhealthy appetite for equal outcomes (as opposed to equal opportunities). There is also a crisis of faith in the West, and it is one that has affected the internal dynamics of the Church.

Sarah is not dispirited. He is fully aware of the challenges that the Church is faced with but he does not despair. "The mystery of Judas is spreading. Therefore, I want to say to all priests: stay strong and upright. Certainly, because of a few ministers, you will all be labeled homosexuals. They will drag the Church through the mud. They will present her as though she were made up entirely of hypocritical, power-hungry priests. Let not your heart be troubled."

The problems within the Church are daunting, but it is wrong to make sweeping generalizations. "The immoral priests, bishops, and cardinals will in no way tarnish the luminous testimony of more than four hundred thousand priests throughout the world who, every day and faithfully, serve the Lord in holiness and joy." He is optimistic. "Despite the violence of the attacks that she may suffer," he says, "the Church will not die. This is the Lord's promise, and his word is infallible."

While much of this book shows the imprint of Pope Benedict XVI on Sarah—the African cardinal stresses the deleterious effects of moral relativism—he is at one with Pope Francis in emphasizing the role of the devil. It is not by happenstance that the West, and the Church itself, are suffering.

What was morally right is now morally wrong, and vice versa. "Good and evil no longer exists," he says. "Evil is good, good is evil." Indeed, "we prefer to think that the devil no longer exists. Some bishops even say that he is only a symbolic image. Jesus Christ is supposedly lying, therefore, when he claims that he is quite real, that he was tempted several

times by him, the Prince of the world!"

This is tough stuff. Sarah is not afraid to call out the dissenters in the Church, even those who are senior members of the clergy. "Satan has a fierce hatred of priests. He wants to defile them, to make them fall, to pervert them. Why? Because by their whole life they proclaim the truth of the Cross."

The evidence that Sarah is right is all around us. Most priests are good men, but there is a segment among the clergy—including members of the hierarchy—who have let us down. Some of their failures have been severe, and when that happens, the hand of the devil is surely at work.

What does the devil want? "The sign of Satan is division." He wants to "divide the Church. The prince of darkness wants first to sow opposition among us." Satan is particularly adept at targeting priests. "Satan intends to destroy priests and the teaching of doctrine." He not only hates the liturgy and the sacraments, he seeks "to instill lukewarmness and doubt in priests."

Sarah offers an extensive discussion of gender ideology, the idea that the sexes are not fixed attributes. The proponents of this ideology would have us believe that the sexes are a cultural creation, having nothing to do with our nature, or with nature's God. "According to this ideology," Sarah writes, "only what I construct is worthy of me." This view is the natural consequence of a society engulfed in narcissism and moral relativism.

It is this vision of humanity that Sarah challenges. "A man could therefore think of himself and construct himself as a woman. This claim can go so far as the alleged freedom to transform one's body by a surgical operation, thought of as the recreation of a sex chosen and fabricated by oneself." He does not exaggerate. Indeed, this kind of madness is enshrined in a bill, the Equality Act, that will be taken up by the

Congress this fall.

"In the gender ideology," Sarah observes, "there is a deep rejection of God the Creator." How could it not be? To be in rebellion against one's nature is not only abnormal, it is a profound statement of pride, the notion that I am the center of the universe needing no help from God. No wonder the suicide rate is so high among transgender men and women.

Gender ideology has serious implications for the family. "It endangers the institutions of fatherhood and motherhood. In the view of some Western governments," Sarah notes, "the words 'father' and 'mother' have become improper. They speak of 'parent 1' and 'parent 2.' The first victims of these behaviors are obviously the children."

Sarah is right to say that we have reduced fatherhood and motherhood to "role playing." This kind of game is an example, he says, of "a visceral hatred of the family," one that has torn at the very fabric of society. The hatred he speaks of is on grand display by radical gay activists who are in a constant state of rebellion against traditional moral values. They are supported by many heterosexual activists as well.

Contrary to what Sarah's critics say, he has more respect for the dignity of homosexuals than many gay leaders have. For instance, he objects to labeling people as LGBT and the like. Why? Because such a vision does not see homosexuals as individuals; rather, it portrays them as simply part of a collectivity. "These persons are fundamentally loved by God," he says, "just as every man and woman is."

Similarly, Sarah says "the first victims of LGBT ideology are the persons who experience a homosexual orientation. They are led by militants to reduce their whole identity to their sexual behavior." Regrettably, this is often true.

Imagine someone who is an American, an Italian, a male, a Catholic, a left-hander, a veteran, a Bostonian, a plumber,

and a homosexual. One of those status groupings may be his master status, but it would be bizarre to learn that the only identity that matters to him is his sexual orientation. Yet that is what gay militants are fostering—reducing one's identity to what one does in bed and with whom.

Institutions of higher education are actively promoting gender ideology. As Sarah points out, so are many elites in the foundation world. He mentions the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. Many more could be cited. Billionaire atheist George Soros is actively engaged, as are most of the cream of the crop in the philanthropic community. Count Wall Street among the big supporters as well.

Sarah sees the hand of the devil at work. He says that “the family is an institution that is utterly unbearable to the devil.” It is a “place of love,” and that is not something Satan will tolerate. “Even more profoundly,” Sarah opines, “the union of father, mother, and child is a trace of the fruitful unity of Divine Trinity. Through families, the devil tries to profane the Trinitarian Unity.”

As we have seen, Sarah is a great champion of priests, but he pulls no punches in assessing the damage that some have done. Not all of it is sexual in nature. Much of it is a function of cowardice.

“The Church is dying because her pastors are afraid to speak in all truth and clarity. We are afraid of the media, afraid of public opinion, afraid of our own brethren! The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep.” It is refreshing to read that he personally seeks “neither success nor popularity.”

What he says rings true. One Friday afternoon back in the late 1990s, New York Archbishop John Cardinal O'Connor summoned me to his office. We never got around to talking about what he

wanted to see me about. That's because I walked into his office rather dismayed, if not angry. I asked him, "What's wrong with so many priests these days? Why don't they take a stand?"

"Sit down, Bill," Cardinal O'Connor said. "Priests want to be liked," he said. "I want to be liked too, your Eminence, but I want to be respected first." He nodded in agreement, and we continued the conversation.

Sarah counsels against such cravings. "A priest must not be preoccupied with knowing whether he is appreciated by the faithful. He must simply ask himself whether he proclaims God's Word, whether the doctrine that he teaches is God's, whether he fully carries out God's will."

The esteemed sociologist, Amitai Etzioni, notes that there are two characteristics that are natural to all human beings: the need for affection and the need for recognition. If a child is deprived of these human wants, he suffers badly. But not only children: Adults need affection and recognition as well. Yet these needs can become a problem if they act to stunt our moral courage. Being liked should never trump our moral duties.

I have often been asked by those who work in other organizations, and who support our work at the Catholic League, what the secrets of our success are. What kind of advice can I offer? I always say the same thing: I can give you plenty of ideas, all sorts of do's and don'ts, but there is one thing I can never give you—courage. It is not transferable. And if you are to be a leader, I tell them, you had better have the chops to take a licking. The public can be cruel.

"For Jesus," Sarah maintains, "one thing only counts: the truth (Jn: 18: 37-38). All his life, he served the truth, he gave witness to the truth." The implications of this sage

observation are profound. It means we cannot sell out in the name of being liked. This applies to all of us, not just priests.

Sarah asks us to reflect on the dialogue between Pilate and Jesus. "Pilate is the man of authority. He does not understand who Jesus is, this king who seems to have no human authority. Jesus seeks to make him understand that the power to dominate is nothing compared to the truth. Then Pilate takes refuge in calling it into question. The truth frightens him."

The truth frightens more than Pilate. But we have a calling—one that emanates from God—to pursue the truth, even when it hurts to do so. Prudence, of course, is not something that should be ignored. But when caring about what others think of us matters more than doing what is right, trouble follows.

Cardinal Sarah gives us much to ponder. He is brilliant, courageous, and totally honest.

THE DEMOCRATS SPURN PEOPLE OF FAITH

On August 24, the Democratic National Committee unanimously passed a resolution, spawned by the Secular Coalition for America, that formally embraced agnostics, atheists, and the unaffiliated. The resolution heralded their "value, ethical soundness, and importance," boasting of their multiple contributions to society.

There is nothing wrong with any political party reaching out to those who are not religious. But there is a big difference

between the rank-and-file and the extremists who claim to represent them.

This is not the first time that senior officials in the Democratic Party have laid anchor with militant atheists. In 2010, several officials from the Obama administration met with representatives from the Secular Coalition for America. This entity represents every extreme anti-religion organization in the nation, including American Atheists and the Freedom From Religion Foundation. As Bill Donohue said in 2010 of these people, many “would crush Christianity if they could.”

Two years earlier, President Obama announced the formation of his Catholic National Advisory Council. On public policy issues such as abortion, embryonic stem cell research, and school vouchers, not one of the twenty-six named agreed with the Church on all three. In other words, dissident Catholics were favored over those who are loyal to the Church.

The following underscores what Donohue has said. Consider the policy positions of those Catholics who in 2019 declared their candidacy for president.

Joe Biden: The former vice president had, as a U.S. Senator, supported various restrictions on abortion funding and even expressed reservations about *Roe v. Wade*. But Biden has now fully abandoned any pretense of moderation. As recently as June he revoked his long-held support for the Hyde Amendment, which restricts federal funding for abortions.

In 1996, Biden voted in favor of the “Defense of Marriage Act,” which upheld marriage as between one man and one woman. But in 2012, as vice president, he reversed his position and endorsed gay marriage.

Moreover, in 2016, in clear defiance of Catholic teaching, he officiated at a gay wedding.

Biden also supports the Equality Act. It is the most

comprehensive assault on religious liberty, the right to life, and privacy rights ever packaged into one bill. The U.S. Bishops have opposed it as an assault on religious liberty and the right to life. Yet Biden promises that it will be his top legislative priority.

Julian Castro: While saying “the Catholic faith has never been far from my life,” Castro supports unrestricted abortion. He vigorously opposed a Texas law banning abortion after 20 weeks. He has even proclaimed that “trans females” should have access to abortion—even though a “trans female” is actually a biological male who cannot get pregnant!

Castro has long supported gay marriage. He states that “I separate any one faith or belief system from the responsibility that one has in public service.”

John Delaney: Rep. Delaney also touts his Catholicism, yet he supports the entire pro-abortion agenda, including taxpayer funding for abortions. He also supports forcing Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plans. He wants to repeal the Hyde Amendment and the Mexico City policy, which blocks federal funds for promoting abortion overseas. Most astonishingly, he voted against the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act.

Not surprisingly, he supports gay marriage, another deviation from Church teachings.

Kirsten Gillibrand: [She has since dropped out.] Gillibrand has vowed to “prevent all restrictions” on abortion and to protect taxpayer funding for Planned Parenthood. She has a 100% pro-abortion voting record and voted against a bill to protect newborns from infanticide earlier this year.

Gillibrand wants to codify the Supreme Court ruling legalizing gay marriage into federal law. She brags that she “led the effort to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act” and she is “a proud original cosponsor of the Equality Act,” openly

declaring her opposition to religious freedom.

Beto O'Rourke: Former Congressman O'Rourke, a lifelong Catholic, has a 100% rating from Planned Parenthood and NARAL. While in Congress, he voted against a resolution to ban abortion after 20 weeks, urged President Obama to fund abortions in foreign countries through American foreign aid, and voted against a bill which would reinstate the federal ban on taxpayer dollars being used for abortions. During the presidential campaign, a questioner asked O'Rourke, "On abortion, you said it's a woman's right to choose. Does that include up until the third trimester?" "Absolutely," he answered.

O'Rourke supports gay marriage, as well as the Equality Act, stating, "We cannot allow religious freedom to be used as a guise for discrimination."

Tim Ryan: Rep. Ryan's record on abortion has been mixed, but that recently changed when he fully embraced the pro-abortion position. He also flipped against Church teachings when he voted to expand embryonic stem cell research. He even went so far as to vote against the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act. This explains why he has earned a 100% rating from the Planned Parenthood Action Fund. Predictably, he supports gay marriage and boasts that he is an original co-sponsor of the Equality Act.

USCCB ARGUMENTS ON LGBT RIGHTS ARE SOUND

When the Congress passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act it was principally concerned about undoing racial discrimination

against African Americans; to a lesser extent, it was aimed at providing equal protection for women. Title VII bans discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. LGBT activists have long argued that the category of sex should include sexual orientation.

Oral arguments for three related cases will be heard this month by the U.S. Supreme Court. One case, *Altitude Express v. Zarda*, involves a skydiving instructor who was fired when a customer found out he was a homosexual. The USCCB is not involved in this case.

R.G. & G.R. Harris Funeral Homes v. EEOC and Aimee Stephens, involves a male funeral home director who was fired when he said he was going to dress like a woman while working at a Christian funeral home.

Bostock v. Clayton County turns on a decision to fire a child welfare services coordinator when the employer learned he was a homosexual.

More than 200 corporations have weighed in on the side of LGBT activists. They want Title VII to include sexual orientation as a protected class, alongside the category of sex.

Everyone concedes that when Title VII was rendered, it was designed to level the playing field for blacks and women, having nothing to do with sexual orientation. No matter, the corporations are attempting to do just that: they want sexual orientation to be indistinguishable in law from sex.

The USCCB's friend-of-the-court briefs on the latter two cases maintain that of the five protected categories in Title VII, four are immutable characteristics, not subject to change: race, color, sex, and national origin. Religion, being a constellation of beliefs and practices, is clearly amenable to change. Most important, it is simply wrong, on many levels, to conflate sex with sexual orientation.

Sex is immutable; sexual orientation is not. Despite efforts to criminalize those who work in professions that help homosexuals to transition to a heterosexual status, the fact remains that some homosexuals have been able to change their orientation. Ergo, sexual orientation is not an immutable characteristic analogous to sex.

Lawyers representing the LGBT activists see no difference between arguing on behalf of homosexuals and defending transgender persons—it's all a matter of treating people equally regardless of their sexual orientation or their gender identity. But such characteristics are not in any way analogous to race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

In the *Harris Funeral Homes* brief, the USCCB says, quite rightly, that "Sex cannot be changed even by surgical alteration of the genitals." That is correct. Bruce Jenner may call himself Caitlyn Jenner, have his genitals changed, and dress like a woman, but he cannot change his chromosomal makeup: he still carries a Y chromosome (as well as an X). In other words, he is a man. No amount of self-identification, which is a psychological variable, can undo what nature has ordained.

In the *Bostock* brief, the USCCB makes an equally sound argument when it contends that many religions hold that "there is a difference between an *inclination* toward homosexual *conduct*, which they do not regard as per se immoral, and homosexual conduct, which they do." This commonsensical view eludes the corporate brief in behalf of the LGBT agenda.

It is fundamentally wrong to equate discrimination based on race or sex with sexual orientation. Being white or black, or a man or a woman, doesn't orient anyone toward anything: race and sex are attributes anchored in nature and have nothing to do with conduct. The same is not true of sexual orientation: The object of the orientation is behavior. As such, this puts it into a moral category, one that may rationally elicit

approval or disapproval. Those who harbor religious objections to certain sexual acts or relationships should not be told they have no right to object.

In the Harris brief, the USCCB says, with good reason, that if Title VII were to forbid discrimination based on gender identity, it could mean “the ability of faith-based and other schools to deal effectively and prudently with the problem of gender dysphoria, in such areas as locker room and bathroom access, use of pronouns, single-sex housing, and the preservation of athletic opportunities for women.”

Similarly, in the Bostock brief, the USCCB argues that “Interpreting ‘sex’ to mean ‘sexual orientation’ could affect the ability of faith-based homeless shelters, transitional homes, and schools to offer and to make appropriate placements with respect to housing.”

When Bill Donohue first took over as president of the Catholic League, he was contacted by a woman who had placed an ad for someone to be a live-in provider for her mentally disabled son. One of the persons who sought the job complained when he was disqualified because of his homosexual status. Was not the mother entitled to reject his application based on his sexual orientation and her Catholic convictions?

Let’s pray the right decision will be reached when the high court renders its final decision next year.

NY STATE INTRUDES INTO

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) is considering a proposal that would greatly increase state oversight over private and religious schools—threatening the academic autonomy and religious freedom of Catholic schools.

The proposed regulations would delegate direct oversight of private and religious schools to the superintendents and school boards of the public school districts in which they are located. So, for example, on Long Island, the Mineola school district would be given authority to oversee Chaminade High School, and the Uniondale school district would oversee Kellenberg Memorial High School. District officials would be required to visit the Catholic schools periodically to make determinations regarding such things as curricula, testing and teacher competence.

“Test scores, report cards, teacher lesson plans, statistical data, etc., would all be subject to their review,” explains Chaminade principal Brother Joseph Bellizzi.

This is an unacceptable intrusion into the autonomy of our Catholic schools, and a clear violation of the separation of church and state. It is blatant overkill, ostensibly in response to complaints that some ultra-Orthodox yeshivas were failing to provide basic academic instruction. Now the state is using that limited problem to justify a blanket power grab that would put all private and religious schools under its control.

Besides being an attack on religious liberty, this is absurd from an academic standpoint. As Brother Joseph Bellizzi and Kellenberg principal Brother Kenneth Hoagland point out, their schools have always maintained a comprehensive educational program, “equal or superior to the program of studies dictated by the NYSED.” Indeed, given how some Catholic schools,

particularly in low income communities, outperform their public school counterparts, perhaps it is the Catholic school administrators who should be overseeing the public schools.

That of course, would never happen—and shouldn't, given the religious mission of Catholic schools. But the double standard in New York State education policy is glaring. Constantly, we are told that the state can in no way—even indirectly—financially assist the families of Catholic school children, without violating the “separation of church and state.” Yet now the state presumes to intrude directly into the classrooms and administration of our Catholic schools, in order to fix a problem that does not exist.

U.N. COMMEMORATES RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

August 22 was a United Nations milestone: it was the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. A resolution marking this day was unanimously passed in May; it was introduced by Poland, no stranger to religious persecution.

On May 28, Poland's foreign minister, Jacek Czaputowicz, addressed the General Assembly about this historic event. “The world has been experiencing an unprecedented rise of violence against religious communities and people belonging to religious minorities.” He went on to say that “Any act of violence against people belonging to religious minorities cannot be accepted.”

When Aid to the Church in Need released its 2018 “Religious Freedom Report,” it noted that 61 percent of the world's

population live in nations where religious freedom is obstructed or completely denied. It estimated that 327 million Christians live in nations where they are persecuted for their faith.

In 2019, Open Doors released its report on religious persecution. It put the number of Christians being persecuted at over 245 million. In the period November 1, 2017-October 31, 2018, it found that 4,305 Christians were killed because of their faith.

Christians need to speak up more about the violence, church burnings, vandalism, and the like. In Europe, Christians in France are the most targeted. There were 875 attacks on Christian sites in 2018, and acts of theft and vandalism at Christian sites are peaking.

It was distressing to read what Georges Pontier, the head of the French Bishops Conference had to say about these attacks. "We do not want to develop a discourse of persecution. We do not wish to complain." The bishop is mistaken. The discourse of persecution has already begun, so he either participates in it or not. History shows that there is no virtue in confronting persecution with silence; it only ensures more of it.

Acting more responsibly is President Trump. On July 17, he met with 27 victims of religious persecution from around the world, pledging his support for religious freedom. He was commended by Freedom House for doing so.

No one believes that religious persecution will end any time soon, but it is important for the United Nations to set aside a day to draw attention to this very serious problem. We hope it will now put some teeth into this resolution.

CHURCH TRASHED AFTER DRAG QUEEN PROTEST

Recently, when the leader of the South Bay Pentecostal Church in Chula Vista, California learned that the city was sponsoring a Drag Queen Story Time event at the local public library, he protested. Pastor Amado Huizar, and his congregation, found it inappropriate to use taxpayers' dollars to fund a Drag Queen Story Hour. The mayor sided with the LGBTQ activists.

Vandals subsequently trashed the church. "Lucifer" and other Satanic messages were spray-painted on the church, alongside sexual vulgarities. The police are investigating the incident as a hate crime. As of now, there is no direct evidence tying the two events, though obviously the pastor and his flock are suspicious.

Leaving aside the vandalism, the larger question is the propriety of using public funds to sponsor such events. This is now the subject of debate in conservative quarters. *National Review* author David French takes the libertarian position, arguing that Drag Queen Story Hour events should be protected by the First Amendment. *New York Post* op-ed editor Sohrab Ahmari takes a social conservative position, saying they should not be protected. These kinds of debates are hardly new, but this latest one has sparked considerable controversy.

The stance outlined by French sees freedom of speech as an end. It is not.

The Founders saw the First Amendment provision on free speech as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. The end is the

makings of the good society, a goal that is best achieved by allowing robust political discourse. This explains why the Founders opposed an absolutist reading of the First Amendment: not all exercises of speech are equal, and some are worthy of censorship. Indeed, the same Congress that passed the First Amendment in 1791, passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, barring seditious speech, seven years later.

There are many exceptions to the First Amendment that make good common sense. We have laws against libel, slander, perjury, obscenity, incitement to riot, “fighting words,” speech which presents a “clear and present danger,” copyright infringement, racist notices put in homeowners’ mailboxes, harassing phone calls, false advertising, lying about one’s credentials when seeking employment, verbal agreements in restraint of trade, contemptuous speech in the courtroom, treasonous speech, lying on tax returns, solicitation of a crime, etc.

No serious person regards these expressions as contributing to the makings of the good society—they actually retard that end—which explains why their proscription is uncontroversial.

The mayor of Chula Vista, Mary Salas, defends the Drag Queen Hour by saying the event is not designed to “propagandize a lifestyle.” She is sadly mistaken. It is nothing but propaganda. Don’t take our word for it—read what the stated goal of the Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH) is at dragqueenstoryhour.org.

“DQSH captures the imagination and play of the gender fluidity of childhood and gives kids glamorous, positive, and unabashedly queer role models.” By “gender fluidity” it is meant that sex is not an immutable characteristic. To put it differently, the LGBTQ goal is to teach kids that a person can switch sexes, being a boy today and a girl tomorrow, depending on one’s self-identification (and/or surgical changes).

DQSH focuses on children 3-8. Yes, there are readings, songs, and the like. There are also “dress-up” exercises aimed at celebrating “gender diversity and all kinds of difference[s].” To what end? The objective is to see that kids are “free from the constraints of prescribed gender roles. In other words, there’s no such thing as ‘girl clothes’ and ‘boy clothes,’ or ‘girl toys’ and ‘boy toys.’ DQSH teaches children that there are many ways to express themselves and their gender, and they are all OK.”

This is pure propaganda for the LGBTQ agenda. Of course they say there is no such thing as boy and girl clothes or toys—they teach that there is no such thing as a boy or a girl!

Teaching that gender is fluid is a lie. Gender is a sociological term that describes socially learned roles that are appropriate for boys and girls. Importantly, such roles take their cues from nature—their social construction is rooted in the biological differences between men and women.

For example, boys are more aggressive than girls, but not because they have been taught that way—they have more testosterone. Similarly, motherhood is not a cultural invention (as the president of Smith College maintains)—it is an expression of what nature ordains. Which explains why male and female attributes are so common in every society in the history of the world.

Most important, a free society depends on nurturing virtue, or good habits, all of which depend on inculcating a modicum of restraint. What does DQSH nurture? “DQSH teaches children to follow their passions and embrace gender diversity in themselves and others.”

That’s just what our narcissistic society needs more of—teaching kids to follow their passions. They do that quite well, thank you, without tutoring. What they need is the

ability to harness their passions, directing their energy toward socially constructive ends. That takes discipline, a property not advanced by the devotees of Drag Queen Story Hour.

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM IS A FICTION Part I

We live in a world of fiction: the fiction that a pregnant woman is not really carrying a baby; the fiction that two men can actually marry; the fiction that a male is a female merely because he says he is. And so on. We even have ideological strands of fiction, the latest of which is Christian nationalism.

Most Americans have never heard of Christian nationalism. With good reason: it exists only in the minds of left-wing activists, some of whom are alienated Christians. The latter are now organized and have set forth their convictions in a statement, "Christians Against Christian Nationalism"; it was released in July 2019.

The statement never tells us who these people are. Surely they could have found one poster boy to be the face of this scourge, but they did not. So what is this ideology? "Christian nationalism demands Christianity be privileged by the State and implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian. It often overlaps with and provides cover for white supremacy and racial subjugation."

In other words, Christian nationalists seek a special status, one that should be ratified by the state. They can't name anyone because the concept is a fiction. If they knew anything

about the history of the First Amendment provisions on religion, which were written by Madison, they would know what he said when asked what the meaning of the establishment provision is.

Madison said it meant that the government could not create a national church and that it could not show favoritism of one religion over another. That was it. Are we to believe that Christians are so angry with Madison's reasoning that they have formed a nationalist movement? Nonsense.

According to the logic of these left-wing activists, the Founders were Christian nationalists. After all, they had no problem with state religions—they existed in Massachusetts until 1833. The fact is we were founded on Judeo-Christian principles: that is not debatable. Indeed, the Founding, absent the role that Christianity played, is unintelligible.

Jefferson, allegedly Mr. Separation of Church and State, paid homage to the nation's beginnings when he awarded \$300 to the Kaskaskias Indians so they could build a Catholic church. He authorized spending \$100 a year for seven years to support a Catholic priest. He also authorized setting aside government lands for the sole purpose of religious activities, allowing Moravian missionaries to promote Christianity.

Would that make Jefferson a Christian nationalist? According to today's separation of church and state extremists, it would.

Let's get back to the definition of Christian nationalism. The statement says this ideology "implies that to be a good American, one must be Christian." Why do these nationalists only imply such a belief? Why don't the proponents of this dangerous belief system make their convictions unambiguous? Here is the answer: because those who are responsible for inventing Christian nationalism can't quote any public figure who has commented as such.

The statement then takes the leap of asserting that Christian nationalism is a close cousin to White nationalism. Surely there are Klansmen-like racists, but they are not the ones terrorizing urban America: it is those who wear black masks and head gear who have taken to the streets, beating up innocent persons. That's what the fascists from Antifa do.

The left is good at inventing a crisis and then offering solutions to fix it, the result of which is more intolerance and oppression of those they hate. That's what is driving their push to eradicate Christian nationalism.

There is nothing new about the fiction of Christian nationalism; it's just that its latest iteration is being rolled out to prop up White nationalism. Consider the following observation.

"Over the past few decades, religious conservatives have forged an alliance to confront the unrelenting secular assault on the nation's Judeo-Christian heritage. Unfortunately, whenever the conservatives fight back—usually to maintain or restore the status quo, for example, to keep 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance—they are demonized for doing so. In fact, demonization is one of the most popular weapons in the arsenal of those out to annihilate our culture. The most common accusation holds that traditional Catholics, evangelical Protestants, and Orthodox Jews desire nothing less than a theocracy in America."

Bill Donohue wrote those words a decade ago in his book, *Secular Sabotage: How Liberals Are Destroying Religion and Culture in America*. What's changed is the conjoining of religion with race, making Americans believe that some dark forces, rooted in Christian and White nationalism, are threatening our liberties. Those who are behind this ploy are engaged in religious and racial baiting.

This entire campaign of demonization is designed to further

divide the nation, pitting Americans against each other. The left thrives on division, seeing it as an opportunity to marginalize and ultimately destroy their adversaries. For freedom to prevail, a robust public expression of religion must exist. That is what scares the daylights out of these activists.