

# THE FREE PRESS SMEARS CATHOLIC CHURCH

[Bill Donohue](#)

*The Free Press* enjoys a stellar reputation for accuracy. That is why I was shocked to read an incredible article by Laurie P. Cohen on the Catholic Church. It is one of the most intellectually dishonest pieces I've read on the subject.

[Some of what I have to say can be found in my book, [The Truth About Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes](#), published in 2021 by Ignatius Press.]

Though one would never know it from reading this article, the vast majority of clergy sexual abuse cases took place between 1965 and 1985 (see the John Jay College for Criminal Justice reports). The most common abuse was touching over a victim's clothing. Between 1950 and 2002, four percent of the priests had an *accusation* made against him, and the majority had one alleged victim. A total of 149 priests (3.5 percent) were responsible for 26 percent of all the allegations. Moreover, almost all the offending priests are either dead or have been removed from ministry.

The latest data, collected between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, show that *two* clergy members out of a total of 48,176 had a substantiated case of sexual abuse made against him by a minor. That's a whopping 0.004 percent.

Cohen makes a big deal about the Catholic Church taking advantage of bankruptcy laws to mitigate its problems. That's what Chapter 11 affords, and that is why it is a conventional option for institutions of every kind. Bankruptcy proceedings are designed to allow institutions to keep its doors open and pay creditors over time. Should the Church be held to a different standard?

Cohen mentions several times that Chapter 11 filings result in “pennies on the dollar” for victims. What makes this claim so astounding—did anyone edit this hit job?—is that it is undercut by Cohen’s own words. She cites a lawyer, Kathryn Robb, saying, “The survivors are getting pennies on the dollar and are being dragged through a process that takes four or five years.” In the *very next sentence*, Cohen acknowledges that one alleged victim was “awarded \$11.5 million in the 2007 jury trial.” That’s a lot of pennies.

Cohen contends that by filing Chapter 11, the Diocese of Rockville Centre undermined the purpose of the Child Victims Act, which, she says, was intended to offer financial settlements to victims. The reality is that the Child Victims Act was never intended to bring about justice to minors who were abused, *unless the abuser was a Catholic priest*. That is why the Catholic League fought these proposals for over a decade—they never applied to the public schools (where child rape is extant).

When this law was finally passed in 2019, it did allow all victims to sue—it established a one-year “look back” provision that allowed victims to sue regardless of how long ago the alleged offense took place—but it was clear from the marketing copy of various lawyers’ and law firms’ websites that they were only interested in attracting victims of priestly abuse. I called one of them and said I was abused by a rabbi and was told they had no interest in helping me!

Non-biological live-in partners are the most likely to abuse a minor, but no one goes after them. Why? There’s no money in it. But there is money—and ideological satisfaction—in going after the Catholic Church. If the goal were justice, this shouldn’t count. Indeed, if the goal were justice, why hasn’t any state gone after the public schools? They don’t because of the doctrine of sovereign immunity, which protects them from getting fleeced. Add to this the trial lawyers and the teachers’ unions—both are an arm of Democratic Party—and it is

obvious why the public schools get a pass.

Cohen is obsessed with Msgr. Alan Placa, a well-known Long Island priest. In 2002, he presided over the funeral Mass of Rudy Giuliani's mother. After he was accused of being a molester, he was investigated by the Diocese of Rockville Centre and the charges were not deemed credible. Then the Vatican got involved, and the tribunal also cleared Placa of all wrongdoing. So why is Cohen harping on this? Does she have evidence to the contrary? Accused priests are entitled to due process, just like everyone else.

Cohen treats steeple-chasing lawyers Mitchell Garabedian and Marci Hamilton as heroes. They are anything but.

Father Charles Murphy of the Boston archdiocese was twice sued by Garabedian. When both accusers dropped their suits (in one case even family members said the offense was bogus), an archdiocesan investigation was launched. Six months later, Murphy was exonerated. He died in 2011, a broken man. Brian McGrory, editor of the *Boston Globe*, ripped Garabedian for what he did, calling it a "disgrace."

When I read this story, I called Garabedian to see if he had any regrets in pressing charges against Father Murphy. He went ballistic, screaming like a madman. This is the same lawyer who spoke at a "victims' meeting" in 2011 saying, "This immortal entity, the Catholic Church, should be defeated. We must stand up and defeat this evil."

More recently, Garabedian tried in vain to nail the former bishop of the Brooklyn Diocese, Nicholas DiMarzio. He made a big splash in 2019 going public with his charges, but waited two years before he filed suit. Bishop DiMarzio was investigated by New York lawyers, underwent a two-year Vatican investigation and was cleared of all wrongdoing. He also passed a lie detector test. But this is what Garabedian does—his hatred of the Church is off-the-charts.

Hamilton's animus against religious freedom allows her to oppose the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the seminal 1993 law signed into law by President Bill Clinton. She falsely accused Cardinal Timothy Dolan of hiding \$55 million from victims when he was the Bishop of Milwaukee and has never apologized. In 2016, she told the press that the U.S. bishops pay my salary. I emailed her on May 5, 2016 calling her a liar. She never responded.

Cohen tries to make hay out of the legal dispute between the Archdiocese of New York and Chubb Insurance company. Chubb is reneging on its obligations by refusing to cover claims made by alleged victims; it was subsequently sued by the archdiocese. Chubb is making the remarkable accusation that the archdiocese "expected or intended" the sexual abuse that allegedly occurred in the lawsuits filed against it.

The mask is off. Chubb has now descended to the gutter, arguing that the New York Archdiocese actually intended for minors to be abused by priests. This is the kind of anti-Catholicism we would expect from the Klan, not a prominent insurance company.

So where's the proof? There isn't any—this vicious tale is made up out of whole cloth, just because Chubb doesn't want to pay up. And guess who is on the side of the archdiocese? Victims, their lawyers and politicians who have previously been critical of the Church. Now they are furious with Chubb. But no mention of this by Cohen.

There have been two scandals related to the issue of clergy sexual abuse. Scandal I has to do with the internal affairs of the Catholic Church and the environment that facilitated it. Scandal II is the creation of many parties, including the media, the entertainment industry, advocacy groups, victims' activists and their lawyers, state attorneys general, and others. They are bent on milking this issue, and distorting the record, so as to stick it to the Catholic Church.

What Cohen wrote exemplifies what Scandal II is all about.  
Shame on *The Free Press* for publishing this screed.