



February 10, 2023

SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
2132 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Jordan,

I am writing on behalf of CatholicVote, a national, lay-organized, faith-based advocacy organization, representing the voices of millions of Catholics across America. I am writing to express our concern and outrage at the extremely worrisome escalation of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) against people who hold certain principles, especially the beliefs of the Catholic Church. Further, the recently leaked memo raises significant questions on whether the Department of Justice is currently surveilling or has infiltrated Catholic organizations under the pretext of combating domestic extremism. I request that the FBI's targeting of people of the Catholic faith be treated as an urgent priority.

As you may know, a newly uncovered document released by an FBI whistleblower shows that the agency's Richmond office repeatedly cited the disgraced, far-left Southern Poverty Law Center in an intelligence bulletin, violating longstanding FBI guidelines on the SPLC's credibility.

The SPLC is known for targeting those who disagree with their extremist views and dangerous rhetoric. The SPLC in fact was connected in federal court to domestic terrorism because their "hate group" designation inspired a troubled young man to attempt to mass-murder the employees of the Family Research Council, a Christian advocacy group, in 2012.

In 2018, the SPLC paid a \$3.4 million settlement for falsely labeling Maajid Nawaz, a British political activist, as an "anti-Muslim extremist." The organization was also compelled to issue an official apology for placing Republican presidential candidate Dr. Ben Carson on its "extremist watch list" in 2014.

And yet, in the document leaked this week the FBI openly cites the SPLC to target those who hold traditional Catholic values on gender and sexuality as "radical" adherents to an "anti-LGBTQ ideology."

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "homosexual acts" are "intrinsically disordered" and "contrary to the natural law."

The SPLC and their allies in the FBI seemingly consider that teaching of the Catholic Church as “anti-LGBTQ ideology.” In fact, the SPLC has placed an organization, The Ruth Institute, on their “hate group” watch list specifically because the Catholic founder said that same-sex acts are “intrinsicly disordered” – a direct quotation from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Are we to understand that the FBI is on track to place an estimated 70+ million self-identified Catholics on a watch list? Also joining this government list would be 37,302 Catholic priests, 4,856 Catholic seminarians, 45,000 Catholic nuns, 441 Catholic bishops and 11 Catholic Cardinals.

And by this definition, Pope Francis would be considered a “person of interest” if he were an American citizen.

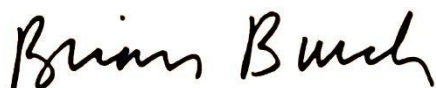
The document also ignores history by stating that “(i)n making this assessment, FBI Richmond relied on the key assumption that [racially or ethnically motivated extremists] will continue to find [radical-traditionalist Catholic or RTC] ideology attractive and will continue to attempt to connect with RTC adherents, both virtually via social media and in-person at places of worship.”

Catholics have consistently been leaders in the true fights for civil rights throughout American history. They were among the first slavery abolitionists and a century later marched with Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. in the continuing fight for equality for all. This is why the white supremacist group, the Ku Klux Klan, made Catholic households a prime target in their war on African Americans. The FBI’s insinuation that the Catholic Church would be a haven for such bigoted behaviors only exposes their ignorance and why they should stop relying on the deeply partisan and discredited so-called “analysis” by the SPLC.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution includes the fundamental right to the free exercise of religion. The Amendment does not exclude Catholic beliefs on human sexuality or language in liturgical practices. The role of religious liberty is foundational to our nation, and has rightly been deemed our “First Freedom.” The leaked memo raises serious questions of law and practice inside the Department of Justice.

I look forward to assisting your efforts to see that this pledge of impartiality is followed in every context, including the obligation to protect innocent Americans from widespread, anti-Catholic domestic terrorism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Burch". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Brian Burch
President, CatholicVote