



## Episode 1,231: The Crisis in the Catholic Church

Guest: Roger McCaffrey & Steve Skojec

**WOODS:** I'm glad to have both of these gentlemen here. We're going to start just with the background. I really want to spend the time kind of picking apart what's really going on and what's likely to happen and all that stuff. But we've got to get the facts out there on the table, and not everybody has been following this as closely as we have. And Steve, since you blog and you write on a daily basis about what's going on, I think you probably have the details pretty well. So let's just start, first of all, with what we learned in that report in Pennsylvania. And secondly, how do you answer people who come back at that and say this is all very tragic, but almost all these cases are in the past, and we have new structures in place now, so it's not fair to use this against current people because we've fixed all these problems?

**SKOJEC:** Yeah, so it's very interesting because we had kind of a one-two punch on reopening the sexual abuse allegations that we thought we got within the Church back in 2002. We had the revelations about Cardinal McCarrick, you know, having not only abused seminarians, but also potentially minors. Those accusations had come out. This was followed shortly thereafter by some other seminarians, former seminarians and priests. Even in good dioceses like Lincoln, Nebraska, coming out and saying that things that happened there. Then on August 14th, the Pennsylvania grand jury report came out detailing abuses of some 300 priests going back decades, and basically reviewing the names of these people. There were implications obviously in that report of the bishops, including Cardinal Wuerl, who's now taken McCarrick's place in D.C.

And the idea, I think, that these things being in the past is easy to dismiss, is a lot more difficult to prove, I think, when you look at the fact that these abuses tend to be generational. You know, these priests are abused, they're allowed to continue to go into ministry, they abuse seminarians, and it perpetuates. And so that's what we're seeing now, is that there's still accusations coming out of things that are happening now. The structures that were in place then I think were — they put structures in place to try to improve the situation, and it does look like the number of cases have gone down somewhat, but it's not as though everything has been revealed. It's not as though there's been honesty and transparency. There's still evidence of cover-ups, and we're still seeing some complicity to — I mean, today we had a couple of priests, I think it was maybe five now priests have been removed from ministry in Lincoln just in the last month because of new revelations that have come out.

**WOODS:** All right, so there's that. Then there's the Cardinal McCarrick stuff, which we can probably talk about in connection with an absolute bombshell of a letter that was written by a former papal nuncio to the United States that I'll link to — because people have got to see

this thing — at [TomWoods.com/1231](http://TomWoods.com/1231). I have not seen anything like this. And people, like even the pope himself, are trying to act as if there's nothing here or the letter speaks for itself. Well, you're darn right it speaks for itself. I couldn't believe the pope said that. The letter speaks for itself. Yes, it does. It absolutely does. For a change, I agree with him. And what it does say is pretty horrifying.

So either one of you, can you — it's hard. I mean, it's an 11-page letter. But basically, what we read in this letter is that, look, first of all, these people knew what was going on. And he names names. And he says, most explosively, that Pope Francis knew all about Cardinal McCarrick's past with seminarians, and that, despite Benedict XVI's placing restrictions on him and penalizing him, those penalties were lifted by Pope Francis, and that McCarrick in effect gloated about this, that he was just going to resume travel and go about his life as before. So this is quite astonishing. Tell us something about this letter — I hardly know where to start — and the significance of it, because to me it's an it's an atomic bomb.

**MCCAFFREY:** Well, I agree. I'll let Steve summarize the letter, if he feels like it, but the implications of it and what the Pope said in reaction to it are enormous, politically, inside the Church. So Viganò, the nuncio — nuncios can become popes, basically. He was headed for a red hat. He was going to be made a cardinal> He says he turned that down temporarily; that is, Benedict was going to make him a cardinal. He suggested to Benedict that he wait six months and that turned into ten years [laughing]. So the implications of this atomic bomb are twofold. It's going to affect the next papal conclave, and it will probably will cost a couple of active cardinals their red hats, because there are several cardinals, arguably like McCarrick and certainly there are a few like Cardinal Wuerl, who is alleged to have covered things up and moved pedophiles and boy-abusers around when he was bishop of Pittsburgh. So the details of the letter I'll leave to Steve, who knows it better than I do, I'm sure.

**WOODS:** Yeah, Steve, what jumped out at you? I mean, obviously the big thing that jumps out is the stuff about Pope Francis, but that's not all he has to say.

**SKOJEC:** I mean, there's a lot of names named in that letter, And I think that it would be difficult, even though I've looked at it several times, to sort of summarize it. I'll leave people out. But I think the two things that stood out to me most strongly are, number one, not only that Pope Francis knew, but you know, Viganò says that he personally told Pope Francis in 2013, *Listen, Cardinal McCarrick is a problem. There is a dossier this thick on him in the Vatican. Pope Benedict actually issued sanctions against him. He was not supposed to be exercising public ministry.* And he basically says that Francis laughed him off, ignored the fact that this was the case and actually started rehabilitating the career of McCarrick.

Now, this is something, by the way, that Francis has been doing from the very outset of his papacy. You get kind of deep into the weeds of conspiracy theory, but there was a group of cardinals and bishops, which included Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Belgium, that conspired to elect Francis. They called themselves the St. Gallen Mafia, and they've been on the record about. They've done news interviews there. They're pretty open and brazen about the fact that they participated in this conspiracy. A Danneels was a guy who was actually caught on tape intimidating, trying to dissuade a victim of abuse in Brussels from going forward. And actually, the accusations were against his own uncle, who was a bishop. Danneels was caught on tape. He kind of wound up retiring as bishop, bringing shame and disgrace, but he

described Francis' election as a personal resurrection experience. And if you look at the pictures of Pope Francis when he's elected, there's Cardinal Danneels standing right next to him on the loggia. He's sort of in the background like a Sith Lord, but he's there. You can see him.

So you know, we have these cases going back from the beginning, where people who were credibly accused of covering up this kind of abuse who are friends of the pontificate, who have helped Francis get to where he is, those people and their indiscretions are largely ignored, overlooked. And in fact, some of them are promoted. Danneels was then also invited by the pope personally to participate in both synods on the family in 2014 and 2015. So he's been very involved at a time where he really, you know, should have been put out to pasture.

So the first thing there is that complicity of the pope, and I think that's the biggest part. But you see also, I mean, Cardinal Wuerl, he's the successor to McCarrick and he's sort of a protégé to him. And he's denied all knowledge of McCarrick's wrongdoing. Viganò actually comes out and actually says that he's a shame-faced liar in this letter. He goes like, *His denials are laughable, because I know he knows about it, because I talked to him about it.* So he's really coming out strong and naming names in a way that we haven't seen done, maybe every.

**WOODS:** Let me try to set the scene for either non-Catholics or people who just don't follow what we might call Church politics, just so that people understand what's really happening here. Because it's true that we have people on the left in the Church. And I know people say, oh, there is no left and right in the church. Yes, there is. Come on. Of course, there is. And there are people on the left in the Church. There are people on the right who need to be desegregated, because there are people who, if you ask them, you know, how many sacraments are there and what is grace, they'll give you all the orthodox answers. These are people we might call — we've sometimes called conservative Catholics, where they'll say, oh, there are lots of problems in the Church, but the pope is a saint and we love him. This has been going on for 30, 40 years. There are all kinds of problems that occur mysteriously, and the guy at the top is just helpless to stop it. That that's been the line. Or he's unimpeachable, and he's great because maybe they feel like that's what they're obligated to believe. Who knows? I can't get into their heads. But they try to pretend that the insanity of the past half century in the Church is more or less than normal. *Yeah, there are some abuses, but you know, just find the best parish you can.* I mean, whatever.

But then there are the traditionalists who say, *Now, hold on a minute. This scenario where we have a new liturgy that's caused all kinds of problems, and we have pastoral practice that's bizarre, and crazy political priorities, like we're more concerned about the environment, as if we don't have enough people already working on the environment that we need some cardinal's opinion.* It's just weird. And so my point is that I fall into that camp, where I say this is not just a matter of, well, there were a few abuses. There's some kind of systematic campaign to rework the whole Church here, and I'm not going to sit by and pretend that everything's fine or there's some decent bishop down the street. But the significance of all this is that the conservatives, the people who have for years told us traditionalists that we should shut our mouths and stop complaining and everything's fine in the Vatican, are now saying — I mean, a lot of them. I mean, Scott Hahn, who I think is a good man, very smart, but he stays out of these sorts of things. He's retweeting and publicizing the nuncio's letter. I mean, a lot of these people are jumping in and saying this is atrocious, and

this man needs to step down. These are people who wouldn't say a word for years. To me, that means something's happening.

**MCCAFFREY:** Well, there's a half a dozen U.S. bishops who are now supporting Viganò, so things have changed. That's the most significant thing. Scott Hahn, perhaps significant, but when you have ordinaries — there are 190-some-odd dioceses in the U.S., and I would have expected zero of those bishops to publicly weigh in against the pope. Really, that's what they're doing.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**SKOJEC:** And some have been very strong.

**WOODS:** Strickland ordered all his priests to read his message about how he found the letter credible.

**SKOJEC:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** Wow. I never even heard of Strickland. And I mean, I thought I knew all the semi-reasonable ones. I never even heard of this guy.

**MCCAFFREY:** Well, I mean, they're probably — I'm guessing, purely. They're probably feeling guilty because they've been silent for so long. And they know so much about what's going on and say nothing, partly because they're local ordinaries. You don't expect somebody from Ohio to make a comment about national problems. But the point is they know there's a crisis within, and they know there's a homosexual network — because really, this is what it's all about in this case — and they've been quiet for a long time, and I think they're feeling, rightly, a little bit abashed. Let's put it that way. So now they're asking the pope for clarification. And there were, I don't know, Steve, 6 or 8, but now there'll be 10 or 12.

**SKOJEC:** I mean, the number keeps growing. The last time I documented it, there were 6, but then I've seen probably 2 or 3 more since that happened. I mean, even guys like Bishop Barron, who, you know, is sort of the TV superstar Bishop and often takes the middle-of-the-road position on a lot of things, but even he has come out and made a statement.

**MCCAFFREY:** Yeah, I noticed that, too.

**WOODS:** Let me say something about Cardinal Cupich in Chicago, who is just the last person on earth you would ever want to appoint to anything, really. You'd never want to appoint him anything. And if you wanted your kids to get a good religious education, you would keep him about a million miles away from him. So he's the guy in charge of the Archdiocese of Chicago, and he was on TV the other day, and it was like something out of *The Onion*, when you heard what he had to say, because it was, *Well, look, we've got an agenda that, you know, we're really busy trying to implement, and we haven't got time for all this crazy nonsense, because after all, we're trying to advocate for the environment and immigrants.*

**MCCAFFREY:** Right.

**WOODS:** And that's when I knew, all right — well, first of all, again, there are a ton of people advocating for the environment and immigrants. What do we need some cardinal for? Whereas there is almost nobody advocating for the sorts of things Catholics should be particularly interested in?

**MCCAFFREY:** Well, the real message from Cupich was: those of us at the top in the Church in the U.S., and increasingly this is so — we're card-carrying leftists. You guys in the press know what we're about. We're counting on you now. We need you. And that was a subtext of this guy's remarks. He will not stay, in my opinion, in Chicago. He will be promoted further. Cupich is not going away.

**WOODS:** Now, at the end of his statement, he said, *And by the way, people making these accusations against Francis are probably racist.* Typical leftist, right? *They're probably racist, because Francis is a Latino.* And I mean, I'm not even sure Argentines think of themselves as Latino, but it doesn't even matter.

**SKOJEC:** Even if he were, he's an ethnic Italian. His parents are both from Italy.

**WOODS:** Right, so the whole thing — I mean, what a ridiculous thing to say. That told me — if you're immediately throwing out that card, you know, it's not looking good for you [laughing].

**MCCAFFREY:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** And I think his gambit to try to — I agree, that's exactly what he was saying to the press that, *Wink, wink, you know you want me in Chicago, because you know you won't have to deal with a Catholic.* You know? *And so, you know you want me here, so help me out.* I do think that the thing is, even the media, as rotten as they are, they have some standards, and there will be a point where they will say, *You know, we did like Cupich up to now, but is my journalistic reputation worth protecting this schmuck? I'm not sure.*

**MCCAFFREY:** Well, they're really, they're torn. The average left-wing national journalist in the U.S. is torn. They love the idea of bringing down whoever happens to be the Church establishment, because they hate Catholics. They hate the Church. On the other hand, you know, they really don't really give a damn about the issues at stake. So I consider them torn. Most of them will probably opt for destruction. They love that idea. But I don't think Bergoglio is going to resign. And, by the way, speaking of subtext, the subtext of Cupich's remarks and the subtext of the pope's response on the airplane are exactly the same, winking at the press rather inelegantly, basically appeal to their better left-wing sense here. When he said, *I'm not going to comment on it; you guys know what you're doing* — I'm paraphrasing, but, *Why don't you guys look into the contents of this letter, and while you're at it, why don't you look into the nuncios who made these remarks?* The subtext is exactly the same. *I'm on your side, gentlemen of the press. And I know you're on my side.* So he's going to stonewall it, and so is Cupich. But where that will end up is anybody's guess. But again, I don't think Francis is going anywhere. He's the king. This is not the White House that we're dealing with.

**WOODS:** But what do you guys think about, if he presumably does not step down, does this suspicion that's now surrounding him mean that when he tries some new — you know, whatever the next synod is going to be, or whenever he tries his next great leap forward, do

you think that now the resistance to him will have more of a backbone, because they know there are a lot of people who support them against Francis now?

**SKOJEC:** Good question.

**MCCAFFREY:** Stephen, I disagree. I don't — he wants a married clergy; he's going to get married clergy, let's put it that way. I don't know what Steve's view of that is. But I think he's just going to push ahead with his agenda.

**SKOJEC:** Look, I mean, I compare him at this point to somebody living in a house that's being foreclosed upon by a bank. There are two different types of people who are going to be in that situation: the ones who are going to work with the bank and maintain their dignity and try to leave in an orderly fashion, and then there's the people who rip out all the fixtures and put holes in the walls because they figure I got nothing to lose and I'm angry that my house is being taken. Francis is the latter. So I agree with you in the respect that he's going to do as much damage as he can on the way out, but the ramping up of opposition that I'm seeing against him from corners that it never would have come from is astonishing.

And I'll give you an example. Yesterday Jim Towey, who's the president of Ave Maria University, always spoken of in the same breath with other orthodox Catholic colleges, issued a statement taking Francis' side and attacking not only Viganò, now but Cardinal Burke. Very, very tone-deaf move on his part. So we're seeing a lot of people talking about that today. Now Steve Ray, who is the regent for Ave Maria University and who is a well-known Catholic apologist, said he's going to be resigning and protests over this statement. He even put a tweet out where he said that basically the Catholics think that following the pope, that that's what they're supposed to do, but that following this pope isn't about remaining Catholic. It's about denying it and being out of touch with reality.

So we're seeing voices that never would have really crossed over into the traditional divide pushing back and pushing hard. And I spoke to someone recently, I won't name names, but who's been doing Catholic media for a very long time. And he told me — this was before Viganò's letter came out. He said, *I have never seen rage like this from Catholics in the pews toward the Church. It is astonishing.* And he's been doing it for many decades.

So I really do think we're seeing the turning of the tide. The question is, the Church is essentially a monarchy. There's only so much we can do against the power structures that exist. Francis can keep doing what he wants to do. But I think that his options will be limited. I think more and more bishops who want to oppose him but have been afraid to do so are finding their courage because there are some numbers now. But how that plays out, I mean, that's anyone's guess.

**MCCAFFREY:** I don't see it a lot of cardinals, the ones who will let the next pope, supporting Viganò. Maybe Steve, again, you probably have a better take on this. I only see three or four, so we're talking about 116 or 18 or 20 in the consistory to elect the next pope, and maybe 3% of them — I know that represents probably 10%, but all I'm saying is I'm little bit — knowing my news media and knowing the nature of Francis, whatever happens in the U.S. with certain Cardinals, I don't think that he's going anywhere. And he probably sees some of them as expandable, including Wuerl.

**SKOJEC:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, I mean I'm sure that anybody who needs to be sacrificed for the greater good of the revolution will be —

**MCCAFFREY:** [laughing] That's about —

**SKOJEC:** — thrown on that altar. But I do think, you know, we had seen reports over a year ago that a number of the cardinals who are ideologically aligned with Francis nevertheless were experiencing buyer's remorse, because he wasn't boiling the frog; he was electrocuting it. And you know, by moving so fast and being so difficult to control and by being so undiplomatic, he was raising a lot of ire. He was waking people up, that, hey, maybe we should slow this down. And so he was increasing resistance to the agenda, rather than accomplishing it you know with a more moderate speed. And at the time, the rumors were that Cardinal Parolin was posturing to sort of be, you know, the consummate diplomat that he is as Cardinal Secretary of State and kind of be the heir apparent to Francis. But he's also named in this Viganò letter as having known and been complicit, and I think that's going to really hurt his chances too. So I don't know what the next conclave will bring, but I can almost guarantee that it's going to be surprising. Whether that's a good surprise or a bad surprise, I don't know, but I don't think it's going to go the way it normally would if circumstances were a little bit more status quo.

**MCCAFFREY:** Yeah, I agree. It'll be long. Probably get somebody from the Third or Fourth World. But then again, we've got five or ten more years of this man.

**SKOJEC:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** Do you think we can assume that there will be no comment forthcoming from Benedict XVI?

**MCCAFFREY:** Yeah, it would be way out of character for — he's obviously nervous about what he's done and what's happened since he resigned. That's clear, because he said he'd disappear. He hasn't disappeared. He used to say, "Call me Father Benedict." That's out the window. Now he shows up, when we see him, in a white cassock. It's totally puzzling. It's got to be totally strange for outsiders to see these two popes in white cassocks. But you know, he's kind of — his personality is one of the timid academic. He's not unprincipled, he's political almost by nature. And they're pressuring him right now, rest assured, to shut up.

**SKOJEC:** Well, he's not the Rottweiler, for sure, that everybody described him as. And when he does come out in the public, he usually makes noises that are approving of Pope Francis. In fact, there was something he said, I think, last year. along the lines of, you know, there's demonstrable continuity between our two pontificates despite differences in style and tone. So he has made an effort to appear, his favorite term, "the hermeneutic of continuity," but it applies to their two papacies, despite the fact that they stand in such, at least superficially, stark contrast. So I don't think we're going to hear from him.

It's interesting, the one thing that we did hear from him was sort of accidental. Back in July, I don't know what the context was, but he had confirmed that there were sanctions that he issued quietly against McCarrick. And Edward Pentin of the *National Catholic Register*, who is their Rome correspondent, reported on this and, immediately, Archbishop Gänswein, who is Benedict's personal secretary and also the prefect of Francis's papal household — he's sort of a

double agent, if you will. He came out and said, oh, Benedict never confirmed what was in Viganò's testimony, etc., etc. But the thing was, that was never what was reported. What was reported is that he had said, a month ago, before this ever came out, *Yeah, I issued sanctions against McCarrick and they were ignored*. So we have this confirmation from him, at the very least, on the part that those sanctions existed, which means that Francis must have known and decided to go ahead and lift them anyway and allow McCarrick to do various things. I think he sent him to China, in fact, to do some of those negotiations.

**MCCAFFREY:** He sure did.

**SKOJEC:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** All right, let me try and place this whole situation in a larger context. And you tell me if I'm oversimplifying things, because I think I am. But there's a part of me, that says — now, I'm not saying, obviously, that everybody who was involved in giving the Church a new liturgy decades ago was a sexual predator. I'm certainly not saying that. But what I am saying is that there does seem to be a package that makes internal sense when I look at the typical parish Mass today, which has zero solemnity, and it's just — anything they can find that might give you the impression that something important is going on, they've done their best to rip out in one way or another. So it could be the music, it could be the altar rails, it could be the conduct of the ministers. Whatever it is, they've gone out of their way to get rid of it.

Then we have the fact that you call up your local bishop and you say, "This terrible abuse is occurring in my parish," and they say, "Yeah, we'll get right on that." And they couldn't care less. You know, isn't that funny? Then your bishop is interviewed in the press, and he has almost nothing to say about Catholicism, but he sure is going to weigh in on the fashionable, PC side of whatever issue he's being interviewed about. You say, *Oh, gee, that's a little bit odd*. And then you meet these cardinals like Wuerl, who has all the dignitaries of the area at his fancy parties and who lives in a multimillion-dollar penthouse and whatever.

And you begin to wonder: is there a picture that's being painted for me here? Could something be tying all this together? Could it be that maybe these people really don't have the Catholic faith? How about that? Dare I propose that the only explanation for why you would systematically try to de-Catholicize everything could be that you don't have the Catholic faith? And yet, you still want to be part of the hierarchy. And then beneath all this, the worst of those people have, we now see, completely self-interested reasons to try to de-Catholicize things. Yeah, I wouldn't want to talk about traditional sexual morality either if I were these people. I would make sure everybody was talking about boycotting lettuce and whatever the fashionable stuff is. You're darn right. Now tell me, am I oversimplifying that, or you want to put some nuance in there?

**MCCAFFREY:** I don't. I think you summarized it perfectly.

**SKOJEC:** Yeah, I'm fully on board with that explanation. I think that the primary assault on the integrity of the faith was the assault on the liturgy, because the way we worship is the way we believe. And, you know, for the average person who's working a nine-to-five all week and not getting to daily Mass and, you know, nominally exposed to the faith, the Mass is their catechesis, more than anything else. And if you desacralize the Mass, if you pull away any sense that we're worshiping God and not ourselves, you're going to chip away at the faith. You're going to chip away at the integrity of that faith. There's a reason why recent polling



shows over 90% of Catholics who go to Mass on Sundays think contraception is totally fine. They have, as one priest I knew said to me about the Novus Ordo — he's a diocesan priest who left for a traditional order. He said, "I would look at the people, and I could just see that the sense of the sacred had been rinsed away." And this is, I think — you know, you couldn't get to where we are without that. I think all these doctrinal changes or attempted changes are hand in hand with the increase in perversity and the acceptance of it.

There's a psychologist by the name of Dr. van den Aardweg, who, I think he's Dutch. He's from Europe. And he gave a talk recently where he talked about the connection between the attacks on *Humanae vitae*, the Catholic teaching on contraception, and homosexual clergy. And he said, I've studied homosexual clergy for many, many years, and they hate marriage. They hate the traditional understanding of marriage. And they'll do anything they can to attack it, because they need psychologically to justify their proclivities. And so if you have a priest who's undermining contraception, you've got a pretty good indication of where he stands on this kind of stuff.

**MCCAFFREY:** I think they tend to hate their flocks, as well, and holiness.

**WOODS:** Well, I think in particular, the flocks, the members of their flock who are particularly well educated, who know what the faith demands, who want the whole thing, and they don't really want the felt banners, you know, and the guitar and the drum kit in the sanctuary, and they don't want any of this. Those are the ones who are held in the most contempt. If you want to sing some hymn from 1977, then absolutely, great, we'll put you in charge of the music program. But if you say, you know, there actually was a great civilization, believe it or not, before 1977, well, then forget about it.

All right, so we've gotten to a point in this conversation where I guess the question is — I mean, I guess we've kind of talked about where we think this is going, and we have a little bit of disagreement among ourselves as to what this means in the long term. But to me the value, of it the main value, like if there's a silver lining — and you hate to even speak that way — is that it means that some people are finally waking up to the real situation. People that the three of us have seemingly in vain argued with for years trying to say, look, there's rot at the top and stop pretending that we shouldn't talk about it or pretend it's not there — I think some of those people are starting to figure things out. And people who are in, you know, somewhat mainstream-right positions are starting to see there is a bigger picture here. And one such person even said, "You know what? I owe an apology to you guys, because you tried to tell me for years that something was rotten, and I just blocked my ears, and I would find the good paragraphs from some church document, and I'd say, 'Look, everything's fine.'" And those people's eyes are being opened, so you know, that obviously doesn't come anywhere near reversing all the damage done and the harm done to innocent people, but it's about time people's eyes are open to what's happening.

**MCCAFFREY:** Right, well, tell me when he gets into John Paul II's documents. Then I'll get relief.

**WOODS:** Yeah, no kidding. Yeah, exactly right.

**MCCAFFREY:** And since John XXIII — and including him. You know, he was capable of such stupidity in his official documents — this has been going on. And so we'll still argue with these folks, because they put these now canonized popes, which I regard as a total scandal — just

procedurally the idea that your successor, the man who made you what you are today can be canonized by you, beatified by you, the new pope, is just appalling to me. But let me put it this way: the men who own the crisis today were the popes 10, 20, 30, and 40 years ago.

**WOODS:** Well, that's when they —

**SKOJEC:** I would say —

**WOODS:** Let me just jump in really quickly. That's what some of the people on the left defending Francis have been saying, that you can't just pin this on Francis; you've got to pin it on these other guys. And so I'm curious about that. And Steve, if you want to jump in, feel free. But also, I want to —

**SKOJEC:** Well, yeah, I mean, I'll confirm that. I mean, I'll say I don't think — you know, it's Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, right? I mean, Francis is the more extreme manifestation of the revolution, but Benedict and John Paul and Paul VI were all part of it, as well. You don't get to Francis without them, without their ideas. In fact, you do see a hermeneutic of continuity between those pontificates. It's a little more subtle, and I think that's going to be the harder thing for people to accept and to recognize.

I categorize Catholics sort of in three different camps. And I hate the labels, but you've got traditional Catholics, who are just Catholics like they've always been. You've got conservative Catholics, who desire sanctity and orthodoxy, but try their best to retain the postconciliar thing. And then you've got the heterodox Catholics, who are just basically remaking the church in their own image, because they don't think Jesus did a good enough job.

And I think for conservative Catholics, this is potentially a time of severe crisis. I think conservative Catholicism is on its deathbed. And I may be, you know, eating crow for saying that too soon, but I don't think it's possible to conserve only the revolution and not what came before, to continue to go to a parish that your great-grandfather who was Catholic would step into and think he was in a Protestant church and doesn't even recognize. I don't think you can do that and come out the other side of this crisis. There are people who have gotten in trouble this this week, Catholic media figures, who've said the sexual abuse cover thing is bad, but this shouldn't have been the thing that got people upset at this pope.

**WOODS:** Right.

**SKOJEC:** I mean, the attack on marriage that *Amoris laetitia* represented, the attack on the dogmatic definition of the moral permissibility of the death penalty, all this stuff, there is error and heresy, material heresy at the very least, coming out of this Vatican all the time. And this is a very temporal thing, it's a very evil thing, but it's not the biggest evil that has come. It's all of a piece. And so I think that for conservatives, looking backward, they've got some difficult road ahead.

But I would say that, you know, from my experience covering this for the last five years, in the beginning, traditionalists, were pretty much the only ones who were equipped to look at the pope and be critical, because that's what we've done for a long time. But I've seen a lot of people in standard, suburban, you know, above-average parishes, where the priests are trying to do the right thing and teach the right things and things like that just coming right out and

saying: this pope's a bad guy. And that was before this all happened so I do think we're going to see a shift. And I've heard some people saying, you know — I'm hearing people asking me about tradition, because we're the only ones who have been making sense this whole time. So I hope it's going to be a renaissance for moving in that direction.

**MCCAFFREY:** By the way, I do see serious differences between Ratzinger and Bergoglio, in other words, Benedict and Francis. But when I say they own it, Ratzinger and John Paul own Francis, because they appointed the men who elected Francis. So I don't see them all as — let me put it this way. Ratzinger definitely had second thoughts and expressed them, and for a German thinker to even have canted doubts about something he himself wrote 30 years earlier, that's a big deal. So I do see differences, and I think that Ratzinger must be tortured man right now watching this unfold, especially since Gänswein, his top assistant, is also a top assistant of Pope Francis. So he's bringing him information in theory every day, or maybe he's hiding information. I don't know [laughing]. But the point is that the previous popes since the Council and the originator of the Council, John XXIII, indisputably own what has happened since then. And conservatives, anyone else need to face up to that fact and stop the mythology and all this pious blather about the greatness of Pope John Paul II.

**SKOJEC:** I think, to your point, one of the biggest mistakes we could make is to think that going back to a pontificate of that style and temperament would fix this.

**MCCAFFREY:** Yeah, well —

**SKOJEC:** And I think a lot of people are tempted that way.

**MCCAFFREY:** Oh, yes, I read the same way. In fact, if there were a conclave in the next five years, probably the best you could hope for is another type like John Paul. And he's the guy who presided — I mean, he was pope for 28 years. He presided over a catastrophe himself, and he resisted feebly when he resisted at all. But yeah, but nevertheless, given the reality of conclave politics, which is hidden from us and yet we know something about it, you're probably going to get some kind of centrist, God forbid, like Schönborn, although I think it'll be someone like Napier from South Africa or even somebody from the Orient.

**WOODS:** Well, if either of you have any final thoughts, I welcome them now, or otherwise, we'll call it quits. Steve, do you want to say a final word?

**SKOJEC:** I just think that we are really living in what are proving to be perpetually unprecedented times. It seems as though every time we say, hey, there's really no historical example of something like this happening, we add another layer to that. So it's an interesting time to be alive. It's a little bit frightening. But something that I've been talking about with some friends recently is that this promise from our Blessed Mother, you know, that her Immaculate Heart would triumph in the end, there is some symbolism in all of this. I mean, the dam broke with the Pennsylvania grand jury report on the vigil of the Feast of the Assumption, and we're now a hundred years since Fatima, and people who look to these things as signs of hope are taking stock of these sort of milestones that are happening and the dates when they're happening and how they pertain to the Economy of Salvation. I do think that maybe we're beginning to see the beginning of the end of this wayward course the Church has been on, but I think that the purification we're going to have to go through before restoration is going to be a difficult road for all of us.

**MCCAFFREY:** What I notice on a different plane is that, increasingly in the U.S. — and I'm sure this is true in Europe. I haven't seen it in Italy, where I go all the time, but maybe there, too. You see open hatred expressed for the Church. There's no distinction between, you know, good Catholics, Catholics who are trying to practice the faith, and the worst of the worst in the Church. And that is disturbing. And I think it will increase unless we have pushback by more than half a dozen bishops. That's one thing we should consider.

The other thing is, if you have this kind of scandal in six dioceses in Pennsylvania — which absolutely are representative. I mean, if you were a pollster, you would know that if you talk to people in six dioceses in Pennsylvania, you're talking to the Church at large in the U.S. So you're going to see this unfolding over the next couple, three years. But if you see it in Church institutions, rest assured it exists in public institutions like the public school system, which is vastly larger. And not a word is said about the problems, indeed, the crisis in public schools, where you have at least twice as much sex abuse. So let's get somebody on that story, too. What's happening in the Church makes me sick. You know, people inside — we've been saying this before. I've been saying this for 40 years. I mean, in the early 1970s, it was obvious there was a large homosexual network in the seminaries and the clergy. So this makes me nothing but sick. I'd like to see what's going on in the public school system, because kids are being, you know, their hearts are being torn apart every day.

**WOODS:** Well, that's a that's a hard note to leave things on, but that's what we're going to have to do. Roger McCaffrey and Steve Skojec, [BooksForCatholics.com](http://BooksForCatholics.com) and [OnePeteFive.com](http://OnePeteFive.com). Thanks to both of you. Thanks to everybody for listening. Controversial stuff, but I don't see why it's that controversial. This is what's — geez, this is what's really happening out there, folks, but I think it's important for Catholics to be frank about it, to not put rose-colored glasses on about anything about the present situation, or, frankly, anything about the past 50 years. It's all on the table to be reexamined. So check out [TomWoods.com/1231](http://TomWoods.com/1231), where we'll have some links relevant to what we've been talking about. And thanks for listening. I'll see you next week.