

# If Collection Baskets Could Talk

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by Gene Thomas Gomulka • ChurchMilitant.com • December 13, 2021

## Where does your money go?



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Everyone enjoys receiving gifts at Christmas in commemoration of the greatest gift the world has ever received when "the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14). This time of year, bishops capitalize on the message of gift-giving to entice the faithful to hand over envelopes of hard-earned cash when collection baskets are passed. But as the U.S. inflation rate in 2021 swells to a 39-year high of 6.8% — the highest increase since 1982 — Americans may think twice about organizations they support.

When scandalized Catholics learn how their contributions are being used to pay the salaries of credibly accused abusive priests, to retain armies of lawyers who defend their predatory sex lives or even to fund clerical orgies, many parishioners vow never to give another dime to their bishops.



Fr. Thomas Devery and Cdl. Timothy Dolan

## **Catholic Donations Funding Lawsuits, Scandal**

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Well-meaning Catholics who decide only to give to their parish on Sundays do not realize that the money they drop in the basket still finds its way to their bishop, who levies a hefty percentage cut of each parish's income. For example, Cleveland Catholics can expect to see as much as 16.5% of their offertory collection given to the diocese.

In the archdiocese of New York, a recent report by Our Lady Star of the Sea parish revealed that this past year alone, the parish was assessed \$63,707 of its revenue by the archdiocese following the removal of its pastor, Fr. Thomas Devery, who stepped down amid multiple allegations of sexually abusing minors.

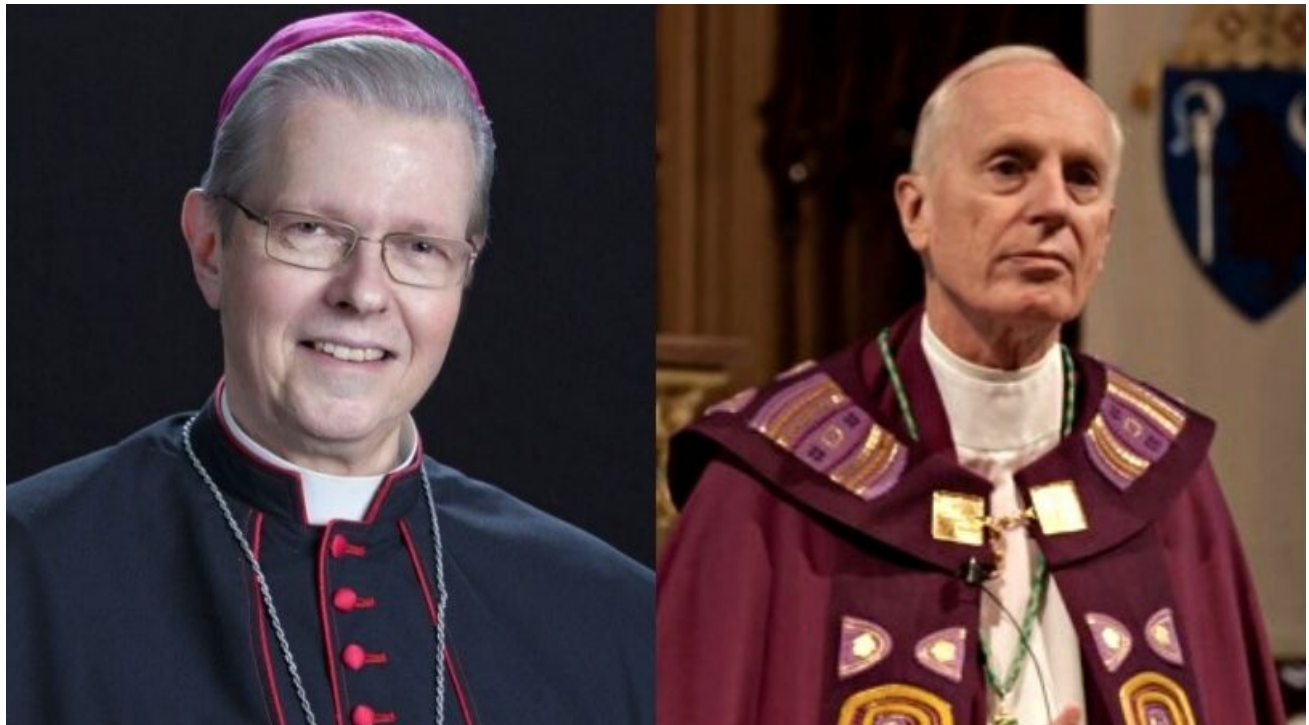
When such huge rates are demanded of nearly 300 New York archdiocesan parishes, the collection basket becomes an extremely lucrative enterprise to fund prelates like Cdl. Timothy Dolan.

Many parishioners vow never to give another dime to their bishops.

Bishops who deceptively claim that not one cent of the people's money goes to sex abuse cases hide the fact that countless churches built with generous donations by the faithful have been sold to finance the defense of predator priests.

Without the knowledge of Catholic donors, bishops and dioceses compensate these defense attorneys at rates that can exceed \$1,000 an hour.

In Springfield, Illinois, Bp. George Lucas used the faithful's money to whitewash his reported sexual activities by retaining a defense attorney.



Bp. Edward Scharfenberger and Bp. Howard Hubbard

In Albany, New York, Catholics may never know how much Bp. Edward Scharfenberger is spending to defend his accused predecessor, Bp. Howard Hubbard, in seven lawsuits alleging that Hubbard sexually abused minors.

Detroit's Abp. Allen Vigneron is pushing "Families of Parishes," a parish restructuring plan giving him total control of about 900 pieces of real estate and hundreds of millions of dollars of assets through Mooney Real Estate Holdings.

His real estate maneuver came only one month after Michigan legislators proposed bills to open the statute of limitations for clerical sex abuse cases and around the same time the Detroit archdiocese faced a cover-up criminal probe.

Vigneron's strategy, slammed by Detroit priests as a "money grab," was described by victims' advocates as a "shell game." It allows him to hold up victims' abuse cases while paying out millions of dollars from Detroit Catholics to high-priced defense attorneys.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/RgcvbQvO5ek>

Contributions to Church charities like Peter's Pence also do not always reach those for whom they were supposedly intended. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) describes the Peter's Pence collection as providing "the Holy Father with the financial means to respond to those who are suffering as a result of war, oppression, natural disaster and disease."

After it was revealed that only one-tenth of the Peter's Pence collection ever reached the poor, with the remaining 90% used to invest in real estate and Hollywood films, the USCCB was sued for misleading donors nationwide regarding the purpose of the annual collection.



Catholic Knight Patrick Kelly and Abp. William Lori

Members of Catholic organizations are also kept in the dark regarding how their leaders spend funds to finance scandal-ridden institutions. When Supreme Knight of Columbus Patrick Kelly and Supreme Chaplain Abp. William Lori visited the North American College (NAC) seminary in October of 2021, it was never reported how much of the Knights of Columbus' (KofC) contributions went to help pay legal fees of pro-LGBTQ law firm Fox Rothschild, retained to defend NAC officials accused of sexual misconduct.

Kelly and Lori, who are implicated in the cover-up of sexual predation at the NAC, are invested in the NAC's defense lest they too be pressured to resign from their posts for failing to act upon multiple reports documenting allegations brought forward by NAC seminarians, two of whom are KofC members.



Bp. John O'Hara, Fr. Peter Harman and Fr. Adam Park

In the meantime, archdiocese of New York Catholics wonder how much of their funds will go to the colossal 900-attorney firm of Wilson, Elser, Moskowitz, Edelman and Dicker, which was retained recently to defend New York's Aux. Bp. John O'Hara after he was allegedly caught attempting to prevent witnesses from testifying against Cdl. Dolan and the NAC.

Were it not for the unknowing support of Catholic donors kept unaware, how else could accused clerics like outgoing NAC rector Fr. Peter Harman, former NAC vice rector Fr. Adam Park and Bp. O'Hara afford throngs of lawyers with such high price tags?

### **Alternatives for Year-End Giving**

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Catholics who are not comfortable with having their contributions laundered or used to protect accused sexual predators are encouraged to tithe this Christmas to causes that truly defend Catholic values.

In some dioceses, it's customary for the donations at Christmas Masses to be exempt from the diocesan levy.

Tithe this Christmas to causes that truly defend Catholic values.

Some places to consider donating would include the Save Our Seminarians Fund, which supports the efforts of the landmark case against Dolan and the NAC to provide legal protections to abused seminarians.

Catholics might also support [Church Militant/St. Michael's Media](#) in appreciation of its staffers' courage in reporting on vital issues that [bishops-endorsed media outlets routinely cover up](#).

It will be up to the faithful to decide whether 2022 will be the year when bishops and accused priests no longer find their sex lives and cover-up financed at the expense of their flock.

*Gene Thomas Gomulka is a sexual abuse victims' advocate, investigative reporter and screenwriter. A former Navy chaplain, captain, seminary instructor and diocesan Respect Life director, Gomulka was ordained a priest for the Altoona-Johnstown diocese and later made a prelate of honor (monsignor) by Pope St. John Paul II.*

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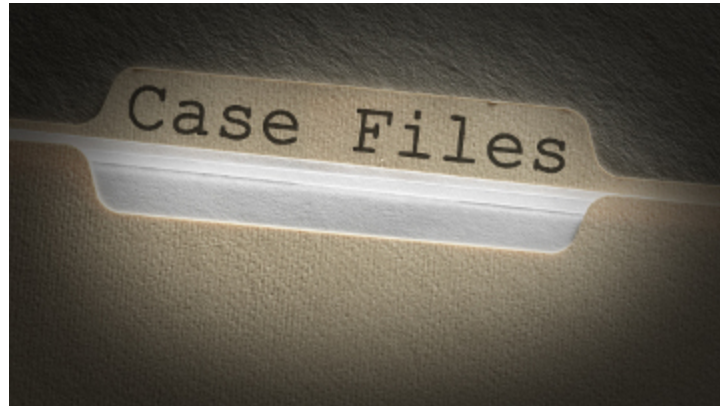
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