

March 16, 2026

Hello Kate and the Op-Ed team,

I read your Op-Ed this morning, and I'm frustrated that the *Seattle Times* focused on a narrow view of a much larger issue, failing to put it into context. When I wrote you in 2024, I explained that your original editorial on this topic failed to recognize the protections in place and how the Catholic Church's history is much different than today's reality. Given my prior efforts to bring these issues to your attention, it is quite disappointing that this subsequent editorial repeats these prior shortcomings.

In this recent op-ed, you indicated that "according to attorneys who've represented victims in Western Washington," the Archdiocese has paid over \$100 million in settlements. **Why would you write that when I myself emailed you that financial detail in 2024 and pointed you to our Protect & Heal website that not only transparently shares our settlement payouts but the number of cases as well?** Is that not a sign of our transparency? Your statement falsely indicated the opposite and serves to mislead *Seattle Times* readers.

We have been very public about the fact that we had clergy sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Seattle, and we have been proactively addressing it for more than 40 years. ([See sample here.](#)) We continue to apologize for this sin that has affected all areas of the Church and have expanded our outreach and pastoral care for victim survivors and their families.

To address transparency, we outline the history, our Safe Environment programming, and our work with victim survivors and their families on the Protect & Heal website, in our Northwest Catholic Magazine and in multiple public statements. We worked with a former FBI agent to review all our files and develop our public list in 2016, a significant step in promoting transparency that other entities do not take. The new Archdiocesan Review Board comprised of non-Catholic experts helps us create new policies, procedures, and programming to ensure we are always improving. This group continues to provide guidance and recommendations for how to help victim survivors and their families heal.

On the website, you will also see that **clergy sexual abuse of a minor peaked 50 years ago with the last reported case in 2007** thanks to our Safe Environment program, which is seen as a model for other organizations. **Zero incidents of clergy abuse of a minor are alleged to have occurred in nearly two decades.** What other comparably large religious or educational institutions can say that?

You also wrote that we are “hiding behind claims that opening the records to scrutiny might ‘re-traumatize’ victims.” These are not false claims. We have letters from victim survivors begging us not to open files to outside groups, which would threaten their privacy. We have received numerous recommendations from sexual assault experts on how to manage this situation delicately to avoid re-traumatizing victim survivors. And we do this because we genuinely care about them – and their families.

Our issue is not that we are hiding or do not wish to share the sins of our Church. We have owned that many times. Our current issue is that we had offered to work collaboratively with the Attorney General to find a way to tell the story with guarantees of privacy for victims – AND – to do so in a manner that follows the law. If we do not fight for the basic First Amendment rights of freedom of religion – who will do that? Whatever we do here does not just impact this issue – one that we are eager to share in a proper manner to demonstrate our sorrow and commitment to safety today – but has widespread implications for ALL RELIGIONS into the future. That is the issue we face.

And, despite your reporting, the recent Washington State Court of Appeals agreed with us. **The recent ruling indicated that the Attorney General’s original subpoena as written was overly broad and, if pursued as issued, would “clearly unconstitutionally infringe” on First Amendment rights.** Yet, you chose to leave that part out, making it sound like we are just hiding behind victims.

You close by accusing the Archdiocese of issuing “empty platitudes,” while ignoring the decades of work that has been done to make Catholic parishes and schools in the Archdiocese of Seattle among the safest places for children today. That is something your readers should know.

Thank you,

Helen McClenahan
Chief Communication Officer

