

Ex-chief of review panel blasts cardinals for handling of abuse cases: "In denial all along"

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An Illinois Supreme Court justice who chaired a lay review board investigating the Catholic sex-abuse scandal is quoted blasting the church and prominent cardinals in a new book and accusing them of dishonesty.

Justice Anne M. Burke, who headed the National Review Board for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops from 2002 to 2004, said "bishops got away with concealing crime" and singled out Cardinal Francis George of Chicago.

Burke said she was furious at George's "casual attitude" and contended that he "wasn't honest with me." Burke also said George, now president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, didn't tell her he was housing an abusive priest.

"I found the cardinal's lack of honesty really difficult to deal with," Burke is quoted as saying in the book by Kerry Kennedy, daughter of the late Senator Robert F. Kennedy. "How do I go on to trust what he says to me? . . . He and his brother bishops have been in denial all along."

Burke's comments come in *Being Catholic Now*, a collection of reflections about Catholicism by prominent U.S. Catholics, including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and conservative commentator Bill O'Reilly. The book was released September 9.

Burke told the *Chicago Tribune* that the interview took place more than a year ago and that she commends George's recent actions, including his release of his legal documents and his promise to purge the priesthood of abusers.

In a statement, George said he was "unaware of all the details of his situation" when he allowed a Delaware priest accused of abuse to stay at his residence.

“I stated publicly that there was no priest in ministry in Chicago who had against him a substantiated claim of sexual abuse of a minor,” George said. “That statement was true when I made it and it is true now.”

Burke also criticized Cardinal Edward Egan of New York in the book, saying he “was offended by” the National Review Board’s “insistence on independence.”

“I think he was also intimidated by the thoughts of 50 former FBI agents doing our questioning,” Burke said.

Egan’s office did not respond to a request for comment. *-Religion News Service*