

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 12, 2025

### Instagram Silences America's Largest Catholic Account for Sharing Documented Abuse Story

*Rachel Mastrogiacomio was raped by a Catholic priest during a private Mass. He confessed and pleaded guilty. She reported it to the Diocese — which, according to prosecutors and The Wall Street Journal, refused to cooperate with police. We shared her story. Instagram banned us — then gave two contradictory explanations.*

#### SUMMARY

Catholic Connect — the largest Catholic organization account on Instagram in America (620,000+ followers, 36.4 million monthly views) — shared a post about Rachel Mastrogiacomio, a woman who was raped by Catholic priest Jacob Bertrand during a private Mass in 2010. Bertrand confessed to the crime and pleaded guilty in Minnesota District Court ([Star Tribune](#), January 2018). According to his own attorneys' court filings (Case No. 19HA-CR-16-3812), he underwent six months of inpatient sex offender treatment at St. Luke's Institute, plus years of outpatient therapy — hundreds of sessions over seven years. When Rachel reported the abuse to the Diocese of San Diego, prosecutors say the Diocese refused to cooperate with law enforcement and initially denied having files on Bertrand — a claim later proven false ([The Wall Street Journal](#), September 2018). Rachel describes this as a cover-up. Catholic Connect shared her story. Months later, an anonymous user reported the post, and Instagram banned the account — giving two completely different explanations: "intellectual property violations" to Catholic Connect, and "harassment and bullying" to the person who reported the account. **Two contradictory explanations. At least one must be false. They've provided zero evidence for either.**

#### The Survivor's Story: Rachel Mastrogiacomio

In 2010, Rachel Mastrogiacomio — a devout 24-year-old Catholic woman studying theology in Rome — was raped by Fr. Jacob Bertrand, a priest from the Diocese of San Diego, during a private Mass. According to the [San Diego Union-Tribune](#), court filings showed Bertrand had spent months grooming Rachel, and told her "the Lord had imprinted a vision in his mind of the victim naked." He manipulated her faith and convinced her that sexual acts during Mass were "God's will."

#### This was not a he-said-she-said situation. Here's what the public record shows:

- Bertrand CONFESSED to the crime — the diocesan spokesman confirmed he "substantially admitted misconduct" ([Crux](#), August 2018)
- Bertrand PLEADED GUILTY to third-degree criminal sexual conduct in Minnesota District Court ([Star Tribune](#), January 2018)
- Bertrand was SENTENCED to 10 years probation ([San Diego Union-Tribune](#), [CBS Minnesota](#), May 2018)
- According to his own attorneys' motion (Case No. 19HA-CR-16-3812, filed April 14, 2023): Bertrand underwent 6 MONTHS INPATIENT SEX OFFENDER TREATMENT at St. Luke's Institute, 99 sessions of psychotherapy, years of outpatient therapy through a CASOMB-certified therapist, and 3.5 years of Sexaholics Anonymous — hundreds of sessions over 7 years total
- Bertrand was eventually LAICIZED (removed from the priesthood)
- Multiple witnesses provided corroborating statements to police

## Mainstream Media Confirms the Facts

**This story has been verified by major news outlets and documented in court records:**

[San Diego Union-Tribune](#) (May 2018): Reported that court filings showed Bertrand told the victim "the Lord had imprinted a vision in his mind of the victim naked and straddling him" during the grooming process. The Tribune reported Bertrand "violated a Minnesota statute that forbids sex between members of certain professions and the people they counsel."

[CBS Minnesota](#) (May 2018): Reported Bertrand "was sentenced to 10 years' probation" and "ordered to undergo a sex offender assessment."

[The Wall Street Journal](#) (September 2018): Reported that the Diocese of San Diego refused to cooperate with law enforcement. Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom, whose office prosecuted Bertrand, stated: "The attorney for the San Diego Diocese originally told us that [they] had no file related to an investigation involving Jacob Bertrand's alleged sexual acts with the victim in our case (*which we later learned was false*)."

[Crux](#) (August 2018): Reported that when confronted by officials at the Diocese of San Diego, Bertrand "substantially admitted misconduct," according to diocesan spokesman Kevin Eckery.

The full court documentation — including the guilty plea, witness statements, victim impact statement, and statement of probable cause — is publicly available at

[PurifyTheChurch.online/legal.html](https://PurifyTheChurch.online/legal.html).

## The Diocese's Response: What Rachel Calls a Cover-Up

When Rachel reported her abuse to the Diocese of San Diego in 2014, here is what happened according to Rachel, prosecutors, and [The Wall Street Journal](#):

- Bertrand was NOT removed from ministry — even after he confessed. According to Rachel, he was reinstated to active ministry in March 2015.
- Rachel states she was NOT interviewed by the Diocese and was not asked for names of other potential victims
- The Diocese REFUSED to turn over key files to police — The Wall Street Journal reported that prosecutor James Backstrom described the Diocese as uncooperative
- The Diocese initially DENIED having files on Bertrand — The Wall Street Journal reported this claim "was later learned to be false"
- Bertrand was only removed from ministry in August 2016, after Rachel filed criminal charges

*Rachel's own words: "I can personally attest to the fact that McElroy is a monster." She said she felt like "a faithful little sheep in the flock that could just be raped and thrown out."*

Despite Rachel's account and the documented record of the Diocese's non-cooperation with law enforcement, Pope Francis promoted Bishop McElroy to Cardinal in August 2022.

## What Catholic Connect Did

Catholic Connect shared Rachel's story with our audience of 36 million monthly viewers. We reported the facts. We named the Cardinal. We let our audience judge for themselves. That's what we do — that's what we've done for over a decade with 11,000+ posts. We give voice to the voiceless. We shine light on darkness in the Church.

**Months later, someone reported that post. Instagram banned us for it.**

## The Timing

**December 8, 2025:** President Trump releases official White House message honoring the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and Catholic contributions to America.

**December 9, 2025:** Instagram bans Catholic Connect — for sharing a story about a Cardinal who has publicly criticized President Trump.

*The timing speaks for itself.*

## Two Contradictory Explanations for the Same Ban

**What Instagram told Catholic Connect:** "Intellectual property violations"

**What Instagram told the person who reported us:** "Harassment and bullying"

**Two completely different explanations for the same ban. At least one must be false. Instagram has provided zero evidence to support either claim.**

The discrepancy came to light after the anonymous user who reported our account told another Catholic page about getting Catholic Connect banned. That page forwarded the messages to us — revealing that Instagram gave them a completely different explanation than what Instagram told us. Screenshots and evidence are available at

[CatholicConnect.io/evidence](https://CatholicConnect.io/evidence)

## No Evidence. No Warning. No Chance to Respond.

Instagram claimed "intellectual property violations" — but:

- They showed us ZERO evidence — no specific posts, no IP claims, no complainants
- They never emailed us any IP infringement notices (Instagram's standard process)
- They deactivated our account BEFORE we could respond to anything
- We requested the specific IP claims — they went silent
- They locked us out of our backup account too — sending a verification code that returned an error when entered correctly

"This wasn't enforcement — this was an ambush. They claimed IP violations but showed us nothing. They gave us no warning, no chance to fix anything, and no way to respond. Then they locked us out of our backup so we couldn't rebuild. And when we asked for proof, they went silent. That's not content moderation. That's a hit job," said Richy Orozco, Founder of [Catholic Connect Inc.](https://CatholicConnectInc.com)

## The Smoking Gun: Facebook Is Fine

**Same team. Same content. Same company.**

- [Facebook](https://Facebook.com): Zero issues. No warnings. No suspension.
- Instagram: Banned twice (2021 and 2025) with the same unsubstantiated explanation.

**If this were really about intellectual property or harassment, Facebook would have the same problems. It doesn't.**

## The Survivor Speaks

After learning of Catholic Connect's ban, Rachel Mastrogiacomo reached out directly:

*"I am appalled and heartbroken to learn that you have been so egregiously persecuted for standing up for me. Learning this devastated me... May Jesus and Mary bless you for bearing this persecution for the sake of righteousness. Forget about me — you stood up for countless*

*other survivors in the shadows. You faithfully stand for Christ Himself! May your reward be great."*

Rachel also addressed those attempting to discredit her story:

*"The court docs and public records in fact exonerate me. They don't discredit me or make me appear delusional... I have just published a book which directs readers to the public record itself."*

## **The Public Record Speaks for Itself**

Some have attempted to discredit Rachel's account. The public record — confirmed by mainstream media and court documents — tells a different story:

- A statement of probable cause from law enforcement
- Multiple corroborating witness statements
- A January 2018 guilty plea — reported by [Star Tribune](#) and [San Diego Union-Tribune](#)
- The Diocese's own spokesman confirming Bertrand "substantially admitted misconduct" — reported by [Crux](#)
- Prosecutor's statement that the Diocese initially denied having files, which was later proven false — reported by [The Wall Street Journal](#)
- Bertrand's own attorneys' 2023 court motion (Case No. 19HA-CR-16-3812) detailing his extensive sex offender treatment
- Ongoing court proceedings as recently as 2025

The documentation is public. Read it yourself: [PurifyTheChurch.online/legal.html](https://purifythechurch.online/legal.html). **We stand with survivors.**

## **What We Are Demanding**

1. **Show Us the Evidence** — You claimed IP violations. Show us the specific posts, the specific claims, and who filed them. You've provided nothing.
2. **Full Transparency** — Explain why you gave two different explanations for this ban. "Intellectual property" to us. "Harassment" to the person who reported us. Which is it?
3. **Account Restoration** — Restore @catholicconnect immediately with full follower count and content intact.
4. **Internal Investigation** — Identify who made this decision, why we were given no chance to respond, and why the same explanation was used in 2021 and 2025.
5. **Policy Changes** — Implement safeguards requiring evidence and opportunity to respond BEFORE permanent account termination.
6. **Public Explanation** — Acknowledge that Instagram gave contradictory information and failed to follow its own due process procedures.

**THE DEADLINE:** We are giving Instagram 72 hours to provide a clear, honest explanation for this ban — and a path to restoration. If they cannot do so, we will pursue every available option, including legal action, regulatory complaints, and continued public pressure until this is resolved.

*Catholic Connect is exploring all legal options and invites religious liberty attorneys or law firms interested in taking on this case to reach out.*

## **Who Needs to Act**

**META ([Mosseri](#), [Zuckerberg](#), [Oversight Board](#)):** You banned the largest Catholic organization account in America for sharing a documented abuse story — then gave two contradictory explanations and zero evidence. Investigate. Explain. Restore.

**WHITE HOUSE & CATHOLIC LEADERS IN GOVERNMENT:** President Trump honored Catholic faith on December 8. Instagram silenced America's largest Catholic organization account on December 9. VP Vance, Secretary Rubio, and Catholic members of Congress: your fellow Catholics need your voice.

**WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS & SURVIVOR ADVOCATES:** A woman came forward. Her abuser confessed and pleaded guilty. She reported it to the Diocese — which, according to prosecutors, refused to cooperate. We shared her story. Big Tech silenced us — then gave contradictory explanations. If platforms can suppress documented abuse stories, no survivor is safe.

**CHRISTIAN & CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS:** If they'll ban us for sharing a survivor's story backed by a guilty plea and court documents, they'll do it to anyone. Contact Meta. Demand answers. The more pressure, the better.

## Who Is Catholic Connect

This isn't a random account. This is the largest Catholic organization account on Instagram in the United States — a ministry that has:

- Been invited to the White House as part of Catholic outreach
- Been invited by Cardinal Tagle to address all the bishops of the Philippines
- Received a blessing from Cardinal Burke for our entire audience
- Reached 36.4 million views in the last 30 days alone
- Invested over \$250,000 in Meta advertising
- Built from scratch by founder Richy Orozco starting right out of high school

## This Won't Stop Us

Instagram also locked us out of our backup account. We've been forced to start over at [@CatholicConnect3.0](#). But we're not slowing down.

Catholic Connect also operates a [mobile app](#) that helps Catholics connect with their local community. We're investing more resources into the app — a platform Big Tech can't take away from us.

"This should be a wake-up call for every Christian ministry. We cannot rely solely on secular social media platforms. They can cut the cord whenever they want, for whatever reason they want, and make up an excuse after the fact. We need to build on platforms they can't take away from us," said Richy Orozco, Founder of [Catholic Connect Inc.](#)

## Quotables

"A woman was raped by a priest who confessed and pleaded guilty. She reported it to the Diocese — which prosecutors say refused to cooperate. We shared her story. Instagram banned us — then got caught giving two contradictory explanations. That's not content moderation. That's suppression of a documented abuse story," said Richy Orozco, Founder of [Catholic Connect Inc.](#)

"They told us 'intellectual property.' They told the person who reported us 'harassment.' At least one of those explanations must be false. They've provided zero evidence for either," said Richy Orozco, Founder of [Catholic Connect Inc.](#)

"If Big Tech can silence a documented abuse story — one backed by a confession, a guilty plea, and court records — then no survivor is safe on these platforms," said Richy Orozco, Founder of [Catholic Connect Inc.](https://www.CatholicConnect.io)

"The President honored Catholic faith on December 8. Instagram silenced America's largest Catholic account on December 9. The timing speaks for itself," said Richy Orozco, Founder of [Catholic Connect Inc.](https://www.CatholicConnect.io)

## How to Support

1. Stay updated: [www.CatholicConnect.io](https://www.CatholicConnect.io)
2. Contact Meta — ask why they gave two different explanations and demand restoration
3. Contact the [Meta Oversight Board](https://www.meta.com/oversight) — this is why they exist
4. Follow the new account: [@CatholicConnect3.0](https://www.instagram.com/catholicconnect3.0)
5. Share this story with everyone

## The Bottom Line

**Rachel Mastrogiacono was raped by a Catholic priest during a private Mass. He confessed. He pleaded guilty. When she reported it to the Diocese, prosecutors say they refused to cooperate with law enforcement. We shared her story. Instagram banned America's largest Catholic organization account — then gave two contradictory explanations with zero evidence. The effect of Big Tech's actions is to silence documented abuse stories. We have the receipts. And we're not going away.**

## Key Links

**Website:** <https://www.CatholicConnect.io>

**Evidence of Instagram's Contradictory Explanations:**  
<https://www.CatholicConnect.io/evidence>

**Court Documents (Rachel's Case):** <https://purifythechurch.online/legal.html>

**New Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/catholicconnect3.0>

**Meta Oversight Board:** <https://www.oversightboard.com>

**2021 CNA Article (Previous Ban):** <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/246676>

## Media Sources Cited (All Linked)

- [The Wall Street Journal \(September 2018\)](#) — Diocese non-cooperation, prosecutor statements, cover-up details
- [San Diego Union-Tribune \(May 2018\)](#) — Court filings, conviction, sentencing details
- [San Diego Union-Tribune #ThemToo \(Aug 2018\)](#) — Full Rachel interview, grooming details
- [Crux \(Aug 2018\)](#) — Diocesan spokesman confirms Bertrand "substantially admitted misconduct"
- [Crisis Magazine \(June 2022\)](#) — Full Rachel interview by Dr. Janet Smith
- [Star Tribune \(Jan 2018\)](#) — Guilty plea coverage
- [CBS Minnesota \(May 2018\)](#) — Sentencing coverage
- [NBC San Diego \(May 2018\)](#) — Sentencing coverage
- [Twin Cities Pioneer Press \(May 2018\)](#) — Prosecutor statements
- [Ruth Institute \(Sept 2022\)](#) — Full Rachel interview podcast

- [Leila Miller \(Aug 2022\)](#) — Comprehensive link collection
- **Minnesota District Court (Case No. 19HA-CR-16-3812)** — Bertrand's attorneys' motion detailing treatment history (filed April 14, 2023)

## Note

*This press release contains factual statements based on court records, mainstream news reports, and firsthand accounts, as well as opinions and commentary by Catholic Connect and the individuals quoted. Statements of opinion are clearly identified or attributable to named individuals. All factual claims are sourced to court documents, prosecutor statements, or mainstream news reporting.*

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*Available for interviews.*

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