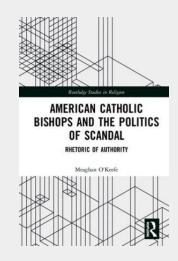
## American Catholic Bishops and the Politics of Scandal

Rhetoric of Authority

This book explores the rhetoric and public communication of the Catholic Church in the United States in the wake of the sexual abuse scandals and offers a demonstration of how large organizations negotiate a loss of public trust while retaining political power. While the Catholic Church remains a major political force in the United States, recent scandals have undoubtedly had an adverse effect on both its reputation and moral authority. This has been exacerbated by the public responses of Catholic clergy, which have often left supporters of the Church, let alone critics, profoundly unsatisfied. Drawing on documents - voting guides, pastoral letters, sermons, press releases, and other materials - issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as well as American nuns, the book explores Catholic political statements issued after the sexual abuse crises entered the public consciousness. Using approaches from linguistics and rhetoric, it analyses how these statements compare to similar materials issued before this time. This comparison demonstrates that for the American Catholic Church persuasion is less important than maintaining the impression that there has been no loss of authority. This is a timely study of the Catholic Church's handling of the recent revelations of abuse within the Church. As such, it will be of keen interest to scholars of religious rhetoric, contemporary Catholicism, linguistics, rhetoric, communication, and religious studies.



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