

“IT’S THE FIRST AMENDMENT, STUPID”



Bill Donohue addresses an editorial in the *New York Times*, and a column by Lisa Miller in the *Washington Post*, that appeared on Sunday:

The central issue in the fight between the Obama administration and the Catholic Church is the right of the federal government to redefine religious institutions as entities that hire and serve mostly people of their own faith. Secondly, the fight is over forcing Catholics to pay for abortion-inducing drugs. But one looks in vain for the Church’s critics to even acknowledge this reality. It’s not contraception that is in play—“It’s the First Amendment, Stupid.”

The *Times* says the Obama mandate “specifically exempts houses of worship.” Try telling that to Donald Cardinal Wuerl who runs the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.; it is a self-insured entity and thus must be forced to pay for morally objectionable services. The *Times* says most American Catholic women do not agree with the Church’s contraception stand, but fails to mention that *because of the Obama administration’s disrespect for religious liberty*, support for Obama has dropped precipitously among Catholic women.

Lisa Miller argues that a “small group of very conservative bishops have hijacked the church,” and cites Stockton Bishop Stephen Blaire as taking the other side. She is wrong. Three days before Miller’s piece ran, Blaire issued a statement saying, “I stand solidly with my brother bishops in our common resolve to overturn the unacceptable intrusion of government into the life of the Church by the HHS Mandate.”

Here's what is really driving this story. The secular critics of the Catholic Church, beginning with HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, are so out of touch with Catholic sentiment today that they seriously misread the reaction to this issue. Moreover, they thoroughly underestimated the resolve of today's crop of Catholic bishops. Now they are trying to deflect what is really happening, but it's too late.