

Albany Times Union's Hit Job on Catholic Church

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a biased report on the Catholic Church in New York State:

After tracking the Albany Times Union for decades, we know it is more than capable of meeting the highest journalistic standards. However, on February 11 the newspaper ran a piece by Edward McKinley, "New York's Catholic Church Leaders Control Billions Outside the Reach of Abuse Survivors," that is scurrilous.

Like all large-scale organizations, the Catholic Church is constantly distributing and redistributing funds among its various holdings. This is routine. Even McKinley acknowledges there is nothing illegal about such practices. No matter, he is convinced that the Church acted unethically in protecting itself from rapacious lawyers who exploited the Child Victims Act for monetary and ideological gain.

When a reporter does not have the evidence to support his conclusion, he typically resorts to innuendo and conjecture to make his point. McKinley is a master at that genre. Here are some examples.

McKinley is not exactly approving of the decision by the New York State bishops to establish the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation; this is a charitable fund that supports a wide range of important causes. The foundation contributes to Catholic Charities in New York which, in turn, helps provide funding for social justice projects undertaken by the eight dioceses across the state. So what's the problem?

The Mother Cabrini Health Foundation came into existence in 2018 following the bishops' decision to sell Fideles Care, a not-for-profit health insurance program. McKinley suggests

that the selling of Fideles Care and the creation of the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation were a means of avoiding payouts to the victims of abuse.* Does he have proof of something unethical or illegal? No, but that doesn't stop him for implying as such.

What McKinley really objects to is the fact that the bishops made financially prudent moves to ensure the operations of the Church. That's their job. They are not just religious leaders—they are stewards of the Church's financial wellbeing. If the laity are not upset about these decisions, why is it a problem for McKinley?

McKinley gave his hand away when he cited Jeff Anderson as a reliable source. Anderson, who loves to sue the Vatican for allegedly covering up sexual abuse (he has never won), achieved infamy a number of years ago when he declared that his goal in life was to "sue the s*** out of the Catholic Church." For McKinley to give a forum to this Catholic-bashing bigot undermines his own credibility.

McKinley also lambasts the Church for accessing the bankruptcy laws to limit the financial liabilities of dioceses. Does he believe that these laws should only apply to failed newspapers and their corporate owners? His remarks evince a clear bias.

The Times-Union did itself a disservice by publishing this hit job on the Catholic Church. Op-eds are for opinion makers. We expect news stories to offer facts, not opinions.

**We subsequently learned that McKinley erred when he indicated that the Church owned Fidelis and Cabrini. Wrong. This matters because of his contention that monies from these institutions could have been used as settlement funds. That is manifestly inaccurate.*