

ALEX GIBNEY LIBELS THE POPE

On February 4, HBO debuted Alex Gibney's movie, "Mea Maxima Culpa." Before the propaganda was even aired, we accused the filmmaker of libel.

It's too bad that Pope Benedict XVI doesn't sue Alex Gibney for libel. In an interview posted recently on The Daily Beast, he called the pope "a criminal." He accused the pope (as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) of covering up the deeds of Father Lawrence Murphy, a priest who molested deaf boys in Milwaukee in the 1950s. Indeed, the February 4 *New York Times* advertised the HBO show by saying there was a "cover-up from rural America to the Vatican."

The charge that Ratzinger was involved in a cover up is libelous. The fact of the matter is that no one contacted the civil authorities about Murphy until the mid-1970s (following a probe, the case was dropped), and it wasn't until 1996 that the Vatican was contacted. Instead of dropping an investigation—the statute of limitations had long expired—the Vatican ordered a trial. Not only was Cardinal Ratzinger not at the trial, his name was never even mentioned. We know this because of the presiding judge's testimony.

Moreover, it wasn't until 2001 that Pope John Paul II asked Cardinal Ratzinger to police these matters, and when he did, he moved expeditiously and fairly. An honest rendering of these events would conclude that *no one at the Vatican* has ever taken these cases with greater seriousness than Joseph Ratzinger.

Gibney says he was inspired to do the film after reading an article by Laurie Goodstein in the *New York Times*. That being the case, Gibney should tell us where in Goodstein's reporting she said that "Vatican delegates" (whatever that means) were aware of Murphy's abuse "as early as 1958." That's what the

film says, and it is pure bunk.

The mark of a Catholic hater is to take dirty laundry and then add to it by offering a conspiratorial account. That's what Gibney has done.