

BANNON IMPUTES FALSE MOTIVE TO BISHOPS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a remark made by Steve Bannon that will air on "60 Minutes" on Sunday:

There is nothing wrong about criticizing the bishops for any position they take on public policy, though when invidious motives are ascribed to them, such conjecture is unacceptable. That is what Steve Bannon has done with regard to their statements on immigration.

It is certainly true that most of the bishops promote a liberal position on illegal immigration. That is open to fair criticism, but to say that their motive is to "fill the churches" is inaccurate and unfair. Indeed, it feeds the worst impulses of anti-Catholics. The bishops are making their case based on their compassion for the dispossessed.

Is the compassion overwrought? Is it dismissive of the rights of those who have waited legally on line to enter the United States? Is it insensitive to the abuses of power exercised by President Obama to deal with this issue? Is it neglectful of a whole host of cultural and economic issues attendant to illegal immigration?

There are many legitimate issues that can be raised about the approach that the bishops have taken, but not among them is the old saw about filling the pews. Besides, if filling the pews were the driving force, only a delinquent pastor would choose to attract those least likely to donate to, and most likely to draw on, parish funds.