

BILL O'REILLY AND THE POPE

Last night, Fox News Network talk-show host Bill O'Reilly commented on the Catholic League's past criticism of him for lambasting the pope. "And I said that the pope wasn't proactive enough on the priest sex scandal in condemning it and taking action," O'Reilly said, "and so I hate the pope, according to the guy from the Catholic League."

By way of background, consider that in his book, *Who's Looking Out for You*, Bill O'Reilly wrote the following: "The anger I feel for the witch-hunters of America is off the charts. They come in every shape and color. The Catholic League of America issued a press release after my criticism of the Pope, charging that I 'despised him.'"

Here are the facts:

- On July 29, 2002, O'Reilly said on his TV show that the pope showed a "lack of compassion" for not meeting with the victims of priestly sexual molestation when he visited Toronto (the implication being that the pope is heartless).

- On January 2, 2003, O'Reilly blamed the pope for not doing enough about the scandal, calling him "an authoritarian guy" on his TV show.

- On March 5, 2003, he said on his radio show, "I have never liked this pope. I have always felt he was an autocrat who had no vision about how people live in the real world."

- On March 13, 2003, O'Reilly blasted the pope on TV for not having "a position on Saddam," thus suggesting that the pope is soft on terrorism. Indeed, he remarked, "And then the pope sits in Rome and says, gee, this is terrible, but does not throw his moral authority behind removing this

dictator.”

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this issue today: “Bill O’Reilly is no more an anti-Catholic than I am a witch-hunter. But he has said some outlandish things about the Holy Father, and it is my job to make sure that O’Reilly doesn’t make an exception to his ‘fair and balanced’ approach when speaking about the pope.”