

# BILL O'REILLY BLASTS THE POPE

The "O'Reilly Factor" show that aired July 30 on the Fox News Channel saw host Bill O'Reilly blast Pope John Paul II for not meeting with the victims of priestly sexual molestation in Toronto. He complained that the pope would not even allow 30 minutes to meet with the survivors.

O'Reilly also said he could not believe that Jesus would have acted this way. The Church, he offered, has lost its moral authority and will not recover in his lifetime. O'Reilly maintained that by not meeting with the victims, the pope showed a "lack of compassion." Nothing less than a "reform" pope will resolve the problem, he said.

We generally like Bill O'Reilly. But lately he's had a tendency to go over the top. Like him or not, the Catholic League has long prided itself in being fair and balanced so we couldn't hold back when O'Reilly went ballistic on the pope.

We found it rather amazing that simply because Pope John Paul II did not meet with sex abuse victims while in Toronto, O'Reilly would conclude that this was evidence that the pope lacked compassion. Nothing short of a "reform pope," O'Reilly said, will rescue the Catholic Church. We labeled such an analysis as madness. Some quick research on our part revealed that O'Reilly's take on the pope was nothing if not unique: he stood all alone in his convictions. This is why we issued the following statement to the press:

"O'Reilly is the only public person in the United States to register this complaint. Not one editorial from the establishment press made this criticism. Not one morning TV news commentary, or evening news statement, took the pope to task for not meeting with the victims. Not one victims' group adopted this line. Not one activist organization, or pundit, took this position. Just Bill O'Reilly."

We then compared O'Reilly's harsh criticisms to a news report by Frank Bruni in the *New York Times*. Here is how Bruni saw it: "His [the pope's] remarks were striking in several ways. The word shame represented stronger, more personal language than the pope had used this year about sexual abuse by priests. Equally significant were the context and setting of the pope's brief discussion of the issue." It is a wonder Bill O'Reilly didn't see what Bruni did.

It is also worth keeping in mind that the bishops met with representatives of victims' groups. And Gov. Frank Keating, who heads the oversight panel, met with them. But none of this was good enough for Bill O'Reilly. He demanded that the pope rearrange his trip so the media circus could commence.