

BISHOPS BLASTED OVER GAY MARRIAGE

Responding to growing attacks on Catholic bishops over the issue of same-sex marriage is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

The passage of a same-sex marriage bill in New York, over the objections of the Catholic hierarchy, has led to a storm of criticism of the state's bishops. The most extreme condemnation comes from a July 5 editorial in the *National Catholic Reporter (NCR)*.

The Catholic hierarchy, says *NCR*, "has lost most of its credibility with the wider culture on matters of sexuality and personal morality, just as it has lost its authority within the Catholic community on the same issues." The bishops are guilty of engaging in everything from "wholesale excommunications" to "open warfare" with dissidents.

The popular "out-of-touch" criticism of the bishops on gay marriage rests on two faulty assumptions: (a) there is a divide between the bishops and the faithful on this issue, and (b) the bishops should take their cues from the laity.

To begin with, there is a profound difference between the views of practicing Catholics and nominal ones. There is also a divide between what the public tells a pollster and the results in a ballot box. In the 31 states where the voters were given the opportunity to decide on gay marriage, many of the polls going into the election showed that the supporters would carry the day. The final tally was 31-0 against gay marriage. New Yorkers were denied a ballot initiative. Moreover, a Siena College poll taken just before the vote in the legislature showed only a minority of Catholics in favor of this idea.

More important, the bishops have a different charge: they are obligated to do what is morally right. But if *NCR* wants the

bishops to follow the laity, is it prepared to have the hierarchy junk its rejection of the death penalty? After all, two-thirds of Catholics want those guilty of a capital offense to be fried, so why not the bishops? Will *NCR* now campaign for the death penalty, lecturing the bishops to get in line with the rank-and-file? Its hypocrisy is stunning