

BISHOPS INDICTED BY JUDGE “REFORMER”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responds to a column in today's *Chicago Tribune* by Judge Anne Burke, former interim chairwoman of the National Review Board (an agency established by the bishops' conference to monitor priestly sexual abuse):

Anne Burke misrepresents the situation in the Philadelphia Archdiocese, and indicts every bishop in the United States.

Burke's accusation of a cover-up in Philadelphia is factually wrong and morally scurrilous: she cites 24 priests who are accused of wrongdoing, never mentioning that most of them were previously investigated and allowed to stay in ministry (unlike others who did not pass muster with earlier probes), precisely because the charges were unsubstantiated. The only reason they are being reinvestigated is because the Philadelphia Archdiocese decided this was the proper response to resurrected accusations made in a *third* grand jury report.

Burke makes it sound as if the Archdiocese is comfortable with allowing molesters to walk the streets of Philadelphia. This is a smear. She also gives the impression that all of these priests are guilty of some serious crime. Truth to tell, none has been found guilty of anything, and many of the accusations are more absurd than they are serious.

If this isn't bad enough, Burke indicts every bishop in the nation. "This makes me wonder what kind of people we are dealing with when we engage the bishops?" Her conclusion: "Are they ever to be trusted?" Her statement is unqualified, demagogic and irresponsible.

This is nothing new. In 2006, Burke justified removing priests from ministry on the basis of *one unsubstantiated accusation*: "We understand that it is a violation of the priest's due process—you're innocent until proven guilty—but we're talking about the most vulnerable people in our society and those are children." Burke's problem extends beyond the Catholic

Church—she has a problem with the U.S. Constitution.