

CARDINAL PELL ACQUIRES TOP LAWYER

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest round of attacks on Cardinal George Pell:

Cardinal George Pell has acquired the services of one of the most respected lawyers in Australia, Robert “The Red Baron” Richter. One prominent lawyer from Melbourne called him “the Rolls Royce of criminal defense lawyers.” We are delighted to learn of this development, though many others are clearly chagrined.

From reading the accounts of various professional victims’ attorneys, it is clear that some believe Pell is guilty until proven innocent. Others think he does not deserve first-class defense lawyers, while others question the motive of Church officials who are coming to his defense, including Pope Francis.

Due process and basic civil liberties are at stake, but given the hysteria in some quarters of the media, it is not surprising that Pell is being treated unfairly, to say the least. Moreover, some are using his case to make a larger point: The institutional Church is guilty as charged.

Among the worst is Marci Hamilton, a professional victims’ advocate who specializes in attacking the Catholic Church. She is busy lecturing the pope to “publicly discipline the cardinals and bishops who relentlessly take church funds and use them to pay lobbyists to continue the cover-up by fighting such reform.”

In other words, the Church—unlike all other institutions, religious and secular—should not defend itself. It should just lie down and allow rapacious lawyers to cannibalize it.

Let me be very clear about this: Any bishop or cardinal who *does not* use Church funds to pay for top notch public relations firms, and blue chip defense lawyers, is doing a disservice to priests and the faithful. There is no cover-up involved when such services are acquired. On the contrary, the scandal is not buying the best that can be afforded.

Cardinal Pell is being accused by ex-cons—both of whom have been arrested for violence—and who *now* claim that he inappropriately touched them while horsing around in a swimming pool. When did this happen? When John Travolta was rocking out to “Saturday Night Fever.”

Cardinal Pell deserves better and is entitled to the best defense in the land.