

MSGR. LYNN FREED

Two days after Christmas, a Pennsylvania appeals court overturned the conviction of Philadelphia Monsignor William Lynn; he was later released on bail. Msgr. Lynn should never have been prosecuted in the first place: he was charged *ex post facto*; a 2007 amendment to the 1972 Pennsylvania child endangerment statute had no application to him.

The guilty parties that worked overtime to convict an innocent man—they include attorneys, judges, newspapers, professional “victims’ groups,” activists, TV talking heads—have been disgraced. This is a monumental win for justice, and a tremendous setback for anti-Catholic bigots. Their goal is to “get a bishop,” and if that doesn’t work, then they settle for the next in line.

Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham began this witch-hunt—she was authorized to pursue sexual misconduct in all religious communities, but instead she selectively chose to focus exclusively on Catholics—and then she passed the baton to her successor, Seth Williams. All of them knew that Msgr. Lynn did not know, or know of, the drug-addicted, lying, scheming, accuser, Billy Doe.

Msgr. Lynn spent 18 months in prison because of dishonest people who harbor an anti-Catholic agenda. D.A. Williams pushed to declare him a “flight risk,” as if Lynn is going to hop a plane to Rome. He is being unfairly monitored.

Congratulations to Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput and attorney Thomas A. Bergstrom for staying the course.

JUSTICE IN OKLAHOMA; SOLDIER'S RIGHTS RESTORED

Within hours of registering a formal complaint with the top Army brass at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, a female Catholic soldier's rights were restored. More important, reforms were immediately put into place guaranteeing the religious liberty rights of Catholics on the base.

After learning that a female soldier enrolled in Advanced Individual Training at the base had thrice been denied the opportunity to go to Mass on Sundays, Bill Donohue wrote to Major General Mark McDonald at Fort Sill's U.S. Army Fires Center of Excellence.

Donohue noted that the "battle buddy" system they have requires soldiers to travel in pairs. He conceded that this arrangement surely has its merits, but he hastened to say that "it is not an adequate defense to deny someone her constitutional rights simply because there are no other Catholics in her unit." He added that a cadre escort "would resolve this matter, while not doing anything to undermine the policy of moving about in pairs."

The Catholic League president personalized his concerns. "I am a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, and have nothing but respect for the men and women of the armed services. But I am also the president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, and as such, I take anti-Catholicism very seriously, regardless of the motive of the offender."

Donohue called for an investigation into this matter. He was pleased when he received an e-mail indicating that his complaint was being taken seriously. Donohue then called the base and spoke to the official who had contacted him. The conversation was amicable, and it resulted in assurances that

a cadre escort service would be arranged for those soldiers who lacked a fellow Catholic to “buddy” with. Case closed.

The reason we jumped on this issue transcended the incident at Fort Sill. There is an attack on the religious liberty rights of Catholics and Protestants in the armed forces, and in the military academies. Militant atheists are driving it, and obsequious officers are yielding to the pressure. We refuse to do so.

The goal is to censor religious expression in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and the Coast Guard, as well as on the campuses of the academies. The stakes are high: If the professional atheists can win there, they can win anywhere. This isn't about fidelity to the First Amendment—it's about trampling on it. Atheists are not being persecuted by the faithful; it's the other way around.

We are happy that this incident ended quickly and fairly.

BEATING BACK SCROOGE

The Catholic League's enormous Times Square billboard ([click here](#)) sends a message that is both joyful and serious: Christians will not allow the Scrooges in our society to stop us from honoring Jesus.

Scrooges are trying to censor Christmas again. In Bordentown, New Jersey the superintendent of schools initially sought to ban religious Christmas music from school concerts. Following an outcry from parents, and the intervention of the Alliance Defending Freedom, the decision was reversed. The same issue arose in Wisconsin's Wausau West High School, but sanity ultimately prevailed there, too.

In College Park, Georgia parents were told that at a charter school, all religious songs were prohibited. The educators proved their lameness when they allowed Feliz Navidad to be sung: if the kids can sing "Merry Christmas," what do the administrators think they are celebrating?

A South Carolina charter school went so far as to cancel the annual toy drive because atheists said it would convert kids to Christianity. They're worried about that—it's not something a free society can tolerate.

Leading the anti-Christmas wars are American Atheists, Freedom From Religion Foundation and the American Humanist Association. These groups are driven by bigotry, not the Constitution. Unfortunately, there is a lot of ignorance among school officials about what is permissible and what is not.

The Catholic League will proudly display its billboard, and will erect a life-size nativity scene in Central Park. Scrooge won't beat us.

GOV. BROWN VETOES ABUSE BILL; VICTORY FOR FAIRNESS

On October 12, California Governor Jerry Brown vetoed a bill that would have allowed adults who were allegedly molested when they were a minor to file lawsuits, provided the abuse occurred in a private institution. The bill would have lifted the statute of limitations for one year.

Governor Brown saw right through the machinations of those who selectively sought to allow alleged victims of sexual abuse another chance to file suit. He properly noted that

legislation passed a decade ago already covered the Catholic Church, so there was no need to do so again.

Most important, Brown denounced the politics involved. "This extraordinary extension of the statute of limitations, which legislators chose not to apply to public institutions, is simply too open-ended and unfair," he said.

On September 10, Bill Donohue wrote a six-page letter to Governor Brown citing his concerns." This legislation is being sold as an antidote to the sexual abuse of minors," he said. "In fact, it only applies to the private sector, thus allowing all alleged victims at the hands of public school employees off the hook," he added. Donohue branded the bill "discriminatory and flagrantly unjust."

Donohue also cited the sexual abuse of students at Miramonte Elementary School in Los Angeles, offering a detailed description of what happened; over half of Donohue's letter was on Mira-monte. His point was plain for anyone to see: these students would be excluded from the bill sponsored by Sen. James Beall Jr., simply because they were abused at a public school.

Donohue was delighted that Governor Brown saw fit to mention Miramonte in his statement. The governor said those students who were assaulted "are no less worthy because of the institution they attended."

The Catholic League contacted over 1,000 parishes in California, all the lawmakers, and every one of our members in the state asking them to demand justice. But the real heroes are the bishops of California, led by Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez. We are so happy that Gomez pulled out all the stops.

The final proof that this bill was driven more by anti-Catholicism than any alleged interest in child welfare came when Republicans tried to amend the Beall legislation to

include public institutions. It was defeated. To engage in bigotry is always wrong, but it is particularly despicable when it is done under the guise of protecting children.

It is always gratifying when those we help are thankful for our efforts, and that was certainly true in this effort. Kudos to Governor Jerry Brown.

UNFAIR CRITICS RIP USCCB

The Catholic League rushed to the defense of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) when it was blamed for the partial government shutdown this fall. It was one of the most baseless and absurd accusations we have seen in a long time.

The most absurd criticism against the bishops was first made by Adele Stan, a writer for a pro-abortion and anti-Catholic website. She not only blamed them for the shutdown, she slandered them by saying they are at war with the poor: the USCCB was accused of blocking access “to health care for the masses, food for the hungry, and shelter for the homeless.” Also, “they wouldn’t mind seeing the global economy brought to its knees.”

We jumped on this issue when Stan’s screed was echoed by other secularists. Following our critical statement, her article was given a big push by the *National Catholic Reporter*, the dissident weekly that rejects the Church’s teachings on sexuality. We immediately took aim at the newspaper, showing how it is working to undermine the bishops. The next day there was a sharply worded rebuke of the USCCB’s critics by its director of communications, Sister Mary Ann Walsh.

Regarding the partial government shutdown, all the USCCB wanted to do was to make sure that in discussions over a Continuing Resolution and debt ceiling bill, the conscience rights of Catholics would be included in “must-pass” legislation. For this they were accused of pushing for the government to default.

POPE FRANCIS AT SIX MONTHS; MEDIA COVERAGE SKEWED

After Pope Francis finished his first six months as pontiff, we compared how he is faring with the media vis-a-vis his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, after his first six months in office. It told us more about the media than either pope.

We looked at the editorials in 15 of the nation’s largest newspapers to see what they said about both popes six months after being elected. The papers we examined were: *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Denver Post*, *Kansas City Star*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Miami Herald*, *New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Sun-Sentinel*, *USA Today*, *Washington Post*.

There were 14 editorials on Pope Benedict XVI and 11 on Pope Francis. The difference can probably be chalked up to the familiarity of the former versus the unfamiliarity of the latter. But there were more similarities than dissimilarities.

Two segments of the population dominated the media’s interest in the two popes: homosexuals and women. In the 25 editorials, homosexuals were cited 13 times, and women 15. With the exception of a few editorials that gave faint praise to Pope

Francis for not judging gays of goodwill, they were uniformly critical of the teachings of the Catholic Church on both subjects. Only two newspapers, *USA Today* and the *Washington Post*, did not mention either subject explicitly.

We found it interesting to note that the *New York Times* has been noticeably silent on Pope Francis. After all, the new pope is trying to reach out to atheists and homosexuals, so we thought these developments might occasion a positive statement from the newspaper. Wisely, it has decided not to comment.

It is smart for those who are not Catholic-friendly not to get too excited by the new pope. All popes are free to decide what style best suits them, but papal observers know that substantive changes are altogether different. It is amazing how much stock some in the media give to the pope's remarks when he is merely jostling with reporters; they treat everything he says as if it were an apostolic letter or encyclical.

That said, there is no other religion that is subjected to this kind of micro-scrutiny. The elite media react to Islam and Judaism with cautious restraint, and with voyeuristic intrusiveness to Catholicism. Yet when it comes to teachings on homosexuality and women, there is very little difference between the three monotheistic religions. Judaism is respected, Islam is feared and Christianity—especially Catholicism—is loathed.

To see a brief summary of the editorials click [here](#).

GOV. BROWN'S KEY RULING

On September 6, the California Senate passed SB 131, the bill that discriminates against the Catholic Church by making it easier for alleged victims of sexual abuse to sue if the molestation happened when they were minors; the bill does not apply to public schools.

The legislation was sent to Governor Jerry Brown to sign; he has until October 13 to decide its fate. When we went to press, he had yet to do so. We pray the former seminarian will be fair.

On September 10, Bill Donohue wrote a six-page letter to Governor Brown outlining his concerns (it was delivered the next day). Donohue detailed the bill's rank injustice and provided many examples of the sexual abuse of minors in the public schools in California. His letter was sent to every bishop, including the auxiliary bishops, in California.

Here is a sample of what Donohue wrote: "Today, there is no institution in the nation that has less of a problem with the sexual abuse of minors than the Catholic Church. Indeed, in the last six years, the average number of credible allegations made against over 40,000 priests is 7.0. In California, in particular, there has been so much progress that priestly sexual abuse has long since ceased to exist. So why the need to target the one institution that doesn't tolerate sexual abuse?"

Donohue ended by saying, "You are the only person left, Governor Brown, who can stop this discriminatory legislation."

CALIFORNIA BILL STALLS; CATHOLIC RESPONSE IS HUGE

Over the summer, the Catholic League contacted well over 10,000 members in California alerting them to a vote on a bill in the Assembly Appropriations Committee that unfairly targets the Catholic Church. We also emailed over a thousand pastors throughout the state. It was worth the effort. On August 14, the bill failed 6-4; there were seven abstentions. At press time, the bill was eligible for reconsideration at the end of August, but the fact that it stalled in committee is a good sign.

As Catholic Californians know, the bill has been deceitfully promoted as a measure to combat the sexual abuse of minors. But it does nothing of the sort. It would suspend the statute of limitations for one year in cases where someone claims he was molested when he was a minor in a private institution; it would apply to those who were 26-years-old in 2002.

Amazingly, the bill does not apply to anyone who was violated by a public employee, such as a public school teacher, aide, counselor or coach. For them—and they account for the lion's share of abuse—it's just too bad.

The purpose of this outrageous bill, SB 131, is to sock it to the Catholic Church. In California, lawmakers already suspended the statute of limitations for private institutions; they did so in 2003. But public school teachers have never been subjected to this condition. In other words, the bill is nothing more than a vindictive effort to punish the Catholic Church.

Leading the fight against this bill are the California bishops, and the California Catholic Conference; we are particularly taken by the aggressive leadership of Los Angeles

Archbishop José Gomez. We are proud to play a support role, and we thank our California members for their participation in this effort. But this fight is not over.

If California lawmakers are truly serious about combating the sexual abuse of minors (most surely are), then they should a) not make exceptions for private or public institutions and b) concentrate on current cases of abuse. To do any less—to carve out a privileged position for some, or to focus on the past, not the present—is an exercise in grandstanding. That's not leadership.

This game has been played in other states as well. We've fought attempts to discriminate against the Catholic Church in Colorado and New York, and our side has prevailed. Rest assured knowing we are not walking away from this fight in California.

When it comes to protecting kids, we don't need one law for some, and another for others. And we sure don't need laws driven by an animus against the Catholic Church. It is astonishing to think that in 2013, Catholics still have to fight for basic human rights.

FACEBOOK'S DUPLICITY

The Catholic League has filed a complaint with Facebook about an entry that shows an edgy picture of the Virgin Mary with the inscription, "Virgin Mary Should've Aborted." Facebook said it did not constitute hate speech. When others continued to protest, the page was taken down, but then other pages, similar in content, appeared; they are still posted.

Alison Schumer, who works at Facebook, said in June that "hate

speech” is defined as “direct and serious attacks on any protected category of people,” but that “distasteful humor” does not qualify. That is an eminently defensible definition. But if that policy was violated when a cartoon of a naked Muhammad was posted— this happened last year when a French magazine took liberties with the prophet—then why does Facebook currently allow the Virgin Mary to be assaulted? It censored the French page.

The policy Schumer defended speaks to categories of people, not individuals. But if it was good enough to take down the anti-Muhammad post, why does it not apply to the Virgin Mary? Also, the cartoon was a depiction of Muhammad lying on his stomach, with his butt exposed. If the reason for taking down this page is nudity, then how does Facebook explain doctored photos of Sarah Palin sitting on a chair in a vulgar position? It’s still up.

We contacted Facebook seven times for an explanation, but to no avail. All we want is for Mary to be treated the way it treats Muhammad.

CALIFORNIA SCHEMING; BILL NAILS CHURCH

California lawmakers are selectively targeting the Catholic Church by pushing a bill that would lift the statute of limitations for one year on cases of the sexual abuse of minors; it exempts all public institutions, including the public schools. Fighting the discriminatory law are Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez, the California Catholic Conference and the Catholic League.

Prior to the Civil War, we had one law for whites, and one law for blacks. In 1868, that was rectified when the equal protection before the law provision was encoded in the 14th Amendment. Now California Sen. Jim Beall wants to turn the clock back: he wants one law for public schools and another for Catholic schools. Differential legislation can be justified in many instances, but not when it comes to crime and children.

Bill Donohue registered his objections to Beall's bill by sending a detailed letter to every member of the California legislature; see pp. 4-5 [click [here](#)]. He followed up with a news release disputing Beall's reasoning for promoting the bill.

"Public schools and teachers have been held to a higher standard of care when it comes to the protection of children and reporting of child sexual abuse, than have the clergy and private youth-serving institutions," said Beall. Not true.

In 2007, AP did a major investigation of the public schools and found widespread sexual abuse of minors, a breakdown in enforcement, resistance from teachers' unions to do anything about it, and grossly inadequate legislation. California was specifically cited for its negligence.

They are not shutting down Catholic schools to clean house—they are shutting down schools like Miramonte Elementary in South Los Angeles. In a subsequent audit of the Los Angeles Unified School District released last year, many highly indefensible infractions were cited. Moreover, school districts in San Jose and elsewhere are still telling teachers not to report cases of sexual abuse to the authorities. And unlike Catholic schools nationwide, there is still no mandatory training program for teachers and staff on how to combat this problem.

Beall's bill got by the Senate and the Assembly Committee on

the Judiciary; it has been sent back to the Senate for refinement. Its fate is still uncertain, and it is not known whether Gov. Jerry Brown will sign it if it reaches his desk.

In 2008, California lawmakers unanimously passed a bill that treats public schools and private schools as equals in the application of the law on the sexual abuse of minors. They should not be turning the clock back now.