

# BISHOPS ADOPT PRINCIPLED POLICY

On November 13, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) passed a policy on priestly sexual abuse that the Catholic League hailed as “principled” and “a model of fairness.” The policy reflected the work of the mixed U.S.-Vatican commission that was done a week earlier.

Francis Cardinal George, who was one of four panel members from the U.S. who drafted the revisions, said the new norms are “fairer overall.” That was the league’s conclusion as well. William Donohue commented that “Cardinal George, Archbishop William Levada, Bishop Thomas Doran and Bishop William Lori, along with the Vatican contingent, did a magnificent job.” He added that “Bishop Wilton Gregory, who heads the USCCB, also deserves great praise.”

In many respects, the new norms are stronger than the Dallas ones. First of all, they apply to all priests: the Dallas charter applied only to diocesan priests, leaving religious order priests—fully a third of the clergy—exempt from coverage. Second, the new norms explicitly say that when “even a single act of sexual abuse” is either admitted or established, the “priest or deacon will be removed permanently from ecclesiastical ministry, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state, if the case warrants.”

This is a no-nonsense approach. So is the new emphasis on putting an end to the practice of transferring a guilty priest to another parish for ministerial assignment: it is specifically prohibited.

The central message of the new approach is this: There will be no more tolerance for intolerable behavior. The kids come first. At the same time, however, the bishops made it clear that this will not be done at the expense of tossing overboard

the rights of the accused.

Every chance we had on TV we emphasized that this policy applies only to the two-thirds of one percent of priests who have been accused of sexual abuse. The other 99.3 percent are wholly unaffected.

We also released a statement urging the bishops to “ignore rogue Catholics.” To be specific, we mentioned the 22 reform groups who comprise Catholic Organizations for Renewal. “As anyone who has tracked these disaffected Catholics knows,” said Donohue, “their goal is to reconstruct the Church from top to bottom.”

In short, there can be no dialogue with those who reject the Church’s teachings on sexuality. Dialogue is predicated on listening and all this crowd wants to do is dictate.

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## **COLUMBIA PREZ APOLOGIZES FOR TAUNTS AT FORDHAM GAME**

An anti-Catholic incident at Columbia University began with an apology that William Donohue deemed “inadequate” and ended with one he declared satisfactory.

On September 21, at a Fordham-Columbia football game played at Columbia, a band announcer at the Ivy League school commented during the half-time show that “Fordham’s tuition is going down like an altar boy.” The crowd loved it. Two days later, a Fordham student, Elizabeth Kennedy, contacted the Catholic League.

Donohue's first response was to request an apology from Columbia president Lee Bollinger. He was quoted in the New York Times saying, "It angers me because I know the multicultural mantra is so much the rage on college campuses, and for elite institutions like Columbia to provide an enthusiastic response to bigotry is disturbing."

On September 23, a spokeswoman for Columbia extended an apology for what happened. But Donohue wanted more: he wanted to hear from Bollinger and thus branded the apology "inadequate." Donohue was particularly disturbed to learn that the offending student, Andy Hao, had his script approved by a Columbia staff person, Catherine Webster.

Donohue then sent a letter to the 16 members of Columbia's board of trustees, to the presidents of select New York-area colleges, and to the presidents of all Ivy League colleges, expressing his concerns. He contrasted Bollinger's inaction to the meritorious response that was provided by Stanford's past president, Gerhard Casper, when a like incident occurred at Stanford in 1997.

In 1997, there was an anti-Catholic and anti-Irish incident during the half-time of a Notre Dame-Stanford football game. Following complaints lodged by the Catholic League and others, President Casper publicly apologized for what happened and wrote a personal letter to Donohue expressing his sincere regret. Casper also barred the band from field shows during the next three Stanford-Notre Dame games and ordered a review of its procedure for approving band scripts.

"President Casper acted responsibly," Donohue said. "President Bollinger has not." The Catholic League president concluded by saying, "I hope you would agree and would therefore use the example of President Casper as a role model in the event that bigotry—of any kind—were to unfortunately strike your campus."

On October 8, at Bollinger's request, Donohue met with the Columbia president. An apology was granted and measures have been instituted to prevent such an occurrence again. Thus did the issue end on a good note.

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## VATICAN WANTS REVISIONS

The Catholic League was delighted to defend the Vatican's response to the sexual abuse policy passed by the U.S. bishops in Dallas. All the Vatican wants is for certain revisions to be made before final approval is granted.

"Fair-minded observers of the Catholic Church were hardly astonished to learn that the Vatican would encourage the process begun in Dallas to continue," we said. We took issue with those in the media, as well as activists on the left and right, who willfully mischaracterized the Vatican's response as a flat-out rejection of the work of the U.S. bishops.

What the Vatican insisted upon, quite rightfully so, was the need to clarify that which is currently ambiguous. For example, the definition of sexual abuse in the Dallas charter is incredibly elastic and subjective. Similarly, respect for the due process rights of priests must be further refined; this would include respect for a statute of limitations.

We drew an analogy with higher education. When a doctoral student submits his dissertation, one of two things happens: a) he is dismissed from the program because his work has been rejected or b) he is permitted to continue in the program but must make satisfactory revisions before his work is accepted. There is no third way—never are dissertations accepted without fine-tuning.

Roughly the same process governs submissions by the bishops to Rome, and that is why the Vatican's response more resembled a thumbs-up than a thumbs-down.

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## **MAJOR VICTORY SCORED: "OPIE AND ANTHONY" AXED**

Media pundits are calling the protest "historic." The subject: the Catholic League's victorious protest of an offensive radio show, "Opie and Anthony."

On August 15, the Feast of the Assumption, a 35 year-old woman and a 37 year-old man had sex in New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral. They did so in front of men, women and children at approximately 4:00 p.m. To make matters worse, a 42-year old man, Paul Mercurio, gave a graphic description of the stunt on his cell phone: he relayed what was happening to Greg (Opie) Hughes and Anthony Cumia on the "Opie and Anthony" show.

The stunt was a staged event. The Virginia couple were trying to win a prize for having sex in a risky place. This is an annual event on the radio show that is sponsored by Boston Beer Co., which produces Samuel Adams beer.

The morning after the sex stunt occurred, the Catholic League lodged a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and issued a news release the same day. William Donohue demanded that the host station, WNEW, have its license revoked. He had learned that as recently as June, the FCC fined the station \$21,000 for violating its decency standards (three

episodes at the cost of \$7,000 each). "Opie and Anthony" was aired in 17 major markets around the nation.

On August 19, FCC Commissioner Michael J. Copps issued an encouraging statement. He said the case would be put "on the fast-track" and that he takes his responsibility "with the utmost seriousness." He then said if the complaints are true, the FCC "should consider the strongest enforcement action possible against this station, up to and including revocation of the station's license."

The Catholic League supplied the FCC with a tape of the show and a transcript. We also registered a complaint with Viacom, the media-giant conglomerate that owns Infinity Broadcasting (WNEW is an Infinity subsidiary). We have had problems before with Viacom (which owns CBS, Showtime and several other companies).

We won on several levels. The show was dumped on August 22; those associated with it were either fired or suspended; we received an apology from Viacom; and Boston Beer president Jim Koch called to apologize as well. Being satisfied with these outcomes, we said it was no longer necessary for the station's license to be revoked.

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## NEBRASKA BIGOT RETURNS

He has long been known in Nebraska for his bigotry. And on August 29, he struck again. State senator Ernie Chambers went on a rampage blasting Catholics in front of wealthy businessmen at a luncheon hosted by the Suburban Rotary Club of Omaha.

Chambers, who is black, attacked the Catholic Church before an all-white audience. "The Catholic Church is more effective as a criminal enterprise than the mafia," he said. Twice before we've tangled with Chambers. We did not hesitate to brand him "an anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, racist state senator who hates America."

For proof, we offered the following: Chambers has engaged in the most virulent anti-Catholic remarks while opposing school vouchers; he has disfigured Catholic devotional objects and distributed them to his colleagues; he has been denounced by several leading Jews for his anti-Semitic remarks; his comments regarding white people have earned him the label "one of the biggest racists in Omaha"; he has been crassly dismissive over 9-11 saying, "It didn't affect me at all"; and he has accused President Bush of being a drunken moral coward who is bent on starting World War Three.

We were disappointed that the Rotarians in Omaha would welcome such a bigot and that is why we wrote to Rotarian officials. Because an AP story said that those at the luncheon were "unfazed" by Chambers' remarks, we asked if the state senator's comments are "the kind of sentiment [that] accurately reflects the position of your organization."

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## **LOS ANGELES COLLEGE CANCELS OFFENSIVE LECTURES**

The summer no sooner began when the Catholic League learned that two anti-Catholic lectures were scheduled to take place at Pierce Community College in Los Angeles. The lectures, given as

part of the Encore/Oasis continuing education program, were titled "The Sex Lives of the Popes" and "Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church." Both lectures were cancelled following our vigorous protest.

The lectures scheduled for August 5 and 12 were to be given by Charlotte Poe. Ms. Poe has no academic credentials and was described in the school's catalog as a "Freethinker," a group hostile to religion in general and Catholicism in particular. William Donohue wrote to the sponsors of the Encore/Oasis program regarding these lectures.

In his letter, Donohue said that the first lecture was based on a book by Nigel Cawthorne; he has been described as a journalist who appears to specialize in the sensational. The second lecture was based on a book by Emmett McLoughlin, a former Catholic priest who has made a name for himself denouncing the Catholic Church.

Donohue asked the sponsors to take note of the fact that all the other scheduled lectures in the program were to be presented by qualified academics, none of whom was slated to attack other religions. He cited as an example, "Introduction to Islam," a lecture taught by a professor of theology at Boston College. He then zeroed in on the heart of the matter:

"I would like to know your thoughts on this subject. Would you defend, as a matter of academic freedom, a lecture entitled 'Sex Lives of Prominent Rabbis' taught by someone with no academic credentials and who belonged to an anti-Semitic organization? Similarly, would you defend a lecture on 'Crime and Immorality in Islam—from Muhammad to 9-11' taught by someone with no academic credentials and who belonged to an anti-Muslim organization?"

The sponsors of the Encore/Oasis series, which



included both private and public sources, got the message, apologized and cancelled the lectures.

The reason Donohue never asked for the lectures to be withdrawn is because he didn't want to give the anti-Catholic bigots an opportunity to brand us as censors. What he did instead was to inform the sponsors that they had nearly a month to respond before he notified "the media across the U.S. about this issue." It worked.

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## **9-11: A YEAR LATER**

No date in American history is known by its month and date in numerical form except 9-11; the closest rival is the Fourth of July. No war is known by its date of origin; the War of 1812 expresses a year but lacks the specificity and timeless nature of 9-11. And that is how it should be—9-11 is nothing if not unique.

Catholic League members will recall that last October's edition of Catalyst gave a personal account of what happened. Our staff watched the Twin Towers collapse right in front of us and some saw the second plane hit its mark.

For those who lost a loved one in New York, Pennsylvania or Washington, D.C., September 11 will live as their day of infamy. They are certainly in the prayers of the Catholic League.

The men and women who died in the World Trade Center came from nations all over the world. But the rescuers came from the U.S.A. What is often noticed, but never mentioned (at least in public), is that the lion's share of these courageous persons were Roman Catholic (the obituaries and TV

news reports made this evident).

We called several top officials at the NYPD and the FDNY to ascertain what percentage of those who lost their lives on 9-11 was Catholic. The answer: between 85 and 90 percent.

Unlike some others in our society, we are not looking for a special memorial for our group. But we cannot let this moment pass without giving due recognition to the heroic role that Catholics played in this tragic event.

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## **BISHOPS MAKE PROGRESS; MUCH WORK REMAINS**

When the bishops assembled in Dallas on June 13, they did so in a climate of apprehensiveness. Two days later, they left in a mood of contentment. While not everyone was happy with the charter that was approved (including many who voted for it), a calmness was finally evident.

The U.S. Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse floated a draft of the document the week before the Dallas meeting. It got mixed reviews. We issued a statement saying "The draft is a reasonable document that should allay the worst fears of a skeptical laity. It is thoughtful, pointed and fair to all parties." But there was a loophole: the draft allowed priests to remain in ministry if they had offended only once in their career and had since been rehabilitated.

It was this exception that brought about the greatest criticism (we called for greater clarification). So when the bishops met in Dallas, they were pressured to make some changes. They were also besieged by Catholics who were pushing

their own agenda and by a media that got caught up in the frenzy.

On the opening day of the meeting, Bishop Wilton Gregory, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, delivered what the Catholic League dubbed a “home run” speech. It amounted to “a collective act of contrition on the part of the bishops.” Perhaps most important, we said, “It set the tone for the entire meeting.”

When the final vote was tallied, much had been accomplished. The bishops made it clear that there was no room in active ministry for any priest who had abused a minor. They added that from this day forward any allegations of wrongdoing would be passed on to the civil authorities. Also approved was greater lay participation at the diocesan level and a national oversight board, headed by Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, to monitor the work of the bishops.

Some wondered if the document had taken the due process rights of accused priests too lightly. Others complained that the bishops said virtually nothing about their own role in enabling molesting priests to move from parish to parish. Still others criticized the statement for its refusal to address such issues as homosexuality, dissent, celibacy and women’s ordination.

Everyone agrees there is much work to be done. The relationship between theological dissidence and behavioral deviance is one the league would like to see examined.

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# VOUCHER VICTORY

On June 27, the U.S. Supreme Court voted 5-4 to allow school vouchers. The Catholic League filed a friend-of-the-court brief in this case. Here is an excerpt from our news release on the subject:

“This is a victory for the poor that triumphed over the so-called champions of the poor. Condemned to failing public schools in Cleveland, the poor have long opted for the same equal opportunity afforded the wealthy. Now they have it.

“There were four dissenting judges, led by Justice David Souter, who still don't get it. Souter wrote ‘There is, in any case, no way to interpret the 96.6 percent of current voucher money going to religious schools as reflecting a free and genuine choice by the families that apply to vouchers.’ He has it backwards: there is no free and genuine choice by families in choosing the right school for their children if they are locked in to the public-school monopoly. The fact that most parents opt for sending their kids to Catholic schools is a tribute to parochial schools and a damning indictment of public schools.

“In a nation where some judges think it is constitutional to burn the American flag on public school property, but it is unconstitutional to say the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, this decision comes at the right time. We hope that those atheists who are at war with our religious heritage will also avail themselves of vouchers and enroll their kids in private schools run by non-believers. The sooner we empty the public schools of these people, the better.”

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# BISHOPS ASSEMBLE IN DALLAS; REFORMS FORTHCOMING

All eyes will be on Dallas when the U.S. bishops meet June 13-15 to discuss the sex abuse scandal that has rocked the Church. National guidelines are expected though the details are still in dispute.

Virtually every media outlet in the nation will cover the event. Indeed, every room in every hotel will be booked as thousands descend upon Dallas. Amid high expectations, some are worried that the meeting has been oversold, thus setting the stage for disappointment. At stake is the credibility of the hierarchy to settle this matter once and for all.

On the table for discussion are policies governing "zero tolerance," a "one-strike-and-you're out" rule and what to do about old cases. Some, like Cardinal George, have expressed reservations over what is meant by zero tolerance. Others, like Cardinal Bevilacqua, have been pressing for very strict measures. It remains to be seen how tightly written the guidelines will be.

The meeting in Dallas follows the events of Rome. In April, 12 U.S. cardinals met with the Holy Father regarding the sex abuse scandal in the U.S. When the meeting was concluded, William Donohue issued the following comment to the media:

"The meeting of the U.S. cardinals in Rome proved to be fruitful if incomplete. No one realistically thought that this serious matter would be resolved in a few days, and that is why Bishop Wilton

Gregory was right to dub the letters 'skeletal' in nature. It was reassuring to hear Bishop Gregory say that there was a growing consensus towards a zero tolerance policy for sexual abuse."

Donohue also said he was glad that the cardinals drew a distinction between the Church's proposed response to child molesters and to cases that are less egregious. "There is a profound difference," Donohue said, "between a predatory priest who victimizes minors and a priest who, straight or gay, drops his guard one evening with an adult. While the latter is patently wrong and inexcusable it would smack of an obscene moral equivalency to treat both instances the same."

In what was perhaps the most significant statement made by the cardinals was the recognition that the Pastors of the Church must "promote the correct moral teaching of the Church"; it also called for bishops to publicly "reprimand individuals who spread dissent and groups which advance ambiguous approaches to pastoral care."