

CATHOLIC CHURCH NEEDS TO PLAY HARDBALL

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on two developments: a) an article in the September edition of *San Francisco* magazine attacking former San Francisco Archbishop William Levada and b) a ruling by a federal bankruptcy judge on August 26 that says all church assets belonging to the Spokane diocese are eligible for liquidation in claims made by the victims of sexual abuse. Donohue's remarks are as follows:

"The sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church is no longer about the alleged victims—they have had their day in court—it is about the victimization of the Catholic Church. The time has come for the Catholic Church to put the vultures in their place.

"Jason Berry's savage attack on the former San Francisco Archbishop includes the vicious allegation that Levada 'worked tirelessly throughout his career to protect sexual predator priests.' Now if this were true, then Berry—who has made a career out of writing about this subject—would have blown the whistle on Levada long ago. So why didn't he? Could it be because Levada is a much juicier subject these days (he is Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith)? What makes this so ugly is the fact that when Levada was auxiliary bishop in Los Angeles in 1985, he was one of the first bishops in the nation to seriously address this issue! In short, what Berry has done is yellow journalism.

"The situation in Spokane is even more outrageous. At a minimum, separation of church and state means that sitting judges have no right to make determinations regarding the organizational chart of the Catholic Church. But that is exactly what's being done. By declaring all diocesan assets

fair game for every steeple-chasing lawyer, a green light has been given to plunder the resources of the Catholic Church. This has gone too far. Bishops would do well not to listen to those who *always* want to settle and start playing hardball. It's time to countersue.

"No amount of wrongdoing by some priests can ever justify attempts to subvert the Catholic Church, whether by the media or by the courts."