

CATHOLIC CHURCH NEEDS TO PLAY HARDBALL

Two recent events have convinced us that the Catholic Church had better learn to play hardball with those who are out to destroy it.

For example, an article appeared in the September edition of *San Francisco* magazine attacking former San Francisco Archbishop William Levada that is completely irresponsible. Even worse was a ruling by a federal bankruptcy judge in Washington state that says all church assets belonging to the Spokane diocese are eligible for liquidation in claims made by the victims of sexual abuse.

Our statement to the press was 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."

It is understandable that, given so many self-inflicted wounds, many bishops do not want to play hardball: if they did, they would be accused of bullying. But lay Catholics are under no such burden, and that is why more of them need to stand up and be counted.

After our news release was circulated, Jason Berry professed outrage at Donohue's comments. He said Donohue was inaccurate but never cited a single example of any alleged inaccuracy. That's because there were none.