

# CBS GUILTY OF UNFAIRLY MALIGNING VATICAN

On the CBS Evening News of August 6, it was reported that the Vatican issued a document in 1962 that “lays out a church policy that calls for absolute secrecy when it comes to sexual abuse by priests—anyone who speaks out could be thrown out of the church.” Immediately, Larry Drivon, a lawyer who represents those allegedly victimized by priests, charged that the Catholic Church was engaged in “Mafia-style behavior—racketeering.” He added that the Vatican document is “an instruction manual on how to deceive and how to protect pedophiles.

Catholic League president William Donohue replied as follows:

“This is an issue fraught with deception all right—but it’s not the Vatican that’s guilty—it’s CBS. By ripping the document out of context, CBS led viewers to believe that the Vatican was engaged in a sexual abuse cover-up as early as 1962. Here’s what it didn’t say in its report.

“First, the document did not apply to sexual misconduct—it applied only to sexual solicitation. Second, the only venue the document addressed was the confessional. In other words, it was meant to deal only with cases of sexual solicitation by a priest of a penitent in the confessional. Third, because the policy was specifically aimed at protecting the secrecy of the confessional, it called for an ecclesiastical response: civil authorities were not to be notified because it involved a sacrament of the Catholic Church, not a crime of the state. Fourth, if a priest were found guilty, he could be thrown out of the priesthood. Fifth, if the penitent were to tell someone what happened (perhaps another priest), he or she had 30 days to report the incident to the bishop or face excommunication. If anything, this proves how utterly serious

the Vatican was about such an offense—it threatened to punish the penitent *for not turning in the guilty priest*. Sixth, the 1962 document was superseded by the 1983 Code of Canon Law and the norms established in 2001 for dealing with serious crimes involving the sacraments.

“For CBS to leave all this out shows how hungry it is to malign the Catholic Church. If anyone is acting like the Mafia, it’s CBS.”