

CNN SMEARS POPE

It was billed as a documentary, but it came across as pure propaganda. CNN's September 25 one-hour special was nothing more than an extension of what the *New York Times* tried to do last spring: blame Pope Benedict XVI personally for the sexual abuse scandal. Though it failed, it succeeded in smearing him. For Bill Donohue's critical analysis of the show, see pp. 4-6; his article was sent to many bishops.

Ironically, most Vatican observers have credited the Holy Father with doing a better job addressing this issue than his predecessor did, Pope John Paul II. Yet many in the media want to pin the scandal on Benedict.

The documentary was disturbing on several levels. It was rife with guilt by innuendo and conjecture, a tactic that could be used against any leader. Moreover, it focused on decades-old stories, treating them as if they were of great currency.

As we have said many times, if the media want to focus on all major secular and religious institutions, going back decades to find examples of sexual abuse, the Catholic League would not complain. But when only the Catholic Church comes under scrutiny, such treatment is manifestly unfair.

The two lowest points in the special came when it was implied that the pope was guilty of obstructing justice, and when the host charged that the pope was more interested in stamping out dissent than in stamping out sexual abuse. Neither accusation can be substantiated, and CNN knows it. Shame on them.