

CONNECTICUT LAW UNFAIRLY BURDENS CHURCH

Bill Donohue recently defended the Archdiocese of Hartford:

- Jacob Doe claimed he was molested in the early 1980s by a priest, Father Ivan Ferguson, who died in 2002.
- Doe had until 1988 to file a lawsuit, but he never did.
- In 1991, the statute of limitations was amended to 17 years.
- Doe had until 2003 to file a lawsuit, but he never did.
- In 2002 the statute of limitations for civil cases was extended to 30 years; it was made retroactive.
- In 2005, the Archdiocese of Hartford paid \$22 million in a settlement with 43 people who claim they were molested by Fr. Ferguson and other priests dating back to the 1960s. Doe was not one of the parties that sued.
- Doe filed a lawsuit in 2008 after the statute of limitations was changed in 2002.
- In February 2014, a jury awarded Doe \$1 million.

There is something wrong with this picture. It is no wonder that lawyers for the archdiocese argue, among other things, that making the statute of limitations retroactive for sexual abuse cases in 1991 and 2002 violates the civil liberties of their defendant.

It was particularly disturbing to read the editorial in the *New Haven Register* that invoked Pope Francis' humble approach to sexual abuse, and his critical remarks on materialism, as a lever to criticize the archdiocese. According to its logic,

the pope would counsel dioceses not to defend their interests, even in the face of palpable injustice. This is absurd. It is also a twisted reading of the pope's thoughts on these issues.

Just as disconcerting was the lack of honesty on the part of the Connecticut media: none mentioned that the amended timeline on the statute of limitations only applies to kids molested in private [read: Catholic] schools—it does not apply to kids raped in public schools.

There is nothing “Christian” about being a piñata for those who want to hold the Catholic Church to a different legal standard. The archdiocese was right to contest this travesty of justice.