

CRITIC OR BIGOT?

The Catholic Church should not be immune from criticism anymore than any other institution. But neither should it be the object of bigotry. The question is, what is the difference between criticism and bigotry?

Criticism of the Church is focused; bigotry is not. A critic focuses on some aspect of the Church, pointing out its shortcomings. A bigot seizes on shortcomings to make a larger point: he wants a wholesale transformation of the Church, tailored to meet his politics. That is why we don't regard Jason Berry to be a critic of the Church.

For many years now, Berry has written critically of the way the Church has mishandled the problem of priest pedophilia. There is much room for criticism here and we don't wish for a minute to minimize the problem. But when Berry veers off into a tirade against the Church, e.g., "a clerical culture fraught with hypocrisy and a calcified power structure, from the pope down," we know we're dealing with something that goes beyond criticism.

Shame on the *Chicago Tribune Magazine* for extending to Berry this opportunity to bash the Church. His article, "A Dark Journey of the Soul," was published on February 11.