

# CUOMO RIPS OFF THE POPE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's State of the State and Budget Address:

On January 15, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo cited a quote by Pope Francis that he said offered support for the Child Victims Act; Cuomo's remarks were included in his State of the State and Budget Address. In doing so, he seriously misrepresented what the pope said. Indeed, he exploited the pope to serve his own political interests.

The Child Victims Act would amend the statute of limitations, making it easier for alleged victims of sexual abuse to bring suit, even if the offense took place decades ago.

Cuomo began his statement on this issue by rolling out his Catholic credentials. He was an altar boy, he said, and his religion is important to him. But it is obviously not that important: if it were, he would not have taken the occasion to inform the audience of his disagreements with the Catholic Church.

The New York Governor said it has been "painful" for him to differ with the Church's teachings on marriage and abortion. Unlike the Catholic Church, Cuomo supports the right of two men to marry; he also believes that the unborn child should have no rights.

Cuomo also mentioned his disagreement with the Catholic Church on the Child Victims Act—meaning in this instance his disagreement with New York State bishops, especially New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan.

What Cuomo did not say is that the bishops support holding every institution, public and private, to the same standard with regard to all future cases of sexual abuse. With good reason, the bishops do not support the "look back" provision

which allows for the adjudication of old cases: most of the alleged offenders are either dead or out of ministry.

Cuomo told the crowd that he is “fully aware of the position of the Catholic Church, and of the opposition of the Catholic Church” to the Child Victims Act. This was deceitful.

He knows that the Catholic Church does not stand alone in opposing this legislation: Jewish groups, the Boy Scouts, and the insurance industry are all opposed to it. Why did Cuomo single out the Catholic Church? In doing so he sowed the seed in the minds of lawmakers that the Church opposes justice for victims, which is a cruel distortion of reality.

Worse was Cuomo’s total misrepresentation of what the pope said.

Here is the quote that Cuomo cited. (Initially, he did not attribute the quote to the pope, saying only that these were the words of a “wise man.”)

“The abuse of minors is an offense so brutal. The Church cannot remain indifferent to this, and the Church must punish such priests, and that includes support for legal action. There is no other way out of this, because it’s a crime. No, worse! It’s leaving them alive, but destroyed.”

Immediately following Cuomo’s recitation of these remarks, he told the audience that these were the pope’s words. “We stand with Pope Francis and we [must] pass the Child Victims Act this year, because if you believe in justice for all, then you believe in passing the Child Victims Act and follow the leadership of Pope Francis.” A huge photo of the pope was shown on a screen at this point, allowing Cuomo to further exploit the Holy Father.

Cuomo stands with the pope? Not on cohabitation. Not on marriage. Not on abortion. Not on transgender issues. Not on school choice. Not on drug legalization. And no, not even on

the Child Victims Act. *There is nothing the pope has ever said that could be interpreted as justifying the singling out of the Catholic Church for legal redress.* Nor has the pope ever spoken to the issue of suspending statutes of limitation for old cases.

Cuomo's Catholicity is his business, but it is our business to call him out when he hijacks Catholicism to buttress his agenda.