

DONOHUE REPLIES TO WASHINGTON POST

The *Washington Post* editorial, "Obstruction on Child Sex Abuse," leaves the impression that Pope Francis is not serious about the Vatican tribunal on wayward bishops, and that American bishops are not serious about priestly sexual abuse.

It fails to note that it was only 10 months ago that the pope announced his decision to establish the tribunal. This may seem like an eternity to the editorial board, but to an organization that has been moving slowly for over 2,000 years (often with good reason), it is like yesterday. And as we shall see, the editorial board's impatience is selectively employed when it comes to these matters.

Regarding the American bishops, they have every right to fight violations of civil liberties, including attempts to weaken the rights of the accused. To abridge the statute of limitations, on any crime, is to trespass on a fundamental civil liberty, which is why we have such protections in the first place.

Just as important, the bishops are properly exercised—even if the *Washington Post* is not—about proposals to revise the statute of limitations that *do not extend to the public schools*.

Because of the antiquated doctrine of sovereign immunity, students in virtually every state have only 90 days to file suit if they have been molested by a public school employee. Unless a proposed law explicitly states that the revisions apply to the public sector, as well as the private sector, nothing changes. In other words, kids who were raped in a public school as recently as Christmas, and have not filed suit, are already out of luck—the clock has run out on them.

But to kids abused in a Catholic school in the 1960s, they can now take their alleged offender to court.

The *Washington Post* editorial board knows that the real problem of the sexual abuse of minors is not taking place in Catholic institutions; it is taking place in the public schools. Much of what follows is taken from news stories recently published in its own newspaper. It should have given the editors pause before slinging arrows at the Church, but it didn't.

A lawsuit has been filed against a school system in Maryland's Prince George County claiming that students, teachers, and the principal all knew about a volunteer who sexually abused elementary school children, and that none of them did anything about it.

Deonte Carraway, 22, was arrested in February for making child pornography at a school and other sites. He forced kids as young as 9 to commit sex acts and video-taped them. There have been at least 17 victims over the past school year; complaints against him extend back to January 2015.

Carraway's job was to shelve library books, yet that didn't stop him from pulling students out of class to spend time with him. He was especially interested in spending time with "troubled" students, and was even encouraged to do so. He manipulated these students to perform sex acts on him, and on each other.

Child rape took place in bathrooms, closets, hallways, and in the auditorium. They were also raped at a public pool, municipal center, a church, and in private homes.

Are we to believe that no one knew anything about Carraway's serial offenses? Or that his practice of occasionally coming to school dressed in his pajamas didn't occasion scrutiny? He got away with all of this because he could: the school has no rules to enforce; there is no training program for employees;

and Maryland has no mandatory reporting law. Catholic schools have all three.

The last time there was a written procedure governing the behavior of public school volunteers in Prince George's schools was in 1998. Even worse, there is no code of conduct for employees and volunteers that addresses offensive behavior toward students. Nor is there any policy on how to prevent or recognize sexual abuse.

In 2012, the Maryland State Board of Education required all school systems to develop such policies, but to this day, Prince George's schools have none. Yet no one has been disciplined.

If the *Washington Post* were fair, it would call for all public schools across the nation to model themselves on the reforms established by Catholic schools in all 50 states. It could begin by demanding mandatory reporting laws.

Contrary to what the newspaper would have readers believe, it is not the Catholic Church that is holding up progress on this issue; rather, it is Planned Parenthood's lobbyists, aided and abetted by the ACLU. They are terrified that if all counselors are required to report cases where a minor might have been sexually abused, it would lead to prosecutions against Planned Parenthood employees who know of statutory rape cases.

Justice demands that the public know the whole truth about this multifaceted issue. The *Washington Post* is in a position to educate, and needs to do so.

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