

EXPLOITING THE REFORMATION

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Bill Donohue comments on a serious distortion of Pope Francis' words:

On January 25, Pope Francis urged Catholics and Protestants to forgive each other "for the sins of our divisions." He asked "for mercy and forgiveness for the behavior of Catholics towards Christians of other Churches which has not reflected Gospel values." He also invited "all Catholic brothers and sisters to forgive if they, today or in the past, have been offended by other Christians."

That call for mutual forgiveness was twisted by *The Trumpet*, magazine of the Philadelphia Church of God, into a papal admission of Catholic barbarism. The headline in its February 3 story reads, "Pope Apologizes for Killing Protestants."

Just as bad, instead of saying the pope asked the faithful for "forgiveness for the behavior of Catholics towards Christians" (this is how the Vatican's English translation puts it), the article says he asked for "forgiveness for the non-evangelical behavior of Catholics."

Why does this matter? Because it allows the magazine to mock the pope's sincerity and distort history. "'Non-evangelical behavior' is an interesting euphemism for the massive violence unleashed in the wake of the Reformation. Modern scholars estimate 50 million died in the religious violence that followed in persecutions, counter-persecutions and religious wars."

Besides misrepresenting what the pope said, that figure has been widely discredited by scholars. Moreover, the killing was committed by *both* sides.

This is not the first time *The Trumpet* has libeled the

Catholic Church. In February 2011, it accused the Church of having “guided” Nazi Germany. This is a malicious lie.

Pope Francis wants an “authentic search for Christian unity.” It is not well-served by those who falsify history, and the words of the Holy Father.