

GANGING UP ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Catholic League president Bill Donohue accused two mid-Western newspapers today of ganging up on the Catholic Church:

“On Sunday, March 5, the *Telegraph Herald*, a Dubuque, Iowa newspaper, started an eight-day series exposing sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Dubuque. The series looks at sexual abuse by priests over decades, complete with accounts from alleged victims and portraits of their alleged victimizers. The titles assigned to each story are revealing: ‘A Culture of Catholicity’; ‘Victims Tell Their Stories’; ‘Unholy Fathers’; ‘Raising the Bar’; ‘Are the Children Protected?’; ‘The Effect on the Good and Holy’; ‘The Support Groups’; and ‘Apology and Forgiveness.’

“On Sunday, March 5, the *Chicago Sun-Times* ran a long article by a local columnist for some other newspaper, Tim Placher, entitled, ‘Bless Me Father, for You Have Sinned: A Suburban Newspaper Columnist Tells the Story of How He Fell Prey to a Predatory Priest.’ It is a detailed account of what allegedly happened to him in 1979.

“There is only one reason why these articles are being printed now—it’s in vogue to bash the Catholic Church. If bigotry isn’t in play, then it needs to be explained why the *Telegraph Herald* decided to run an eight-part series on the dirty laundry of the Dubuque archdiocese extending back decades but not on the dirty laundry of local school districts. It is beyond dispute that the public school industry houses more sexual abusers than any other comparative group, so why hasn’t the Dubuque community been treated to a litany of sordid stories on how school superintendents ‘pass the trash’ (this is code for passing molesting teachers from one school district to another, a practice so common it has its own

argot)? And are there no columnists or reporters at the *Chicago Sun-Times* who have been sexually abused by a public school employee? Even if it occurred in the 1970s, isn't it worthy of being told now?

"To be sure, we expect more from priests than teachers. But the disproportionate coverage given to priests cannot be fairly justified."