

HUNTING FOR OLD DIRT ON THE CHURCH

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on two media outlets that are out to get the Catholic Church:

The media can't find new dirt on the Catholic Church, so they resort to finding old dirt. Any ethical media source would just move on, but there are some that bear an animus so strong that they can't. The latest example is a report jointly issued by ProPublica, a liberal non-profit investigative internet outlet funded by establishment sources, and the *Houston Chronicle*.

The report is a bomb. It breaks no new ground. It focuses on the way the Catholic Church deals with a few priests who were credibly accused of sexual abuse and who are either no longer in ministry or have moved to another country. All the priests named in this anecdotally driven article of more than 5,000 words are alleged to have offended decades ago.

This exact same game was played last fall when the Associated Press, the *Denver Post*, *USA Today*, and WCP0 (the ABC affiliate in Cincinnati) did stories on credibly *accused, not convicted*, priests who are either inactive or have been removed.

Nowhere in the ProPublica/*Houston Chronicle* article does it say the Catholic Church did anything illegal or, for that matter, out of the ordinary. When employees who work for the media—or anyplace else—have been let go for alleged instances of sexual misconduct, no one expects the employer to keep tabs on them. If they take another job someplace else, that is never considered a black mark on the organization that dumped them. Except, of course, if that institution is the Catholic Church.

Apparently, we must remind these journalists of an elementary

axiom of the criminal law: *the accused is assumed innocent until proven guilty, and is entitled to due process*. Yes, that even includes the Catholic clergy.

ProPublica boasts of developing an interactive database to search for accused priests. Where is its interactive database for accused public school employees? Only a fool would think this is an oversight. They don't have one because they don't care about the victims of sexual abuse, unless, of course, the victimizer is a Catholic priest.

What these media outlets are doing is piling on, cherry picking the Catholic Church so they can throw mud at it. They are the really filthy parties to this contrived controversy about old cases of abuse.

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