

# HYSTERIA MARKS POPE'S CRITICS

Seldom have we seen such delirium over an innocent man, namely Pope Benedict XVI. Christopher Hitchens, the rabid atheist, wanted to know why the European Union was allowing the pope to travel freely. Perhaps he wanted the pope handcuffed at the Vatican and brought to the guillotine.

Margery Eagan of the *Boston Herald*, another big fan of the Catholic Church, said, "The Pope should resign." To look for a single sentence that implicated the pope's guilt in anything would have been in vain.

Then we had the *Washington Post* indict priests by painting all of them as child abusers in a cartoon. The cartoon showed two priests trying to lure a child into a booby-trap.

These are only a few examples of the hysteria that marked the critics of the Holy Father.

As indicated in our March 30 *New York Times* op-ed page ad, the pope is innocent. Indeed, he was being framed. No one has any evidence that he even knew of the case of Father Lawrence Murphy. Indeed, his office didn't find out about the case until 1996 and then did the right thing by summoning an investigation (it could have simply dropped the case given that the statute of limitations had run out).

No matter, the pope's harshest critics blamed him for not defrocking a man whom he may have never heard of, and in any event was entitled to a presumption of innocence. Or was he? There are not just a few who would deny civil liberties protections to priests.

It is a sad day when al-Qaeda suspects are afforded more rights than priests. That this kind of intellectual thuggery should emanate from those who fancy themselves tolerant and fair-minded makes the sham all the more despicable.