

IN DEFENSE OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on news stories regarding the role of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI in the clergy sexual abuse scandal:

Ten years ago, Bill Keller, former executive editor of the New York Times, wrote an op-ed in the newspaper about me. He said I was a strong defender of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who, he accurately said, “used to be known as ‘God’s Rottweiler.’” Ratzinger is now Pope Benedict XVI, and Bill Donohue is the Rottweiler’s Rottweiler.”

Not sure whether Keller meant that as high praise or not, but I’ll take it.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI is back in the news, and it is not flattering. He is being accused of not taking action against four molesting priests when he was archbishop of Munich and Freising from 1977 to 1982. Benedict defends himself against these accusations.

The news comes after the publication in German of a 1,900-page independent audit of the Munich archdiocese between 1945 and 2019.

It is important to note that the investigation was not something that government authorities commissioned—it was done at the behest of the Church. No other institution in Germany, religious or secular, has ever asked a law firm to probe its record regarding sexual misconduct.

It is also important to note that attorney Martin Pusch, who is also an author of the report, cannot be certain that Benedict’s account is wrong. He explicitly said “we *believe* that this is not so (my *italic*).”

Of the four cases, two involve priests who were sanctioned by the courts but were permitted to do pastoral work. One was convicted in another country and was allowed to work in the archdiocese. Most of the media attention focuses on Peter Hullermann, a homosexual priest predator.

Regarding the Hullermann case, in his 82-page response to questions posed by the investigators, Benedict initially said he had no recollection of being at a 1980 meeting about the priest. He has since apologized for making a "mistake," saying that an "editing error" inaccurately conveyed that he was not there. The files document that in this meeting, no decision was made to transfer Hullermann.

In 1979, Hullermann was accused of sexual abuse with a postpubescent boy in Essen. After he was convicted, he was transferred to Munich for therapy. After the therapy, he was transferred to another parish. Who made that decision? It wasn't Benedict: it was Fr. Gerhard Gruber, the vicar general. Gruber admits that he, and he alone, was responsible, explaining that he never told Benedict (who was then known as Cardinal Ratzinger).

So what's the problem? Benedict, we know, approved the transfer, but that's about it. We know that his office "was copied on a memo" about Gruber's decision, but even the New York Times in 2010 admitted that such memos were routine and "unlikely to have landed on the archbishop's desk."

Ratzinger left the archdiocese in February 1982 to head the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In August 1982, Hullermann was reassigned to Grafting and in 1986 he was convicted of sexually abusing boys while he was there. Benedict was long gone.

If Benedict is guilty of anything, from what we know so far, it is that he did not always act like the "Rottweiler" he is accused of being. When he learned of a priest who was an

exhibitionist, but who never physically abused anyone, he did not treat him the way he should have. He should have seen this as a red flag—normal men don't act that way.

In all the news stories on this issue, never once do therapists come in for criticism. Yet they played a big role in persuading elites in every sector of society of their powers to transform miscreants, especially in the latter part of the 20th century. There was no one they couldn't "fix," or so they thought. Their role was pivotal in the decision of elites, including bishops, not to crack the whip.

The Germans have also been duped by charlatan therapists. In 2020, Germany showed how "progressive" it is when it announced that sex offenders would be allowed to visit prostitutes in brothels as part of their "treatment."

It should also be known that Germany has no mandatory reporting law governing the sexual abuse of minors.

Bild is Germany's biggest tabloid. It is known for running articles questioning whether Benedict covered up sex crimes. Three months ago its editor, Julian Reichelt, had to step down after allegations that the publisher tried to cover up the findings of an investigation into his sexual misconduct and bullying.

For the record, no one in the Church has done more to stem clergy sexual abuse than Benedict. It was he who took the initiative to issue a document barring men with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" from entering the priesthood. He was hated by "progressives" long before this, but this decision made him their biggest enemy.

In the first year of his pontificate, Benedict removed the notorious serial molester, Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado, founder of the Legionaries of Christ, from ministry. Significantly, he defrocked some 800 molesting priests from 2005 to 2013.

This is hardly the first time that Benedict has been treated unfairly. He is the scourge of the left, both in and out of the Catholic Church.