

# LOS ANGELES TIMES SLANDERS CATHOLICS

On March 26, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an article by John Spano that gave credence to a totally baseless charge by attorney Irwin Zelkin that Catholics are permitted to skirt the truth under oath in order to protect the best interests of the Catholic Church. The piece, "Catholic Doctrine is Cited in Priest Sex Abuse Cases," called into question the veracity of Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, and San Diego Bishop Robert H. Brom. Zelkin, who is suing the Catholic Church, says that a so-called doctrine of mental reservation allows Catholics to dodge the truth in cases where the reputation of the Church might be sullied.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented on this today:

"The *Los Angeles Times* was right to run a 'Correction' on this story on March 31, but it was entirely too lame. Instead of saying that Zelkin's accusatory statement regarding Bishop Brom—charging him with invoking mental reservation—was 'based only on the recollections of Irwin Zelkin,' the 'Correction' should have included an apology to Cardinal Mahony and Bishop Brom for leaving the impression that they might counsel lying under oath.

"There is no mention of mental reservation in either canon law or the Catholic Catechism. And there is no 'doctrine' of mental reservation—it is a concept that has been used to blunt the truth without technically lying. The last time it was floated in any seriousness was not during a trial involving a Catholic in a sex abuse case, rather it was during the impeachment proceedings of President Bill Clinton in regard to his sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky. In reference to President Clinton's encounter with Lewinsky, David Schippers,

majority counsel, said that 'the law does not permit a witness to insert an unstated premise or a mental reservation into a simple question so as to make his answer technically true if factually false.' In other words, mental reservation is not something the Catholic Church invented to justify not telling the truth.

"It is not too late for the *Los Angeles Times* to issue an apology. It should do so without delay."