

LOS ANGELES TIMES SLANDERS CATHOLICS

On March 26, the *Los Angeles Times* printed an article by John Spano that gave credence to a totally baseless charge by attorney Irwin Zelkin, who is handling sex-abuse lawsuits against the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Zelkin told the *Times* that Catholics are permitted to skirt the truth under oath in order to protect the best interests of the Catholic Church.

The article, "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 told the *Times* 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.

The *Times* printed a correction on this story on March 31, but by then the damage had already been done—which is why we deemed the correction "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 *Times* should have printed an apology to Cardinal Mahony and Bishop Brom for leaving the impression that they might counsel lying under oath. The *Times* never issued one.

There is no mention of mental reservation in 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 testimony on his sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky.

In other words, mental reservation is not something the Catholic Church invented to justify not telling the truth.