

LYING ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

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When someone gives the wrong information, and he quickly discovers his error, he often says, "Sorry about that. I lied. What I meant to say was..." He is wrong. No one can lie unless he knows the truth. Making a mistake of fact is not a lie—it is a mistake.

This has to be said because to charge someone with lying, we have to be confident that we know that the accused knew the truth, yet nonetheless decided to disregard it. This issue of *Catalyst* is rife with examples of lying, intentional falsehoods told about the Catholic Church.

It is a constitutional axiom that those accused of a crime are considered innocent until proven guilty. This means that those who publicly discuss cases involving the accused are ethically obliged to speak about allegations, and not treat accusations as matters of fact. Not to do so is to invite the reader to conclude that the accused has been tried and convicted. Here are a few recent examples.

The reason we charged the Wisconsin branch of SNAP with lying is because it ran an article on its website titled, "The Crimes of Monsignor William J. Lynn." But the Philadelphia priest has never been convicted of anything. In fact, the accompanying article even says that his case has yet to go to trial. Yet he is being publicly branded a criminal. Moreover, we contacted the officials in Wisconsin about this error, but to no avail. In other words, they knew the truth but decided to lie.

Surely Sr. Maureen Turlish, a Catholic dissident who

heads the Philly chapter of Voice of the Faithful, knows that a grand jury has no power to convict anyone. Similarly, she must know that whatever is said about the accused in such hearings is proof of nothing. Yet she still chose the word "fact" to characterize what the Philadelphia grand juries have said about alleged clergy victims. Similarly, the National Catholic Reporter ran an editorial indicting the last three archbishops of Philadelphia for being complicit in crimes. Never did it say "alleged crimes." Yet they obviously knew that none of the three cardinals they smeared—John Krol, Anthony Bevilacqua and Justin Rigali—has ever been found guilty of jaywalking, never mind obstruction of justice.

Speaking of the National Catholic Reporter, it is an utter disgrace that this newspaper, which has a stable of writers ranging from dissidents to Catholic haters, is looked upon kindly by many who work in the dioceses, to say nothing of those who teach in Catholic colleges and universities. That this weekly has gone off the deep end in recent years is indisputable, yet it still commands an audience, dwindling though its base is.

In the August 19 edition of the Reporter, it ran a short piece on Fr. Mychal Judge, the priest who was the first of the First Responders to die in the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York City. After he was killed, a few people who knew him said he was gay, while others who also knew him disagreed with this account. Importantly, no one ever said that the Franciscan priest publicly identified himself as a homosexual. If that were true, then everyone would have known about it.

The Reporter took the leap and wrote that "Judge was a Catholic priest who publicly acknowledged that he was a celibate gay man." After reading this, I asked our director of communications, Jeff Field, to contact the newspaper's editor, Tom Fox, asking for the evidence. Fox never replied to us, but in angry e-mails he sent to those who contacted him after receiving our statement, he made a lame attempt to defend

himself: he cited Judge's "own handwritten journal entries," and private conversations about his gay status.

None of what Fox said addressed my complaint. We asked for evidence that the priest "publicly acknowledged" his gay status. Fox provided none because there is none. He should have apologized and issued a correction.

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg first said there was no room for the clergy to speak at the 9/11 memorial ceremony because he didn't want to take away from the victims' families. But he didn't mind having Paul Simon and James Taylor strum their guitars, nor did he mind endless poetry readings. This was hardly the first time he allowed his personal predilections to dictate public policy, but it was one of his most offensive.

Bloomberg then developed a new defense, saying this was a constitutional issue and that separation of church and state disallows the clergy from speaking at public events. This is a lie. The clergy have been speaking at these events for over two centuries, and he knows it. Then Bloomberg insulted most Americans when he said his clergy ban was done because "government shouldn't be forcing" religion "down people's throats." But somehow it is okay for secularists like him to shove his beliefs down our throats!

As I said, it is one thing to make a mistake, quite another to lie. But it is a sign of our times that critics of the Church cannot settle for rational discourse, and that is because their goal is not to persuade, but to plunder.