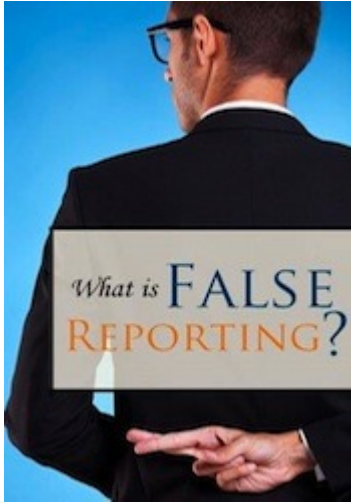


# MEDIA DISTORT VATICAN POLICY ON ABUSE



Bill Donohue comments on media distortions of Vatican policy on abuse reporting:

A statement by one French monsignor during a training course for new bishops is being interpreted by some major media outlets as if it were an official Vatican document. It is nothing of the sort. In a presentation that he made to some bishops, he contended that the clergy were not required to report suspected abuse cases to the authorities. That, however, was his opinion, and nothing more.

Most of these erroneous reports cited Crux journalist John Allen as their source. He wrote a splendid piece about Msgr. Tony Anatrella's words to the new bishops. Nowhere, however, did Allen claim that Anatrella's words amounted to a new Vatican policy or a "Vatican document."

That didn't stop major media outlets, however, from making such an unfounded leap. UPI, under the headline, "Vatican: Bishops not required to report abuse," declared that "A newly released Catholic church document tells bishops they don't have to report clerical child abuse accusations to the police." The *Guardian* cited Allen, but then went far beyond his Crux article in claiming that Anatrella's words amounted to "the Catholic church's policy." *Newsweek* ran a Reuters

article that claimed, "The Vatican has told new Catholic bishops that they have no obligation to report clerical child abuse, according to reports." And *Time* also distorted Allen's article, saying Crux was reporting a "policy" in which "The Catholic Church is allegedly telling newly-ordained bishops that they have no obligation to report child sexual abuse allegations to law enforcement officials."

Allen correctly said that the monsignor's presentation may have been "seriously wanting" in some areas, but he never went beyond that. As Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi subsequently made clear, Anatrella's words were "not in any way—as someone has mistakenly interpreted—a new Vatican document or a new instruction or new 'guidelines' for bishops."

John Allen is not responsible for the irresponsible conclusions drawn by others.