

MEDIA SPIN TRUMP-POPE MEETING

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on how the media are spinning the meeting between President Trump and Pope Francis:

The first news report I heard this morning on the meeting between the president and the pope was on radio: WCBS said reporters were taking note of the fact that President Trump smiled but Pope Francis did not. That must mean something, of course. But it does not—it means nothing. As even the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* acknowledged, the two were beaming when they shook hands. So what?

When I met the pope, he had a winning grin when we shook hands, but looked serious for a group shot. That's the way he is. Imagine if the president wasn't smiling and the pope was. Would that mean Trump had just been put in his place? What if neither was smiling? Would that mean they hate each other?

Other media outlets played the same game:

- "The president smiled broadly beside the pontiff, who appeared subdued and stone-faced before the 30-minute private conversation." (NBC News)
- "They posed for photographs and then sat down at the papal desk, the pope unsmiling, as their private meeting began." (CBS News)
- "While Trump flashed a wide grin, the Pope offered only a modest smile—his demeanor, business like." (CNN)

There was no breaking news story about the content of the meeting, but the Vatican did release a statement saying, "Satisfaction was expressed" by both the president and the pope on several issues, including "their joint commitment in favor of life, religious liberty and freedom of conscience." Those are non-negotiable issues of paramount importance.

Most of the media were content to recycle the same discredited story about the president and the pope from 2016.

In February 2016, a reporter from Reuters misrepresented Trump's position on illegal immigration to the pope. The Holy Father was told that Trump thinks it is okay to break up families when deporting illegal aliens. This is untrue.

In fact, Trump explicitly told Chuck Todd that he would never do that. After the media distorted what Trump said, the pope said *if* someone said he was *only* interested in building walls, that would not be Christian. He added that he would give him "the benefit of the doubt." Trump was then told that the pope said he was not Christian, and he responded by saying that was "disgraceful."

In other words, both men were misled about what the other said about him. The media continued to float these falsehoods today.

President Trump and Pope Francis disagree on climate change and immigration, but they have more in common on abortion, gay marriage, gender ideology, and religious liberty than what divides them. The real difference was between President Obama and Pope Francis—on these issues and others—though the media failed to report it.