

NEW YORK TIMES PILES ON

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an editorial in today's *New York Times*:

Now it's the *New York Times* piling on Cardinal George Pell.

The ostensible target of the *Times* editorial is Pope Francis, and his alleged "failure" to "address the child abuse scandal" within the Church. But the editors focus on Cardinal Pell, one of the pope's "closest advisers," who is returning to Australia to answer charges of abusing minors long ago.

To be sure, the *Times* editors acknowledge that Cardinal Pell has said "he expected to prove his innocence of the assault charges." But in the very next sentence, they cite the "cardinal's deepening involvement"—as though such involvement is already established—as "a severe blow to the Vatican and the pope."

[As I stated last week](#), Cardinal Pell—given his aggressive response to sexual abuse as Archbishop of Melbourne, his full cooperation with authorities in a number of probes, and his having been cleared of the one 40-year-old allegation previously brought against him—is entitled to the presumption of innocence. The *Times* needs to let the process go forward before poisoning the waters with unfounded presumptions that the cardinal is already guilty.

Likewise, the *Times* is jumping to invalid conclusions about Pope Francis' record in responding to the abuse crisis within the Church. By throwing around huge numbers of "suspected" abusers in Australia, without ever acknowledging that most of them are decades-old cases that have not been substantiated, the newspaper tries to convince the reader that nothing has changed within the Church.

In fact, the Catholic Church has to date done more than any

other institution to address a sexual abuse crisis that afflicts virtually every agency, organization and institution in which adults interact with children. Pope Francis' leadership in that effort is clearly a work in progress. As such, it can hardly be termed a "failure"—and would not be, by any media outlet that did not harbor the anti-Catholic animus that permeates the *New York Times*.

Contact James Bennet, editorial page
editor: James.Bennet@nytimes.com