

# NEW YORK TIMES SHOWS BIAS

On the day after Ash Wednesday, the *New York Times* ran a photo—approximately a quarter page in size—of a priest giving ashes to a woman. The photo, shot from above, showed no one in the church but the two of them. The caption below said, “The Rev. Ed Zogby marked a worshiper’s forehead with ashes at the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton near Battery Park. Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent.” There was no attendant story.

We called the church where the photo was taken to find out approximately how many Catholics showed up to receive ashes. The person we spoke to said that the photographer was there for hours and that “thousands” showed up to receive their ashes. One would never have gotten that impression from the photo. We also learned that the photographer was there at the times when the church was full which made us wonder: why the *Times* chose to use that particular photo and why in such a prominent placement?

In that same day’s *New York Post* there was a story about the Ash Wednesday crowd at St. Patrick’s Cathedral. “The largest Ash Wednesday congregation in recent memory,” the *Post* said. This was the exact opposite message of what the *Times*’ photo conveyed.

A few days after we asked our members to contact the *Times*’ Public Editor Clark Hoyt about the photo, he contacted Bill Donohue. He said that he thought we took offense where none was intended. He also said that the editor in charge of photography chose the photo because it was “a gorgeous photograph of a profound religious experience.”

A little over a week later, the *Times* ran a 524-word story about six protesters who held a news conference on the steps of St. Patrick’s Cathedral criticizing the current New York

Archbishop, Edward Cardinal Egan, and his newly named successor, Archbishop Timothy Dolan of Milwaukee. On the opposite page, there was a picture of a demonstration at New York City Hall by union members; in a caption below the photo there were 39 words explaining the event. But there was no story accompanying it. Other New York newspapers said that "thousands" showed up at the City Hall rally.

In the *Times*' story about the news conference at St. Patrick's, it said that protesters questioned the figures released by the archdiocese on the number of priests accused of molesting minors; they also criticized Archbishop Dolan for not releasing the names of accused priests to the media (as if any organization acts in that manner). What the *Times* did not find newsworthy is the story about a rabbi who was accused of sexually abusing his own daughter for years, beginning when the girl was 9 years old. (The *Daily News* and the *Post* both covered this story, though neither gave it the kind of front-page attention they almost always give to miscreant priests.)

Once again we asked our members to contact Clark Hoyt, only this time we didn't hear back from him.

So there we have it. A photo of a priest and a woman in an empty church gets a quarter page and no accompanying story. And six disgruntled people show up at a rally to slam two high-ranking Catholic bishops about matters based on conjecture and disagreement merits a sizable story. But there is no story on the thousands who showed up at another rally on the same day, and there is no story about a rabbi who was accused by his daughter, his son and his ex-wife of sexually molesting his own child for years.

It looks like the *New York Times* has some explaining to do.