

NY TIMES WAGES WAR ON CATHOLICISM

By Bill Donohue

This article was originally published at Newsmax.com on February 27, 2013.

On Feb. 27, The *New York Times* ran a front-page story raising questions about some cardinals who will soon vote for the new Pope. Some of the cardinals have had accused priests serving under them, while others have been the subject of criticism by the Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests (SNAP).

However, the story by Laurie Goodstein contains factual errors, blatant omissions, and many sources who have damaged credentials.

Goodstein writes that the Pope “put children at risk by failing to report pedophiles or remove them from the priesthood.” This is thrice incorrect: (a) many priests have been removed from ministry under Pope Benedict XVI (b) children have not been put at risk and (c) pedophiles have never been the problem.

Rev. Marcial Maciel is rightly cited as “a pathological abuser and liar,” but for Goodstein to mention his name, while at the same time contending that the Pope never removed a molesting priest from ministry, is positively astonishing. Who does she think dumped Maciel in 2006? Moreover, the Pope not only removed him from ministry, he put the entire order of priests he founded, the Legions of Christ, in receivership.

Goodstein’s claims that children have been put at risk under the Pope, and that pedophilia is the problem, have been undercut by many scholars, including one she cites, psychology professor Thomas G. Plante. In his research on this subject, he found that “80 to 90 percent of all priests who in fact

abuse minors have sexually engaged with adolescent boys, not prepubescent children. Thus, the teenager is more at risk than the young altar boy or girls of any age.”

In other words, the scandal – which ended more than a quarter-century ago (most of the abuse took place between the mid-60s and mid-80s) – rarely involved children. This finding is consistent with the work of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice: it found that less than 5 percent of molesting priests have been pedophiles. In almost every case, it has been homosexual priests hitting on teenage boys, the most common offense of which has been “inappropriate touching.”

Unfortunately, for politically correct reasons, even those who honestly collect the data, including Plante and the John Jay professors, are reluctant to discuss the role that homosexual priests have played in molesting minors. In fairness, it is important to keep in mind that while most of the molesting priests have been homosexuals, not pedophiles, most homosexual priests have never been molesters. That said, one of the reasons why this problem is almost non-existent today is because this Pope has made it very difficult for practicing homosexuals to enter the priesthood. The results are in the numbers: in the last 10 years, the annual average number of credible accusations made against over 40,000 priests has been in the single digits.

Goodstein says that “three priests and a former priest” accused Cardinal Keith O’Brien of Scotland of “making sexual advances.” This is correct. What is not said is that the accusers will give neither their names nor the details of what allegedly happened, and that the unconfirmed offenses – all denied by O’Brien – are said to have occurred more than 30 years ago.

This particular part of the story carries added significance when we consider Mark Thompson’s baggage. On November 12, Thompson took over as the president of *The New York Times*

Company. He did so following a trail of accusations that when he was the BBC chief, he failed to report on child rapist Jimmy Savile, the BBC icon who worked there for decades.

Thompson denies he ever heard about Savile's predatory behavior. Yet last September, Thompson told his lawyers to write a letter on his behalf threatening The *Sunday Times* with a lawsuit if it ran a story implicating him in the Savile scandal. Most astoundingly, he then claimed he knew nothing of the letter's contents! So when it comes to pointing fingers about a sexual cover-up, the Times should be the last to do so.

One of the most irresponsible critics of the Catholic Church on this matter is Judge Anne Burke. She is quoted by Goodstein as blaming every single cardinal for this problem. "They all have participated in one way or another in having actual information about criminal conduct, and not doing anything about it." Ideally, she should be sued for libel. But she knows that no cardinal is going to do that. So she continues to throw mud.

In 2006, Burke said priests are not entitled to constitutional rights. She argued that priests should be removed from ministry on the basis of one unsubstantiated accusation.

Anticipating an obvious wave of criticism, the judge said, "We understand that it is a violation of the priest's due process – you're innocent until proven guilty – but we're talking about the most vulnerable people in our society and those are children." But her alleged interest in child welfare did not allow her to say whether non-priests should be denied their civil liberties when accused of wrongdoing.

Goodstein drops Terry McKiernan's name as a credible source. He is the director of a website that tracks abuse cases. At a SNAP conference in 2011, he said, without a shred of evidence, that New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan was "keeping the lid on

55 names" of predator priests. This is an out-and-out lie: Dolan is not covering for any priest.

If Dolan were guilty, then McKiernan should be willing to disclose the names of these 55 priests. But he refuses to do so. This is typical of him. As with Burke, he has a different standard for accused priests: he said in 2011 that accused priests should be removed from ministry before an accusation is even investigated. Not surprisingly, when the John Jay study was released two years ago, McKiernan condemned it the day before it was issued.

The last critic mentioned by Goodstein is SNAP director David Clohessy. In today's New York *Daily News*, he is quoted saying, "We're trying to keep this issue front and center."

He needs to – he's broke.

On Feb. 23, SNAP sent a desperate e-mail to its donors saying, "We are barely meeting our everyday expenses."

One of the reasons why SNAP is in bad shape is because Clohessy has had to come up with big bucks to pay for his lawyers after being sued for refusing to turn over SNAP records about his allegedly shady operations. While he demands transparency from the Church, Clohessy refuses to disclose his source of funding (we know that much comes from Church-suing lawyers like Jeffrey Anderson).

Clohessy was asked before a Missouri court in 2011, "Has SNAP to your knowledge ever issued a press release that contained false information?" He didn't blink. "Sure."

For decades, Clohessy has been lobbing rhetorical bombs at the Catholic Church, arguing what a crime it is for anyone in the Church not to report a suspected molester. But when it comes to himself, it's a different story. In the 1990s, he knew about the predatory behavior of a molesting priest and never called the cops. That priest was his brother, Kevin. This is

not a matter of conjecture – he's admitted it.

No one with any sense of dignity should ever seek to defend the behavior of a molester. It must also be said that when such a serious issue like this is being discussed, no one with any sense of dignity should be making irresponsible charges or sweeping generalizations. Moreover, no one engaged in this conversation should come to the table unless his own hands are clean. Had these strictures been applied to Goodstein's piece, she wouldn't have had a story.

Dr. William Donohue is the president of and CEO of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. The publisher of the Catholic League journal, Catalyst, Bill is a former Bradley Resident Scholar at the Heritage Foundation and served for two decades on the board of directors of the National Association of Scholars. The author of five books, two on the ACLU, and the winner of several teaching awards and many awards from the Catholic community, Donohue has appeared on thousands of television and radio shows speaking on civil liberties and social issues.