

# PAPAL TRIP TOPS EXPECTATIONS

Here is how Catholic League president Bill Donohue summarized the papal trip to the United Kingdom:

Almost everyone was surprised by both the size of the crowds that came out to greet Pope Benedict XVI and the enthusiasm he generated. British Prime Minister David Cameron was particularly kind, praising the pope for the “searching questions” he posed. Perhaps most gratifying was the way the BBC, no friend to Catholics, treated the Holy Father. “A pope who had previously been regarded as someone rather cold, professional, aloof and authoritarian,” wrote David Willey, “had suddenly been perceived as a rather kindly and gentle grandfather figure.” Not only that, but the pope’s speech at Westminster was dubbed a “triumph,” moving one British notable to say his performance was “sheer magic.”

In the U.S., the coverage began and ended on a mixed note. Far and away the most unfair coverage came from CNN and the *New York Times*. CNN proved relentless with its criticism of a male-only clergy, even going so far as to highlight some excommunicated women who think they are priests. The *Times* was just as fixated on one topic: the sexual abuse scandal. Take today’s newspaper, for example. On page 4, there is a 1224-word story on a non-story: readers are treated to a rehash of old cases of abuse that took place in Belgium. To find out about the pope’s trip, which garnered only 704 words, the reader must turn to page 11.

It does not speak well for CNN and the *New York Times* that Catholic critics on the other side of the Atlantic look eminently fair by comparison. Can’t wait to see what CNN has in store for us this Saturday night when it airs a “documentary” on the pope. From the looks of things, it appears it will pick up where the *Times* left off last spring when it sought to blame the pope for the scandal. We’ll see.