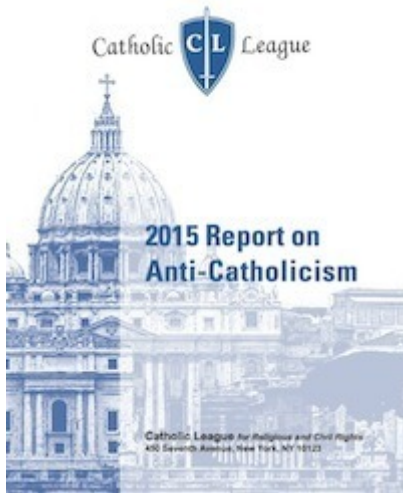


# Papal Visit



The most historic Catholic event of the year was Pope Francis' visit to the United States. While it occasioned much goodwill, and overall very fair media coverage, there were some notable exceptions. A selection will be recounted in this section.

We anticipated that the media would give high profile to surveys of Catholics showing that many disagree with Church teachings on a variety of subjects. We got in front of this issue by commissioning our own survey. We chose Kellyanne Conway's organization, The Polling Company, to do the survey.

We also knew that the decision by Pope Francis to canonize Father Junípero Serra, a courageous 17th century defender of human rights for Indians, would ignite a backlash from radical activists and revisionist authors. That is why Bill Donohue wrote an 18-page booklet defending the pope's decision. He chose an easy to read Q&A format to debunk many myths about this Franciscan priest. It was widely distributed and widely praised.

Bill Donohue and Vice President Bernadette Brady-Egan met Pope Francis on September 23 in Washington, D.C. They are grateful to Catholic University President John Garvey and Washington Archbishop Cardinal Donald Wuerl for arranging the meeting.

Everywhere Pope Francis went he flagged religious liberty; it was his most consistent theme.

He opened his trip by addressing religious liberty at the White House, arguing that we are called "to preserve and

defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it." That he did so in the company of President Obama, at the White House, was critically important. If there were any doubt about what he meant by those words, it was removed altogether when he made his unscheduled visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor later that day.

By embracing this order of nuns, Pope Francis laid down an unmistakable marker: He has rejected efforts by the Obama administration to force Catholic nonprofit organizations to pay for, or even sanction, abortion-inducing drugs in their health care plans.

The pope also met privately with Kim Davis, the Kentucky county clerk who refused, on religious grounds, to issue a marriage license to a gay couple. "Thank you for your courage. Stay strong." These words by the pope need no interpretation. Moreover, his invocation of conscience rights as a fundamental human right can only be read as a statement against the Supreme Court decision legalizing gay marriage. These two unscheduled meetings by Pope Francis should convince everyone that he is an ardent advocate of life, religious liberty, and marriage (properly understood).

The next day, he admonished the Congress of the necessity of "safeguarding religious freedom." At the U.N. he emphasized "religious freedom" again, calling attention to "natural law." He saved his most extensive remarks on this subject for Philadelphia.

In Philly, Pope Francis spoke outside Independence Hall, summoning the crowd to embrace an expansive interpretation of our first freedom. "Religious liberty, by its nature," he said, "transcends places of worship and the private sphere of individuals and families." Thus did he shoot down the Obama administration's position that we should be satisfied with freedom to worship. Similarly, the pope lashed out at attempts "to reduce it [religious freedom] to a subculture without the

right to a voice in the public square....” He wanted a full-throated exercise of religious expression, one that is not marginalized by secular elites.

Aboard the plane on his way home, Pope Francis was asked about Kim Davis. He stated that “conscientious objection is a right—it is a human right.” He added that all human beings are entitled to human rights, including conscience rights.

### August

Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), a rabidly pro-abortion Catholic, sent a letter to Pope Francis – signed by 93 of her House Democratic colleagues – that urged him to focus on certain topics when he addressed Congress Sept. 24. Not content to have him speak in general terms about concerns like economic justice or the environment, they wanted him to advance specific items on their agenda, like paid sick leave, a higher minimum wage, and climate change. Nowhere, of course, did they express openness to what he might have said on marriage, family or the sanctity of life.

A front page story in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* asked why there was just one session on LGBT issues at the World Meeting of Families. That’s easily answered: the event featured over 100 speakers, and gays comprise 1.6 percent of the population. That seems proportionate. Moreover, Bill Donohue’s analysis of the program yielded five areas of interest: theological, demographic, sexuality, challenges to the family, and family adversity. In each of these areas, the meeting explored a number of issues. For instance, demographic issues included “Family and Demographic Dynamics in the World”; “Blended Families”; “Hispanic Families”; “Immigrant Families”; “Women in the Family”; “The Elderly”; and “Grandparents.” Challenges to the family included “Parents as Primary Catechists”; “Growing in Virtue”; “Fostering Vocations in the Home”; “Interfaith Marriage”; “Health Finances”; “Infertility”; and “Disabilities.” Given the tremendous variety of topics for the

World Meeting of Families to explore, the only segments of society that were unhappy with the program were gays and their allies in the media.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* also featured a story about LGBT dissident Catholics turning to Methodists for recognition. It is hardly surprising that the World Meeting of Families Congress, which was being hosted by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, insisted that this Catholic event feature Catholic speakers. Yet the *Philadelphia Inquirer* still treated as breaking news the rejection of groups that have publicly professed their rejection of key Catholic teachings.

The four dissident Catholic LGBT groups that were invited to hold forth at a local Methodist church were:

- New Ways Ministry whose leaders were “permanently removed” from any “pastoral work involving homosexuals” under Pope John Paul II. Three U.S. cardinals have also said that it is a phony Catholic group.
- Dignity USA, which has also been blasted by bishops. In 2015, to show what side it was on, it featured as its Keynote Speaker, Dan Savage, the most obscene anti-Catholic in the nation.
- Fortunate Families, which refuses to accept Catholic teachings on homosexuality and marriage.
- Call to Action, whose members have been excommunicated in some dioceses. It has been in rebellion against the Church for decades.

An article in the *Trentonian* by L.A. Parker argued that Pope Francis should not come to the United States for a papal visit if he did not apologize for Jared Fogle, a former spokesperson for the fast food chain known as Subway, for having sex with minors. To demonstrate why the pope should apologize, Parker trotted out “Billy,” a guy who claimed to have been molested by Philly priests and teachers.

While warning cities who hosted the papal visit to respect church-state separation, Americans United for Separation of Church and State said nothing about the letter that Rep. Rosa DeLauro and 93 of her House Democratic colleagues sent to Pope Francis urging him to advance specific items on their legislative agenda. While Americans United actively opposes religious voices exerting influence on public policies, they apparently saw no problem with these government officials using their offices to try and influence a religious leader.

Americans United for Separation of Church and State sent a letter to officials and federal agencies warning that during previous papal visits, government officials tried to divert taxpayer money for religious purposes and said this could not happen during Pope Francis' visit that occurred in September. In the letter, Americans United said "[G]overnment bodies must not provide any aid to a Pope's religious activities that goes beyond the provision of services—such as police, safety and security—that are regularly given for comparable public events of a similar size."

Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a letter to New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio that was critical of the city's ticket giveaway contest for the pope's procession through Central Park. FFRF's letter concluded by advising the city to stop the ticket giveaway right away and requested a response from Mayor de Blasio. FFRF stated "By singling out this event for a ticket giveaway, NYC appears to be endorsing Pope Francis' sectarian religious message. This practice violates the well-established constitutional principle that the government must remain neutral toward religion."

A homosexual media lobbying organization known as GLAAD issued a guidebook called "The Papal Visit." GLAAD is not a Catholic group. In fact its release of a papal guidebook for journalists is perverse, given its history of applauding anti-Catholic plays and movies and of condemning Catholics who defend the Church. The papal guidebook listed eight lay

Catholics who the media should beware of. As Bill Donohue said, it speaks well for both of them that they never forget him.

### September

Prior to the pope's visit, anti-Catholic groups were selling the false notion that there is a "stark contrast between the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the laity," and that "These bishops and cardinals are often greatly out of step with what the vast majority of Catholics believe." The Catholic League-Polling Company survey done prior to the pope's visit clearly contradicted this assertion. It showed faithful Catholics in support of the leadership role of the hierarchy as set forward by Christ himself and reiterated throughout the history of the Church.

The Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) and Americans United for Separation of Church and State took various steps to limit the public's access to Pope Francis during his visit to the United States. Americans United threatened a lawsuit if the city of Cape May, NJ went ahead with plans to broadcast the pope's September 27 Mass from nearby Philadelphia at the Cape May Convention Hall. FFRF opposed New York City's giveaway of tickets to see Pope Francis in Central Park September 25. They also protested the pope's meeting with inmates at the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility in Philadelphia September 27, and the inmates being permitted to hand carve a chair to present to the pontiff even though they had volunteered to do so.

In an article in the *Washington Post* that was syndicated in other papers, conservative columnist George Will—an atheist—whose latest cause is assisted suicide, said "He [the pope] stands against modernity, rationality, science and, ultimately...open societies." The Holy Father, Will opined, is known for emitting "clouds of sanctimony." More important was his twisting of the pope's position on materialism to mean

that he is anti-electricity.

In an op-ed in the *Boston Globe*, long-time Catholic dissident Garry Wills comforted himself with the thought that there are two Churches: "Other Church," which is the hierarchy, and "Our Church," which is everyone else. It is the former, of course to whom Jesus gave his authority. Moreover, if Wills were to read the Catholic League-Polling Company survey of Catholics, it would have burst his bubble about the faithful being in rebellion against the Magisterium.

The least friendly administration to religion in history invited a collection of pro-abortion nuns, Catholic gay activists, assorted dissidents and religious rebels to attend Pope Francis' visit to the White House. These included gay Catholic blogger Aaron Ledesma; Catholic gay activist and Church critic Nicholas Coppola; and Sister Jeannine Gramick, co-founder of the Catholic dissident group New Ways Ministry, who in 1999 was barred by the Vatican from working in ministry to homosexuals. Also attending were Gene Robinson, the first openly gay Episcopal bishop, and Sister Simone Campbell, leader of the "Nuns on the Bus" who actively campaigned for Obamacare with its blatant pro-abortion provisions. Members of GLAAD, the Catholic dissident group Dignity and various LGBT leaders also attended.

The Empire State Building did not light its towers in honor of Pope Francis. Instead, it acknowledged the opening night gala of the New York Philharmonic. In doing so, Anthony Malkin, the principal owner of the iconic building, showed his true colors once again: his disdain for Catholics is palpable. Malkin is, of course, most known for stiffing Mother Teresa on the anniversary of her centenary.

Radio host Michael Savage revealed to his listeners that it is tragic "to see a pope arise out of nowhere who espouses the very communistic principles that the church opposed." He accused Pope Francis of promoting "the same philosophy" as the

church's persecutors and warned "Oh, beware the enemy within. He's everywhere. He's everywhere now." Savage then said "Just make sure he's not inside your own heart. You have to fortify yourself with knowledge. Knowledge is power and knowledge is really the only thing you have left against these con men and shysters who would steal your very freedom."

Progressive Secular Humanist and CEO/founder of the popular Facebook page "Progressive Secular Examiner," Michael Stone, wrote an article for Patheos.com titled "Pope Fatigue: Celebrating a Morally Bankrupt Institution is Wrong" in which he said "Pope Francis is a marvelous showman—a genius at public relations and media manipulation who has successfully hustled the media, and the public at large." He accused the pope of being "guilty of perpetuating the institutional immorality of the Catholic Church." Stone argued "In addition to being anti-gay, anti-trans, anti-birth control, anti-woman and anti-free speech, Pope Francis continues to protect and enable pedophile priests while presiding over a Catholic Church still fighting to keep accused sex abusers from going to trial."

As thousands gathered around a video screen to watch the papal Mass at 15th Street and JFK Boulevard, a man holding a sign filled with Bible verses near a security checkpoint shouted various profanities, as well as "The Pope is an antichrist!" followed by "Priests are child molesters!" and finally "Idolaters!" The man then said "I rebuke you!" and "Turn from your sin and follow Christ!"

During the much anticipated papal Mass, anti-Catholic protests occurred throughout the city and counter protestors arrived to drown out the sounds of the anti-Catholic protestors. On 19th Street and Callowhill, people yelled obscenities on microphones as well as "You don't have a God." On the other hand, a man drowned out protestors exclaiming "Pope Francis is the Antichrist" with bagpipes.



Rutgers University's student-run newspaper "The Medium" published an article after the pope's visit to the U.S. titled "I KINDA WANT TO F\*\*\* THE POPE." In the article, the author said "Call me crazy, but after this weekend I kinda want to f\*\*\* the Pope." The author went on to say "Really, I want to feel the Pope inside my soaked p\*\*\*\*." Moreover, "I want to feel his papal fingers pulling my hair as he shoved his d\*\*\* down my throat." "I know it may be frowned upon, since he has taken the oath of celibacy" it later read.

Charles P. Pierce at Esquire called Pope Francis' meeting with Kim Davis "a sin against charity" and the "dumbest thing this pope has ever done."

He went on to characterize it as a "hamhanded blunder."

Gay activist Michaelangelo Signorile ripped the pope as "a more sinister kind of politician," one who "secretly supports hate."

We released a compilation of some of the most egregious expressions of anti-Catholicism from the right as well as the left during the papal visit:

- Ann Coulter tweeted that the Catholic Church was "largely built by pedophiles." This is the kind of comment we might expect from the likes of Bill Maher, her good friend.
- "The Pope is a Lying Whore." That's the way the maniacs at the Westboro Baptist Church greeted the Pope. A few protesters from this group showed up in Philadelphia with signs that read, "Pervert Pope Francis."
- Freedom From Religion Foundation loves abortion and hates the Catholic Church, so it was fitting that it spent over \$200,000 in full-page ads condemning the church. Sounding like 19th century nativists, the atheists sounded the alarms in the New York Times warning us of "A Dangerous Mix." What was so scary? The

Pope's speech before the Congress. On the same day, in the Washington Post, the same crazies blasted the Congress for inviting the leader of the "aggressively homophobic, patriarchal and undemocratic religion."

- Violence was more than threatened when vandals wrote "Saint of Genocide" on a headstone at the Carmel Mission in California where Saint Junípero Serra is buried. They poured green paint on a statue of this champion of human rights (the Pope canonized Father Serra the previous week), splashing headstones with blood-red paint; only the headstones of people of European descent were targeted by the racists.
- Alex Jones is known for dabbling in conspiracies, so it came as no surprise that this radio talk-show genius would accuse the Pope of hiring mercenaries to shield him from immigrants.
- Meanwhile, the deep-thinkers at Charisma News were raising the question, "Why so Many People Think Pope Francis is the Antichrist" Similarly, some guy named Tom Horn showed up on the online "Jim Bakker Show" wondering whether the Pope was "demonically inspired."
- George Will showcased his brilliance on all matters Catholic when he lambasted the Pope for allegedly standing "against modernity, rationality, science and, ultimately . . . open societies."
- Judge Andrew Napolitano went off the rails when he accused the Pope of changing the church's longstanding teaching that abortion is murder. He is factually wrong—nothing of the sort ever happened. Worse, he threw dirt at the Pope by branding him a "false prophet."

### **CATHOLIC LEAGUE SURVEY OF CATHOLICS**

#### *Introduction*

Over the summer, the Catholic League commissioned a survey of Catholics, in anticipation of the media surveys we knew would precede the Holy Father's visit to

the United States. In addition to the usual questions, we probed issues that the media generally ignore. We also dug deeper, seeking a more comprehensive examination of Catholic attitudes and beliefs.

### *Methodology*

In the first week of August 2015, The Polling Company, headed by Kellyanne Conway, conducted a nationwide scientific survey of 1,000 Catholics. They were randomly chosen from telephone sample lists, using both landline and cell phones.

Sampling controls ensured proportional representation of Catholic adults, drawn from such demographic data as age, gender, race and ethnicity, and geographic region. Data were weighted slightly for age and race. The findings are accurate at the 95% confidence interval, with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1%.

## ***Findings***

### *Role of Catholicism*

Respondents were asked about their religious formation. Childhood lessons were identified by 56%, while teachings from Catholic schools were cited by 45% of those questioned. Most striking, 70% of those who spent 11+ years in Catholic schools cited education as a primary source of Church teachings.

Asked to choose from a list of characteristics about what constitutes a good Catholic life, the majority chose “living an honest and moral life” and “helping your neighbor.” African Americans, 59%, and widowers, 63%, were more likely to choose the latter.

Roughly 68% of Catholics say their commitment towards their faith has not been altered in any significant way

in the recent past. Those who are the most educated tended to feel the most excited about or committed to their Catholic faith; those who rarely attend Mass were the least excited.

A staggering 95% of Catholics say their faith plays a significant role in their everyday lives. When it comes to the impact that their faith has on their political decisions, 69% reported that their Catholicism matters. Nearly half of Catholics, 48%, believe that if more people practiced the teachings of the Catholic Church, our society would be better off. Those who attend Mass more than once a week, 72%, are the most likely to agree with this proposition.

### *Pope Francis, the Bishops, and the Media*

The findings show that 83% of Catholics approve of the overall job that Pope Francis has done. He gets his highest approval ratings from African Americans, 93%, and those who have a post-graduate education, 92%. Similarly, 79% say that he has changed the Church for the better, drawing more support from women than men.

Catholics would prefer that the bishops stick mostly to internal Church matters; 64% feel this way and only 27% think they should address public policy. But the more a Catholic attends Mass, the more likely he is to say the bishops should speak out more about policy issues.

When it comes to the pope, however, things are different. A plurality of 48% prefer that he speak to public policy matters; 45% say he should address mostly internal Church concerns.

Respondents were asked about their reaction to media coverage of papal events. "During the previous Pope's visit to the United States, Pew Research found that during the week of Pope Benedict's visit, over half of

the news coverage on the Pope focused on the clergy sex abuse scandal. Knowing this, do you think that the media coverage is mostly fair or mostly unfair toward the Catholic Church?"

Nearly six in ten, 58%, said that the media coverage was mostly unfair; 34% said it was mostly fair.

One of the issues that the Catholic League has been quite critical about over the years is the media habit of including non-Catholics in polls about Catholicism. We had pollsters ask respondents if they had ever heard of a survey that asked non-Jews and non-Muslims if they agree with the teachings of Judaism or Islam. Not surprisingly, 90% said they never heard of such a poll.

By a margin of 52% to 39%, respondents agreed that "Gay couples receive more respectful/favorable treatment in popular culture like books, TV and movies than do Catholic figures like priests and nuns."

### *Catholic Church Teachings*

The media are obsessed with issues of sexuality when writing about the Catholic Church. Too often, in their surveys, they ask simple "yes or no" questions, thus eliciting information that is not particularly useful. We allowed for a more nuanced approach.

Our survey found that roughly four-out-of-five Catholics at least partly accept the Church's teachings on abortion.

To be specific, respondents were asked if they agree with the Church that "all life is sacred from conception until natural death, and the taking of innocent human life, whether born or unborn, is morally wrong."

"I accept part of this teaching but not all" was the

response of 39%, and 38% said, "I accept this teaching completely." Conservatives and those with 11+ years of Catholic education were more likely to subscribe to the Church's teaching.

When asked to identify themselves as pro-life or pro-choice, 50% said they were pro-life and 38% said they were pro-choice. But it appears that even among those who say they are pro-choice, few are zealots.

For example, 17% said abortion should be prohibited in all circumstances; 17% said it should be legal only to save the life of the mother; and 27% said abortion should only be legal in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother. That's 61% who are mostly pro-life.

Among those who are pro-choice, only 5% said that abortion should be allowed for any reason and at any time; 4% said any reason was okay but there should be none after the first six months of pregnancy; and 17% said abortion should be legal for any reason, but not after the first three months of pregnancy. That's 26% who are mostly pro-choice.

Another way of looking at it is to consider how many are happy with current abortion law. In the U.S., abortion is allowed for any reason and at any time; we have the most liberal abortion laws in the world. The survey data yield an impressive finding: if only 5% agree with current law that means that 19 out of 20, or 95%, of Catholics disagree with the status quo.

When it comes to marriage, 58% believe it should be between a man and a woman only; 38% do not agree. Those from the Northeast are the most liberal on this; frequent church-goers the most conservative

On the subject of women priests, 58% say they agree that

the Church should ordain women as priests; 36% disagree (African Americans and those widowed were the most likely to disagree). Even though a majority are okay with women priests, the data indicate that what is being measured is more of a preference than a demand: just 35% say they agree strongly that women should be priests. Which means that two-thirds either oppose women's ordination or it doesn't mean that much to them.

This last interpretation of the data may be too generous. It is not at all uncommon for people to be conflicted: on the one hand, they want the Church to change certain teachings; on the other hand, they admire the constancy of Church teachings.

In the black-and-white world of the media, there is no interest in probing the respondent's conscience. This may make for good commentary, but it lacks a scientific basis.

Here's an analogy Bill Donohue often uses when speaking to the media. If asked if he would prefer "God Bless America" to the "Star Spangled Banner" as our national anthem, he would choose the former. That's his preference. But is he going to get exercised about it if there is no change? Of course not. Similarly, when Catholics are asked whether they want the Church to change its teachings on certain subjects, they may say yes, but few are prepared to take to the streets over it.

It is because of these concerns that Donohue crafted a question to get right to the heart of this issue.

Respondents were asked if the Catholic Church should "remain true to its principles and not change its positions," or should it "change beliefs and principles to conform to modern customs?" The majority, 52%, agreed

that the Church should not change; 38% disagreed. It is likely that some of those who are okay with women priests also admire the steadiness of the Church's teachings. This becomes even more apparent when the issue of the conflicted Catholic is teased even further.

Here is the actual question, and the responses, that address this issue:

- 31% – I differ with the Catholic Church's position on some issues but the Catholic Church shouldn't change its beliefs or positions just because of public opinion
- 28% – I agree with most every position the Catholic Church takes and the Catholic Church should remain true to its principles and not change its position
- 26% – I differ with the Catholic Church's position on some issues and the Catholic Church should modernize its beliefs by changing its position to reflect current public opinion
- 9% – I disagree with most every position the Catholic Church takes and the Catholic Church should absolutely change its positions to reflect modern day beliefs
- 2% – None of the above
- 4% – Don't know; cannot judge

This data indicate that 6-in-10 Catholics want the Church to stay true to its principles; only 35% want it to conform to modern culture. Again, this suggests that many of those who might differ with the Church on women priests, or some other issue, also prefer a Church that doesn't change with the winds of the dominant culture.

This is nothing new. In a 1995 survey of Catholics, commissioned by the Catholic League, we asked an almost identical question. It yielded practically the same results.

### *Religious Liberty*

By a healthy 2-1 margin, Catholics support laws that protect



religious liberties. To be exact, 63% oppose compelling private businesses to provide services that violate their religious beliefs; 30% are not opposed. When asked specifically about forcing wedding-related businesses to provide services like taking photos or baking cakes for same-sex marriages if it violates their religious beliefs, 62% say it is mostly unfair; 29% say it is fair.

Similarly, 60% agree that "Religious freedom laws are only meant to protect religious freedom, and the threat of these laws is exaggerated by the media and allies." Only 32% believe that religious freedom laws are worrisome.

Respondents were also questioned about the Health and Human Services mandate. They were asked if they agree or disagree with the federal government forcing Catholic organizations "to pay for health care coverage that covers contraceptive drugs, including those that can destroy a human embryo, even if it is against their religious beliefs?" Fully 68% disagreed; only 27% agreed.

### *Conclusion*

It is entirely legitimate for survey researchers to question Catholics about their religion, probing their beliefs and attitudes. But when non-Catholics are asked to pass judgment on Church teachings and/or no attempt is made to distinguish between practicing Catholics and non-practicing Catholics, the results are ineluctably skewed towards a more critical outcome. This explains why the Catholic League survey was conducted: we sought a more accurate picture of the status of Catholicism today.

### **WHY FR. SERRA DESERVES TO BE CANONIZED**

**Bill Donohue**

*This article is adapted from Bill Donohue's longer piece, "The Noble Legacy of Father Serra"; it is available online.*

## **Who Was Father Serra?**

Junípero Serra was born on the Island of Majorca, off the coast of Spain in 1713, and died in Monterey, California in 1784. Partly of Jewish ancestry, this young and sickly boy applied to enter the Order of St. Francis of Assisi; he became a Franciscan in 1731.

He is known as the greatest missionary in U.S. history, traveling 24,000 miles, baptizing and confirming thousands of persons, mostly Indians (in 1777 the Vatican authorized Serra to administer the sacrament of confirmation, usually the reserve of a bishop). He had but one goal: to facilitate eternal salvation for the Indians of North America.

## **Were the Indians Perceived as Being Inferior?**

Culturally, the Indians appeared inferior, but they were not seen as racially inferior. Take, for example, the Chumash Indians of Southern California, the first California Indians to be contacted by Spanish explorers. When the Franciscans first met them, they were struck by how different they looked and behaved. The women were partially naked and the men were totally naked. Serra, in fact, felt as though he was in Eden.

Moreover, the Indians had no written language, and practiced no agriculture. They lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering. They ate things that the missionaries and the soldiers found bizarre, including roots, seeds, birds, horses, cats, dogs, owls, rats, snakes, and bats. These primitive habits, along with other practices, convinced them that changes had to be made.

## **How Did Father Serra Get Along with the Indians?**

For the most part, they got along well. This had something to do with the fact that the Catholic Church led the protests against inhumane treatment of the Indians; the Spanish crown ultimately agreed with this position. It cannot be said too

strongly that the primary mission of the Franciscans was not to conquer the Indians, but to make them good Christians. The missions were supposed to be temporary, not some permanent take over.

The Indians drew a distinction between the way the Spanish soldiers treated them and the way the Franciscans did. So when some Indians would act badly, the soldiers blamed them and sought harsh punishments. The priests, on the other hand, saw murderous acts as the work of the Devil. Also, the soldiers were always anxious to take land from the Indians, but they were met with resistance from the priests.

Both the colonial authorities and the missionaries vied for control over the Indians, but their practices could not have been more different. With the exception of serious criminal acts, Serra insisted that all punishments were to be meted out by the priests. While he did not always succeed in challenging the civil authorities, he often did, the result being that the Indians were spared the worst excesses.

The Franciscans also sought to protect Indian women from the Spaniards. The missionaries carved out a very organized lifestyle for the Indians, keeping a close eye on attempts by Spanish men to abuse Indian women. The Friars segregated the population on the basis of sex and age, hoping to protect the females from unwanted advances. When sexual abuse occurred, it was quickly condemned by Serra and his fellow priests.

### **Was it Violence that Decimated the Indians?**

No. What killed most of the Indians were diseases contracted from the Spaniards. According to author James A. Sandos, "Indians died in the missions in numbers that appalled Franciscans." He describes how this happened. "When Spaniards in various stages of exploration and expansion entered into territory unacquainted with disease," he writes, "they unwittingly unleashed disease microbodes into what

demographers call 'virgin soil.' The resulting wildfire-like contagion, called 'virgin soil epidemics,' decimated unprotected American Indians populations." Professor Gregory Orfalea is no doubt correct to maintain that it is doubtful if Serra ever understood the ramifications of this biological catastrophe.

### **Isn't It True that the Clergy Flogged the Indians?**

By 21st century standards, flogging is considered an unjust means of punishment, but it was not seen that way in the 18th century. Fornication, gambling, and the like were considered taboo, justifying flogging.

Serra, who never flogged anyone (save himself as an expression of redemptive suffering), admitted there were some excesses, but he also stressed something that is hard for 21st century Americans to understand: unlike flogging done by the authorities, when priests indulged the practice, it was done out of love, not hatred. "We, every one of us," Serra said, "came here for the single purpose of doing them [the Indians] good and for their eternal salvation; and I feel sure that everyone knows that we love them."

There is also something hypocritical about using 21st century moral standards to evaluate 18th century practices. Abortion-on-demand is a reality today and that is barbaric.

### **Some Contend that the Indians Were Treated the Way Hitler Treated Jews?**

This is perhaps the most pernicious lie promoted by those who have an animus against the Church. Hitler committed genocide against Jews; there was no genocide committed by Serra and the Franciscans against the California Indians. Hitler put Jews in ovens; the missionaries put the Indians to work, paying them for their labor. Hitler wanted to wipe out the Jews, so that Western civilization could be saved; the priests wanted to service the Indians, so that they could be saved.

Sandos pointedly refutes this vile comparison: "Hitler and the Nazis intended to destroy the Jews of Europe and created secret places to achieve that end, ultimately destroying millions of people in a systematic program of labor exploitation and death camps. Spanish authorities and Franciscan missionaries, however, sought to bring Indians into a new Spanish society they intended to build on the California frontier and were distressed to see the very objects of their religious and political desire die in droves. From the standpoint of intention alone, there can be no valid comparison between Franciscans and Nazis."

Moreover, as Sandos writes, even from the standpoint of results, the comparison fails. "Hitler intended to implement a 'final solution' to the so-called Jewish problem and was close to accomplishing his goals when the Allies stopped him. In contrast, neither Spanish soldiers nor missionaries knew anything about the germ theory of disease, which was not widely accepted until late in the nineteenth century."

Those who make these malicious charges know very well that Jews never acted kindly toward the Nazis. They also know, or should know, that acts of love by the Indians toward the missionaries are legion. No one loves those who are subjecting them to genocide.

### **Were the Indians Treated as Slaves?**

No. The historical record offers no support for this outrageous claim. Slaves in the U.S. had no rights and were not considered human. The missionaries granted the Indians rights and respected their human dignity.

It is also unfair to compare the lifestyle of the Indians to slave conditions in the U.S. "The purpose of a mission was to organize a religious community in isolation that could nourish itself physically and spiritually. Surplus production was to feed other missions and local towns and presidios. Profit was

never a consideration, unlike plantations, where profit was the purpose and reason for their creation.”

### **Did the Missionaries Eradicate Indian Culture?**

No. While missionary outreach clearly altered many elements of Indian culture, as Orfalea notes, “the fact is, the California Indian did not disappear. From the low point at the turn of the [20th] century (25,000 remained), the Indian population has grown to well over 600,000 today, twice what it was at pre-contact.” Indeed, today there are over one hundred federally recognized California tribes with tribal lands, with many others seeking recognition.

Not only did the missionaries not wipe out the native language of the Indians, they learned it and employed Indians as teachers. Some cultural modification was inevitable, given that the missionaries taught the Indians how to be masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, and painters. The Indians were also taught how to sell and buy animals, and were allowed to keep their bounty. Women were taught spinning, knitting, and sewing.

“Although many historians once thought that Indian culture had been eradicated in the missions,” Sandos says, “anthropologists and other observers have provided evidence to the contrary.”

### **Should Serra Be Made a Saint?**

The evidence which has been culled for over 200 years, from multiple sources, is impressive, and it argues strongly for including Father Serra in the pantheon of saints.

A total of 21 missions were established by the missionaries, nine of them under the tenure of Serra; he personally founded six missions. He baptized more than 6,000 Indians, and confirmed over 5,000; some 100,000 were baptized overall during the mission period. Impressive as these numbers are, it

was his personal characteristics that made him so special.

“To the Indian,” Orfalea writes, “he [Serra] was loving, enthusiastic, and spiritually and physically devoted.” His devotion was motivated by his embrace of Christianity and his strong sense of justice. To put it another way, his love for the Indians was no mere platitude. “Love thy neighbor as thyself” was routinely put into practice; he knew no other way. But it was his humility, coupled with his merciful behavior, that distinguished him from all the other missionaries.

Serra was so merciful that he said, “in case the Indians, whether pagans or Christians, would kill me, they should be pardoned.” This was not made in jest. He insisted that his request be honored as quickly as possible, and even declared, “I want to see a formal decree” on this matter.

Father Serra deserves to be made a saint. He gave his life in service to the Lord, battled injustice, and inspired everyone who worked with him to be a better Christian. That Saint Junípero Serra will now inspire people all over the world is a certainty, and a great testimony to his noble legacy.

*Pope Francis canonized Blessed Junípero Serra on September 23 outside the National Shrine in Washington, DC.*

### **SCORE ONE FOR OUR SIDE ON FR. SERRA**

In early July, the California state legislature announced that it would postpone a vote on the proposal to remove the statue of Fr. Junípero Serra from the U.S. Capitol. A few weeks later, California Gov. Jerry Brown, while attending an event in the Vatican, flatly said, “We’re going to keep his statue in Congress. It’s done as far as I’m concerned.” We are happy to report that we had a hand in this outcome.

At the beginning of the summer this issue was anything but settled. California State Senator Ricardo Lara was responsible

for authoring the proposal to remove the statue, but after a massive campaign protesting his decision, he requested that the vote be postponed. He cited Pope Francis' upcoming visit as the reason for the postponement.

California Assemblyman William P. Brough and Sen. Pat Bates welcomed the good news. According to a joint statement released by Brough and Bates, "Debating such a bill just before the pope's visit would have conveyed a terrible message to him and millions of Catholics around the world, contradicting California's reputation as a tolerant and welcoming place for all people."

"Now that the California legislature has agreed to a delay," Bill Donohue said at the time, "perhaps they can take this opportunity to reconsider the proposal and drop the matter entirely. The Catholic League has contended that the opposition to Fr. Serra's statue rises out of misunderstandings of his work and legacy. It was to correct such misunderstandings that I published the booklet, *The Noble Legacy of Fr. Serra*; it was distributed to interested parties in California and beyond."

In the run-up to the vote, we blanketed California with copies of Donohue's booklet. John Liston, executive director of Serra International, wrote to him expressing his gratitude. "I think it went a long way in assisting the California legislature to suspend the vote to remove the statue of Fr. Serra from Statuary Hall," he said.

We are grateful to Gov. Brown for laying anchor on this matter. As we have continually argued, Fr. Serra deserves to be honored, not vilified. He was the most prominent person to champion human rights for American Indians. That is why he was canonized by Pope Francis on September 23.

#### ***NEW YORK TIMES* MALIGNS SAINT; NO EVIDENCE PROVIDED**

On September 30, when Bill Donohue read a *New York Times*



front-page story on Saint Junípero Serra, he could hardly believe his eyes. The 17th century priest, who championed the rights of Indians, had just been canonized by Pope Francis the week before. So it came as a shock to read that he was accused of torturing Indians.

As Catholic League members know, in anticipation of the expected controversy over Father Serra, Donohue authored a booklet on him a few months ago. He read widely on the Franciscan priest, and published his findings in *The Noble Legacy of Father Serra*; he used a Q&A format to make his research easily accessible to readers. In all his readings, Donohue never found a single scholar who ever accused Father Serra of torturing Indians.

The reporter who wrote this story, Laura M. Holson, offered this remarkable sentence: "Historians agree that he [Serra] forced Native Americans to abandon their tribal culture and convert to Christianity, and that he had them whipped and imprisoned and sometimes worked or tortured to death."

Donohue readily concedes that the Indians were not treated justly. But it was the Spanish conquerors, not the Franciscans, who were responsible for the worst excesses. Indeed, Father Serra's heroism, which led to his canonization, is largely a function of his opposition to Indian maltreatment. It was he who insisted that the Indians should be treated with the dignity afforded all human beings.

On the day the story appeared, Donohue emailed the reporter asking her to provide evidence that "Historians agree" that Father Serra had Indians "tortured to death." [His letter and all the subsequent exchanges he had with *Times* officers is laid out below in chronological order.]

As you can see, none of the parties at the newspaper were able to answer his one question: Who are these historians? Yet they refused to run a correction.

No one disputes that radical activists, racists, and anti-Catholics have made wild and unsubstantiated accusations against the Franciscans. But there is a difference between these agenda-ridden ideologues and scholars. The latter would be expected to provide evidence, and that is why the charge that "historians agree" that Father Serra was a barbarian is complete nonsense. If this were true, the *Times* would be able to name them.

Finally, it must be said that Vatican scholars pored over thousands of documents related to Father Serra and released a 1,200 page position paper on him. They would never recommend for sainthood anyone who ever authorized the torturing of innocent persons.

### ***NY TIMES PIECE ON FR. SERRA NEEDS CORRECTION***

**October 1**

*The following news releases explain the exchange between Bill Donohue and the New York Times.*

*The top story (below) was Donohue's first response—it was sent the day of the news story on September 30. After a day went by and he heard nothing, he went public with his complaint on October 1. After a week went by and he heard nothing from either the "Corrections" editors or the public editor, he issued his second news release (the bottom one) on October 7. On the next page is the final exchange that occurred on October 8; it was published as a press release on October 9.*

Donohue emailed the following letter to *New York Times* reporter Laura M. Holson about her article, "Sainthood of Serra Reopens Wounds of Colonialism in California":

*You said that "Historians agree" that Fr. Serra had Indians "tortured to death." I have done research on Serra and written about him, yet I know of no historian who makes such a claim. Please name them. I can name many who never made such a claim.*

[Donohue listed the following ten books as evidence that Fr. Serra never tortured Indians: *Junípero Serra: California's Founding Father* by Steven Hackel; *Converting California: Indians and Franciscans in the Missions* by James Sandos; *Life and Times of Fray Junípero Serra, Volumes 1-2* by Maynard Geiger; *Junípero Serra: California, Indians, and the Transformation of a Missionary* by Rose Marie Beebe and Robert Senkewicz; *Journey to the Sun: Junípero Serra's Dream and the Founding of California* by Gregory Orfalea; *Saint Junipero Serra: Making Sense of History and Legacy* by Christian Clifford; *Junípero Serra: A Short Biography* by Kerry Walters; *A Cross of Thorns: The Enslavement of California's Indians by the Spanish Missions* by Elias Castillo; *Life of Ven. Padre Junípero Serra* by Francis Palou; *Francisco Palou's Life and Apostolic Labors of The Venerable Father Junípero Serra, Founder of The Franciscans* by Francisco Palou and C. Scott Williams.]

Holson never responded. As a result, Donohue asked for an entry in the "Corrections" section of the newspaper, and he also contacted the public editor. This is a serious issue: when a reporter blithely says that "Historians agree," readers take it that there is at least a consensus among historians about the subject. But such is not the case on this issue. The only persons given to such an accusation are radical activists, not professional scholars.

Not one of them accuse this saintly priest of torturing Indians. Holson quoted Steven Hackel in her article, and though he has been somewhat critical of Fr. Serra, he never made such a claim. The one person who said torture took place, Elias Castillo, never indicted Fr. Serra. None of the other books come even close to accusing Fr. Serra of torture. Quite simply, it is a lie.

**NEW YORK TIMES SMEAR OF FR. SERRA STANDS  
October 7**

After the *New York Times* ran a front-page story that smeared St. Junípero Serra, repeated attempts to have the paper correct the record failed.

On the day that Laura M. Holson's news story appeared, "Sainthood of Serra Reopens Wounds of Colonialism in California," Bill Donohue sent her the following email:

*You said that "Historians agree" that Fr. Serra had Indians "tortured to death." I have done research on Serra and written about him, yet I know of no historian who makes such a claim. Please name them. I can name many who never made such a claim.*

The following day Donohue contacted the "Corrections" section of the paper, as well as the public editor, sending them the above email. He also said, "Ms. Holson has not responded. Assuming she cannot name historians who have made such a claim, I am requesting that this merit inclusion in the 'Corrections' section of the *Times*."

One week went by after Donohue's email to these two parties, and still no response. Moreover, he wrote them again, sending the previous emails: "Please let me know if I can expect a correction to Ms. Holson's story. If her account is accurate, she should be able to name the historians who say that Fr. Serra tortured Indians. This story is particularly important because Pope Francis just canonized Fr. Serra when he was in DC. Thank you."

Another day passed, and still no reply. This is yellow journalism at its worst. When Donohue submits paid ads to the *Times*, he is often asked to identify his sources. Yet it accepts hit jobs like Holson's. The fact is there is no list of historians who claim Fr. Serra tortured Indians, and the *Times* knows it. The Catholic League sent this news release to a wide audience.

**NEW YORK TIMES REMAINS DEFIANT ON SERRA**

The following exchange occurred on October 8:

Dear Mr. Donohue:

You might have been busy with your news release of October 1 and did not have a chance to keep up with Laura Holson's coverage of the shooting in Oregon. She began filing from Oregon last Friday. So while our editors discussed your complaint when it was received, we waited to go over it with Ms. Holson until she had reached the point where she was not inundated with her coverage of that horrific event.

Certainly you have very strong views on this issue and have written extensively on it. But after many discussions, a review of past Times coverage and other resources, I agree with Ms. Holson's editors that "historians" is accurate, and therefore no correction is required.

At one point you sent us a list of books you considered to be "the authoritative books on Fr. Serra." Ms. Holson had already reviewed the writings of some of the historians you cited in that list.

If I thought having an extended conversation on this would help, I would be happy to. But after re-reading your correspondence, I cannot think of anything we could do or say that would convince you that our coverage was fair and complete – or that the reference to "historians" is accurate.

We respect your opinion and I hope you will respect our decision – even if you do not agree with it. If nothing else, rest assured that your points have been thoroughly reviewed and a great deal of time has been put into making this decision.

Sincerely,

Greg Brock

Gregory E. Brock

Senior Editor for Standards

The New York Times

Dear Mr. Brock,

Thank you for taking my complaint seriously. I have just one question: Who are the "historians" who claim that Fr. Serra tortured Indians?

Sincerely,  
Bill Donohue

*We at the Catholic League take great pride in providing readers with factual material; we are always ready to back up our work with evidence. It is one thing to offer an opinion, quite another to make unequivocal statements of a condemnatory nature in a news story. That is exactly what the New York Times did. Worse, it is considered the newspaper of record.*

*The Times only made matters worse when its Senior Editor for Standards took the side of the reporter **without identifying the historians who claim that Fr. Serra tortured Indians to death.***

*We are disappointed that this incredible fabrication was not challenged by others. Surely there are scholars and members of the Catholic Church who are in a position to know that what the Times said cannot be substantiated. That said, we are happy that we didn't miss the opportunity to challenge them.*

*Bill Donohue*