

PAT ROBERTSON HOSTS CHURCH CRITIC

On the March 3 edition of "The 700 Club," TV evangelist Pat Robertson ran a segment on celibacy in the Catholic Church. Invited to appear with Robertson was therapist A.W. Richard Sipe. Sipe used the occasion of the latest report on sexual abuse by priests to challenge the wisdom of celibacy.

We let fly with the following news release:

"With great delight did the embittered ex-priest, Richard Sipe, inform his new friend Pat Robertson that the Catholic Church was more corrupt today than at any time since the Reformation. Enthralled by the figure of 4 percent of priests accused of molesting minors since 1950, Sipe failed to mention the results of national surveys taken by Christian Ministry Resources in 2002. The *Christian Science Monitor* summed up the surveys' conclusion as follows: 'Despite headlines focusing on the priest pedophile problem in the Roman Catholic Church, most American churches being hit with child sexual-abuse allegations are Protestant...' But don't look for the founder of the Christian Coalition to do a show on these findings.

"According to Sipe, only 10 percent of priests are celibate. How did he arrive at this figure? Sipe, who calls his work 'guerrilla research' (meaning he uses anecdotes given to him in his role as shrink), defines violations of celibacy to include 'sexual thoughts and desires.' The wonder is why there are as many as 10 percent of priests who have never experienced such desires. And what is going to happen to the 90 percent who are guilty? They're going straight to Hell: 'You see,' Sipe says, 'one thing about the Catholic teaching is that every sexual thought, or desire, or action, is mortally sinful. Every action, no matter how small, no matter how nuanced, will send a person directly to Hell.' This

suggests either profound ignorance of Catholicism or calculated malice. By the way, Robertson's gullibility on this matter is truly revealing.

"Robertson closes with, 'We're not trying to point any fingers, obviously, but it's something that we'd like our Catholic brothers and sisters to do something about for their own good.' For his own good, Robertson ought to stop with the lectures and start fixing the problems in his own house. Not that we're trying to point any fingers. Obviously!"

On March 4, Rev. Pat Robertson wrote a letter to William Donohue defending his decision to host Sipe. Here is how Robertson began his letter: "Please know that we are on the same side. I have been an enthusiastic supporter of Catholic causes for decades and have in no way changed. Frankly, I believe that sending out an intemperate Press Release accusing me of 'lecturing' the Catholic church was somewhat over the top. Friends don't treat friends this way."

Donohue did not reply. It is his belief that friends don't extend a platform to their friend's enemy.