

POLITICS OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN PENNSYLVANIA

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on legislation aimed at curbing sexual abuse in Pennsylvania:

The sexual abuse of minors is not taken seriously by many of the critics of the Catholic Church, unless, of course, the offenders are members of the clergy. This certainly includes the editorial board of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Proof: It spares no criticism of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in dealing with this issue, yet remains silent on demanding much needed legislative reforms governing the public sector.

In a recent editorial, the newspaper said, "The Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the insurance industry have long fought efforts to hold abusers accountable for past crimes." Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput answered that charge saying, this is "flatly, *demonstrably* false." (His italic.) He then showed why it is untrue.

My interest is somewhat different.

The time has come for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to push for legislation that treats the Catholic Church the same way as the public sector. In practice, this would mean that those who are abused by someone employed by the archdiocese would have six months to press charges. That's it. It would also mean there would be a cap of \$500,000 on the maximum amount of damages paid by the archdiocese. That's it.

There is an alternative. Pennsylvania lawmakers, at the behest of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, could eliminate the doctrine of sovereign immunity, thus ending preferential treatment for the public sector. That would mean, of course, that the lifting of the statute of limitations for the sexual abuse of minors would apply to public school employees.

Either way is fine by the Catholic League. What say the newspaper? To reject both proposals would suggest a bias, even an animus, against the Catholic Church.

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