

POPE ACCUSES ALLEGED VICTIMS OF SLANDER

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks made by Pope Francis in Chile:

"The day someone brings me proof against Bishop Barros, then I will talk," Pope Francis told the media. "But there is not one single piece of evidence. It is all slander. Is that clear?"

The pope was referring to charges that Chilean Bishop Juan Barros Madrid covered up for a molesting priest, Father Fernando Karadima; the priest was found guilty by the Vatican in 2011 and sentenced to a lifetime of penance and prayer.

In 2015, when Pope Francis named Juan Barros as the Bishop of Osorno, he noted that a Vatican inquiry found no evidence against him. The Holy Father blamed "leftists" for smearing the bishop.

"The Osorno community is suffering because it's dumb," the pope said. He explained that it "has let its head be filled with what politicians say, judging a bishop without any proof."

The pope's most outspoken critic is Juan Carlos Cruz, an alleged victim of Father Karadima. He claims that Barros watched as the priest abused him.

Responding to the pope's recent remarks in Chile, Cruz accused the pontiff of being a phony. He said the pope's "plea for forgiveness is empty." Not surprisingly, the media are not reporting on who Cruz is, so we will.

Cruz is a homosexual who says the alleged abuse by Father Karadima began when he was 15 and *continued until he was 23!* He wants us to believe that he was powerless to fend off the priest's advances for nearly a decade, extending into his twenties.

There is no way for the Catholic League to know exactly what happened, but if a Vatican inquiry failed to uncover anything against Barros, that cannot be breezily dismissed. Moreover, when the character of his chief accuser is suspect, if not flagrantly flawed, then it is understandable why the pope reacted the way he did.

Too many priests—and now even notable lay persons who are not Catholic—have been branded as molesters without sufficient evidence or due process. The climate is poisoned. To be sure, the guilty must pay, but the accused have rights that must be protected.

For the pope to accuse “leftists” of slander is not something the Catholic League finds hard to believe. We’ve seen it for years.