

POPE CITES ARMENIA GENOCIDE



Bill Donohue comments on the remarks made yesterday by Pope Francis:

There are two good reasons why Pope Francis chose to address the genocide of the Armenian people. First, Armenia was the world's first Christian country. Second, this year marks the centennial of the 20th century's first genocide. It should also be noted that it was Muslims who were responsible for these atrocities, and they are at it again today.

The Turkish government says the pope is guilty of promoting "unfounded claims." It is wrong: nothing the Holy Father said is historically inaccurate, though in fairness, there have been "unfounded claims."

It is true that some observers have lumped together those Armenians who died as the result of disease, famine, and war with those who were singled out for extinction. It is also true that there is evidence supporting the claim that some Turkish officials took steps to protect the lives of Armenians during the deportations. But they also failed in serious ways.

One of the most astute historians to cover these events is William B. Rubinstein. After conceding that some accounts have been unfair to the Turks, he writes, "Most of the evidence suggests...that the Turkish authorities actively masterminded the mass killing of the Armenians as a deliberate policy." On the other hand, the popular claim that 1.5 million Armenians were systematically killed appears to be an exaggeration. Rubinstein puts the figure at about 1 million. But this hardly exculpates Turkish officials. "This was certainly the greatest massacre of civilians in what can be described as the Western

world in modern times until that point," he writes, "and one of the greatest slaughters in recorded history, as well as the first of the demonic slaughters of the twentieth century."

On the eve of the Holocaust, Hitler told his military, "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?" This is why it was important for Pope Francis to cite this event. Moreover, Muslim madmen are carrying out another genocide of Christians today. Some things never change.