

POPE LAUDS BENEDICT FOR ABUSE RESPONSE



Bill Donohue comments on remarks made today by Pope Francis on the sexual abuse scandal:

No one has done more to check the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church than Pope Benedict XVI, but he receives very little credit for doing so. That is why what Pope Francis said today matters: he singled Benedict out for his yeoman efforts. "Benedict XVI was very courageous and has opened a new way." Because of Benedict, he said, "the Church has done much, perhaps more than all the others."

Pope Francis is twice right. Long before Benedict became pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, as head of the Vatican's doctrinal congregation, called for swifter and stronger procedures to punish molesting priests. That was in 1988. In 2001, he was given exclusive jurisdiction over these matters, and in 2003 he was awarded the power to police priestly sexual abuse. When he became pope, he made it more difficult for practicing homosexuals to enter the priesthood, the net effect of which has been a sharp decline in the number of abuse cases.

In his interview today, Pope Francis said, "The Catholic Church is perhaps the only public institution that has moved with transparency and responsibility. No one has done more, and yet the Church is the only one that is being attacked." The pope was obviously referring to the highly politicized, and maliciously conceived, United Nations report on the Vatican's response to this issue.

Pope Francis not only speaks truth to power, and to the people, he tells it like it is to those who selectively rally to his side. Yesterday, his comments condemning anti-Catholicism were, as I predicted, all but ignored. His remarks today lauding his predecessor will similarly be given short shrift. Such is the politics of the left, religious as well as secular.