

POPE PUTS THE ISSUE IN FOCUS

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following statement today regarding the pope's statement on the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church:

"Pope John Paul II showed his superb leadership today branding sex abuse by priests a 'crime.' And his focus on the victims was right on target. The Holy Father's blunt language and interest in addressing the central issue in this scandal stands in stark relief to what others have been saying lately.

"The head of the bishop's conference, Bishop Wilton Gregory, was similarly excellent. When asked about celibacy and women's ordination, he said those were part of other people's agendas. The real issue, he emphasized, was protecting children.

"But what we hear from others is disturbing. There is a myth floating that unless celibacy is made optional, no progress can be made. Ditto for the issue of women in the priesthood. These may be real issues for some people but at the end of the day they are diversionary. What is driving the problem at one level is sexual misconduct, much of it the acting out of sexually active homosexuals. Yet there is intellectual dishonesty at work here: it seems everything can be discussed except one issue—sexually active gays in the priesthood.

"This is a time for an honest airing of all the factors that have contributed to the scandal. It is not a time to simply vent or agitate for agenda-driven solutions. What caused this problem must be addressed institutionally from within the Church. The fundamental problem is a lack of discipline. Not surprisingly, Pope John Paul II understands what needs to be done and will not be distracted by extraneous matters. With an accurate diagnosis, we can expect reasonable correctives."