

SHOULD PRACTICING CATHOLICS HOLD PUBLIC OFFICE?

In today's edition of *Newsday*, the Long Island daily, columnist Paul Vitello questions the propriety of allowing Nassau County District Attorney Denis Dillon to investigate allegations of sexual misconduct against priests. Dillon is a practicing Catholic. For Vitello, this is sufficient grounds to disqualify Dillon from any further investigation into these matters. Dillon concluded yesterday that all allegations against priests in the Diocese of Rockville Centre occurred beyond the state's five-year statute of limitations, making moot further inquiry.

Vitello charges that Dillon is active in his religion and that his spokesman, Rick Hinshaw, writes for the *Long Island Catholic*.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"In one sense, what Paul Vitello has done is welcome: it removes any doubt as to his motives. In his world, practicing Catholics who hold public office need to be treated as suspect characters. Just Catholics. Nothing is said about Protestants, Jews or Muslims. They can attend church services, go to synagogue, frequent mosques, be actively engaged in their religion and still hold public office. But Catholics are not to be trusted. They're different from the rest of us.

"Article VI of the U.S. Constitution holds that 'no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.' To the extent that New York State law reflects this understanding, no doubt Vitello would like to insert a caveat exempting coverage for

practicing Catholics. As he said in his article, it is Dillon's 'attitude' about his religion that is most objectionable.

"Finally, I would like to add to Vitello's paranoia: Rick Hinshaw previously served as director of communications for the Catholic League. Though Vitello will suffer apoplexy when he learns this, he should also know that Rick served us with distinction."

CARDINALS' MEETING PROVES FRUITFUL IF INCOMPLETE

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the two letters issued by the 12 U.S. cardinals in Rome regarding the sex abuse scandal in the U.S. His comments also reflect his sentiments on the press conference that was held following the meeting. Here is what he had to say:

"The meeting of the U.S. cardinals in Rome proved to be fruitful if incomplete. No one realistically thought that this serious matter would be resolved in a few days, and that is why Bishop Wilton Gregory was right to dub the letters 'skeletal' in nature. It was reassuring to hear Bishop Gregory say that there was a growing consensus towards a zero tolerance policy for sexual abuse.

"Some will not be happy with that part of the letter which draws a distinction between the proposed Church's response to child molesters and to cases that are less egregious. The Catholic League believes this to be just right. There is a profound difference between a predatory priest who victimizes minors and a priest who, straight or gay, drops his guard one

evening with an adult. While the latter is patently wrong and inexcusable it would smack of an obscene moral equivalency to treat both instances the same. For this reason, it is proper that the cardinals not take the bait that some have thrown and attempt to issue a blanket policy for every conceivable offense.

“There is little doubt that when the bishops meet in June they will hammer out a national policy that will fine-tune what the cardinals set out to do in Rome. It is important to remember that the vector of change is positive and for this all Catholics can be grateful.

“Finally, it is highly significant that in the ‘Final Communiqué’ there was mention of the need for the Pastors of the Church ‘to promote the correct moral teaching of the Church and publicly to reprimand individuals who spread dissent and groups which advance ambiguous approaches to pastoral care.’ Debate is one thing, open rebellion quite another.”

PHILADELPHIA D.A. LAUNCHES WITCH HUNT AGAINST PHILADELPHIA ARCHDIOCESE

District Attorney Lynne Abraham announced today that she will convene a grand jury to investigate allegations of sexual abuse by priests in Philadelphia. She said the grand jury will investigate “all allegations involving priests whether they are dead, dismissed or retired.” The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, though surprised by her decision, said it will cooperate with the investigation.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“This is the clearest example of a witch hunt against Catholic priests we’ve seen thus far. D.A. Abraham has no real interest in safeguarding the welfare of children. If she did, she not only would empanel a grand jury to investigate sexual abuse by priests, she would go after rabbis who molest children, and ministers who molest children, and imams who molest children, as well as every person of the cloth in the hundreds of other religions that exist in the Philadelphia area.

“Indeed, if Abraham were sincere, she would go after all sexual abusers throughout society: she would go after teachers, social workers and therapists and every other profession where adults mix with kids. And don’t forget about lifeguards. In fact, if she had pure motives, she would begin by inquiring whether there is anyone in her own office who is currently a molester. Then she should extend her office inquiry to staff members who are ‘dead, dismissed or retired.’

“This is exactly the kind of anti-Catholic bigotry that the Catholic League has feared all along. Abraham is a fraud: she wants to stick it to the Catholic Church because she senses that society has given her a green light. Instead, she just gave herself a big, black eye. She is an utter disgrace to her profession.”

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.”

MICHIGAN STATE CARTOON SPEWS BIGOTRY

A cartoon in today's edition of *The State News*, the student newspaper of Michigan State University, shows two priests interacting. One priest asks, "Why are you so happy?" and the other is shown walking away with a newspaper that reads, "Supreme Court Strikes Down Part of Child Pornography Act."

Catholic League president William Donohue responded as follows:

"Anyone who thinks that the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church gives them the right to exploit this issue by actively bashing Catholicism is mindless. There is dirt in every institution and in every demographic segment of the population. Yet we see few sucker punches thrown at these groupings. But when it comes to Catholics, that's different: bigots use the Church's dirty laundry to throw mud at all Catholics.

"There have been scores of cartoons lambasting the Church over the scandal. Here's what our rule of thumb is in responding. If the cartoon is targeted at an individual culprit, that's one thing. If it's targeted at all bishops, or clergy, or the entire Church, that's quite another. By analogy, it is one thing to mock Sharon or Arafat, quite another to mock all Jews or all Palestinians. The problem with this cartoon is that it unfairly labels all priests as child porn users.

"The Catholic League will continue to fight anti-Catholicism even in this climate. Indeed, we will fight it all the harder precisely because the bigots think they've gotten the green light. We're prepared to throw up as many speed bumps and stop signs as necessary to derail them.

"We are blanketing the media in Lansing over this outrageous

cartoon.”

U.S. SUPREME COURT CONTRIBUTES TO CULTURAL SCHIZOPHRENIA OVER CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

The United States Supreme Court today struck down a law banning virtual child pornography. It held that previous rulings prohibiting child pornography applied only to real children and not to images that merely appear to depict children engaged in sex. Both the Clinton and the Bush administrations worked to defend the law that was struck down today.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“It was Justice Byron White, who died yesterday, who once said that child pornography was a ‘category of material outside the protection of the First Amendment’ and could be regulated regardless of whether it met a test of obscenity. That was 20 years ago. Now, in a 6-3 decision, the justices of the high court have declared that there is no connection between computer-generated child pornography and the actual exploitation of real children. If this isn’t proof that many lawyers have become unhinged from reality, nothing is.

“Perverts love child pornography and most use it to act on their impulses. They will be delighted that a half-dozen judges on the nation’s highest bench have just given them the

green light to indulge their sickness as much as they like, provided, of course, that the images of child pornography are not drawn from actual pictures of little kids. Computer-dummied versions are quite okay.

“The whole country is upset with instances of child sexual molestation in the Catholic Church. Will everyone now be just as upset with the U.S. Supreme Court for its latest ruling? Will they protest authors like Judith Levine who argue in favor of adult-child sex? Will they finally question why there is a professor at Princeton University, Peter Singer, who maintains a soft line on bestiality?

“This is cultural schizophrenia. We don’t like the consequences of perversion but don’t have the guts to deal with its sources.”

NEW YORK’S NEWEST NEWSPAPER, THE SUN, STUMBLES OUT OF THE GATE

On the top right corner of New York’s latest newspaper, *The Sun*, there is a picture of Our Lady of La Leche, the Virgin Mary breastfeeding baby Jesus. The caption beside the Madonna and child reads, “THE LAND OF MILK AND MOMMY. A visit to the Upper Breast Side, NYC’s breastfeeding boutique, page 16.” The story is about Manhattan’s first breastfeeding boutique, “Upper Breast Side.”

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“Our Lady of La Leche is a legitimate piece of Catholic art. The Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche was built in the early 17th century in America’s oldest city, St. Augustine; it is the oldest Marian shrine in the nation. It is precisely because it is such an honorific work of art in the Catholic community that Catholics take offense when it is exploited for commercial purposes. This is where *The Sun* erred: it ripped off a piece of Catholic iconography to hawk its newspaper.

“On March 26, I issued a news release criticizing People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) for using the identical portrait to make a statement against the dairy industry. Now we have *The Sun* joining the chorus. That this offense should appear on its first day suggests there are at least a few jerks working at this newspaper. Whether these louts spend their time moonlighting for PETA is worth investigating, but the Catholic League has been preoccupied with larger matters these days.”

AS CARDINALS PREPARE TO GATHER IN ROME: BEWARE OF WILD EXPECTATIONS

The summoning of U.S. cardinals to Rome next week has led to an outburst of highly questionable predictions regarding the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. Addressing this issue today is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“The cardinals haven’t arrived in Rome and already the drumbeat of wild expectations has begun. Some are predicting that the Church in the U.S. will breakaway once and for all from Rome while others are maintaining there will be an end to

the ban on married priests and women's ordination. This kind of hyperventilation is not helpful and it sorely misunderstands the nature of the problem and what is likely to be done about it.

"The fundamental problem is a lack of discipline: misconduct with impunity has hurt the Church. There are some who say that a bishop cannot afford to lose a priest. It is high time to ask whether they can afford to keep some of them.

"The fact that the Holy Father is calling American cardinals to Rome indicates that he understands the gravity of the problem. But it would be folly to think that the matter will be resolved next week. There is no quick fix to a problem that is deeply rooted in the dominant culture and has been institutionally mishandled by the Catholic Church.

"Father Thomas Reese of *America* magazine has it just right when he guards against 'raised expectations.' Father Reese knows this is a local problem that must be resolved here. What can be realistically expected next week is that the cardinals will return to the U.S. with a clear understanding of what they will bring to the table in Dallas when they meet June 13, 14 and 15. That's when something finite is likely to emerge."

DISSIDENCE AND DEVIANCE IN THE CHURCH: CONNECTING THE DOTS

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church by examining the

relationship between heterodoxy and sexual deviance. Donohue holds a doctorate in sociology from New York University. He has taught college courses on the family and has authored books and articles that address the subject of human sexuality. Here are his remarks:

“It is well known that Paul Shanley, a former priest of the Boston Archdiocese, was a serial child molester. Indeed, he not only practiced pedophilia, he publicly justified it and even went so far as to say ‘the kid is the seducer’ in sexual encounters between adults and children. Shanley also endorsed bestiality. That he remained a priest for more than decade after this was disclosed is not in a dispute. Nor is it disputed that he was promoted to pastor by Cardinal Law *after* it was known that he attended the first conference of the North American Man/Boy Love Association in 1978; at the time he was the representative of Cardinal Medeiros for sexual minorities.

“Shanley’s twisted views on sexuality were not an anomaly. In a 1977 book published by the Catholic Theological Society of America, *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*, author Father Anthony Kosnik argued against traditional Catholic teaching on sexuality. He maintained that we must jettison the view that holds fornication, adultery, homosexuality, sodomy and bestiality to be intrinsically evil acts. Showing the wide cultural variance in sexual taboos, Kosnik concluded that priests must understand that ‘God is surely present’ in homosexual relations that are marked by ‘sincere affection.’ This book was widely used in seminaries at the time but was condemned in 1979 by the bishops. Kosnik, however, remained teaching in a seminary until 1982.

“It is time we connected the dots between dissidence and deviance. While the latter is not always caused by the former, it provides intellectual cover.”

BUSH SHOWS LEADERSHIP IN OPPOSING CLONING

President George W. Bush's opposition to human cloning experiments was supported today by Catholic League president William Donohue:

"President Bush's opposition to human cloning experiments is supported by 80 percent of Americans, cutting across all gender, class, racial and religious lines. Those who strongly support cloning come from those quarters in the scientific community whose interest in this subject is essentially parochial. Furthermore, it does not persuade to say that 40 Nobel Prize winners support cloning: previous recipients of this award have also supported infanticide.

"It is a criminal offense in every European country to engage in reproductive human cloning. One nation, England, allows therapeutic cloning. But even this form of cloning is wrong: it entails the creation and then the destruction of human embryos. Any research that intentionally kills innocent human beings is immoral.

"There are many innocuous ways in which scientific research can move forward conquering sickness and disease. Cloning is not one of them. Indeed, the idea of stockpiling cloned human embryos is not only repugnant, it opens the door to full-scale reproductive cloning. It is disingenuous not to concede this point.

"President Bush showed leadership in his opposition to future stem cell research. He is doing so again in his opposition to human cloning experimentation. It is about time everyone acknowledged that the dehumanization of human sexuality is

neither healthy nor ethical. That is why the Catholic League strongly supports President Bush in this decision.”