

# SEXUAL ABUSE OF MINORS: ONE STANDARD FOR PRIESTS, ANOTHER FOR OTHERS?

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following remarks today on the way priests are being held accountable for sexual molestation of minors, and the way lawmakers are handling this situation with regards to others:

“There are two different, but related, stories on priestly sexual misconduct in today’s edition of the *New York Times* and *Newsday* that raise serious questions regarding the way this problem is being handled by the Church, and the way New York lawmakers are dealing with it. In the *Times*, we learn that a bill that would add the word ‘clergy’ to a list of professionals required by law to report cases of suspected child abuse has run into unexpected difficulty. It is not Catholics who are throwing up roadblocks, it is the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) and Family Planning Advocates (the lobbying arm of abortion-rights organizations like Planned Parenthood).

“These groups are upset that the law might require reporting cases of statutory rape and might force rape-crisis counselors to break their confidentiality agreements. Donna Lieberman, the director of the NYCLU, says the original intent of the bill was not intended to cover all instances of child abuse. This contention has been rejected by State Senator Stephen Saland.

“*Newsday* is reporting that 5 of 10 priests retiring from the Diocese of Rockville Centre have had their priestly faculties removed because of *allegations* of sexual misconduct. None has been found guilty.

“It is ironic that the civil libertarians and their pro-

abortion allies are worried that zero tolerance might create difficulties for young girls impregnated by their older boyfriends. But they have no problem holding the Catholic Church responsible for sexual abuse committed by priests. Even worse, some dioceses are now overreacting by taking punitive measures against priests who are assumed innocent until proven guilty. It is about time everyone got on the same page.”

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## PARTING SHOTS AT BILL MAHER

Catholic League president William Donohue offered his parting shots at Bill Maher now that his show is being thrown off the air after tonight:

“Over the years we have had a good time reading the enfeebled responses of ABC officials defending Maher’s anti-Catholicism. In October 1998, we learned that ‘the program goes to great lengths to make sure they offend as many groups as possible.’ In point of fact, Maher is not an equal-opportunity offender: in his May 24 interview with Larry King, Maher, who was raised Catholic and is half-Jewish, dumped on Catholics while speaking emphatically about the plight of Jews and blacks. Just like he did on his show for years.

“In November, 1999, we were told ‘The aim of this program is to question the standards by which our society draws lines of tastes and otherwise stratifies itself and categorizes the behavior of its citizens.’ Not true. The aim of the show is to bash those whom it is *not* politically incorrect to do so. Like Catholics.

“In August, 2000, we were informed that ‘Mr. Maher and the producers of the show regularly push the limits of the

envelope to encourage examination of societal norms.' Not so. If this were true, Maher would have regularly pushed gay hot buttons by examining why so many of them engage in AIDS-producing behavior at AIDS fund-raising events.

"In January, 2001, we were told the show is 'cutting edge.' But there is nothing 'cutting edge' about a show that appeals to the most debased appetites in society. By this logic, Jerry Springer is a genius.

"In the King exchange, Maher was serious when he admitted, 'I think religion is bad and drugs are good.' He also said 'If you want to kill yourself, kill yourself. I'm pro-death.' This explains everything. Now we know what makes him tick. He needs our prayers."

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## **LEAGUE'S AMICUS IN VOUCHER CASE IS VICTORIOUS**

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed the decision made today by the U.S. Supreme Court allowing school vouchers:

"This is a victory for the poor that triumphed over the so-called champions of the poor. Condemned to failing public schools in Cleveland, the poor have long opted for the same equal opportunity afforded the wealthy. Now they have it. What a victory for diversity!

"It is worth remembering that in the mid-1990s, a federal court ordered the state of Ohio to take over the atrocious public schools in Cleveland. The court even went so far as to declare the schools an 'emergency condition.' That is what

triggered the voucher program giving the poor school choice.

“The Catholic League’s amicus brief in *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris* argued that previous court characterizations of Catholic schools as being ‘pervasively sectarian’ were based on prejudice. Any reasonable student of these decisions would have to agree. Yet the four dissenting judges, led by Justice David Souter, seem not to get it. Souter wrote that ‘There is, in any case, no way to interpret the 96.6 percent of current voucher money going to religious schools as reflecting a free and genuine choice by the families that apply to voucher.’ He has it backwards: there is no free and genuine choice by families in choosing the right school for their children if they are locked into the public-school monopoly. The fact that most parents opt for sending their kids to Catholic schools (the money goes to them, not to the schools) is a tribute to parochial schools and a damning indictment of public schools.

“In a nation where some judges think it is constitutional to burn the American flag on public school property, but it is unconstitutional to say the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, this decision comes at the right time. We hope that those atheists who are at war with our religious heritage will also avail themselves of vouchers and enroll their kids in private schools run by non-believers. The sooner we empty the public schools of these people, the better.”

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**FEDERAL COURT BANS PLEDGE OF  
ALLEGIANCE; CIVIL**

# DISOBEDIENCE URGED

The decision by the 9<sup>th</sup> circuit court of appeals to declare the Pledge of Allegiance unconstitutional was addressed today by Catholic League president William Donohue:

“In my first book on the ACLU (*The Politics of the ACLU*), I mentioned that the founder of the organization, Roger Baldwin, had said in his later years that ‘the record will show a lot of foolish statements and motions by somebody or other connected with the ACLU, like, for instance, taking ‘In God We Trust’ off coins or postage or denying Congress its chaplains.’ How right he was.

“But today the record shows that one of the most foolish statements in the annals of civil-libertarian fanaticism has been rendered by a federal appeals court in California. It has ruled that the dreaded words ‘under God’ make the Pledge unconstitutional. According to this logic, we simply can’t have such an expression of free speech in this country and remain free. Students can wear T-shirts with obscenities on them, and they can practice simulated sex on stage in a school play, but they can’t say the Pledge. That’s pushing the envelope too far.

“It makes no sense to debate this issue. The establishment clause, written by James Madison, was written to prohibit government from encroaching on religion. It was not written to obliterate every religious vestige of our cultural traditions simply because some are hostile to our heritage.

“Instead of debate, we need civil disobedience. We need teachers all over the nation to lead their students in the Pledge (respecting the right of dissenters not to participate). But before doing so, the teachers need to contact both the police and the media: it is vitally important that everyone watch on television the teachers being taken

away in handcuffs for saying the Pledge of Allegiance. This will expose who the real authoritarians are and thus set the stage for a reversal of this madness.”

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## **TEXAS BISHOP EDMOND CARMODY SHOWS SPUNK**

Edmond Carmody, Bishop of the Corpus Christi Diocese, has banned both the gubernatorial and lieutenant gubernatorial candidates in the Democratic party from speaking at diocesan churches because of their abortion-rights position. The candidates, Tony Sanchez and John Sharp, are Catholics who say they are personally opposed to abortion but nonetheless support a woman's right to terminate her pregnancy.

Since 1999, the Corpus Christi Diocese has had guidelines barring Catholics who support abortion rights from speaking at any Catholic institution and from holding church positions. Catholic League president William Donohue explained why Bishop Carmody's decision to implement these strictures is especially important now:

“Many adversaries of the Catholic Church think that now is the time to strike. They sense a Church on the run, with bishops in retreat. But Bishop Carmody has already proved them wrong.

“Because some clergymen have failed to live up to the Church's teachings on sexuality doesn't mean that the teachings are flawed. The teachings put a premium on restraint and it was the failure of all priests to internalize this property that led to the scandal. It wasn't the message that failed—it was some of the messengers.

“By not backing down to those who say the Church has no business speaking publicly on sexual morality, Bishop Carmody has done the Church a public service. Moreover, he has shown that pro-abortion Catholics have no more right to sell themselves as Catholics than do pro-racist Catholics. These are our house rules. It is also the Catholic contribution to diversity.”

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## **BISHOPS MAKE PROGRESS BUT MUCH WORK REMAINS**

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on the final charter that the bishops approved today in Dallas:

“Every fair-minded person will say that the U.S. bishops made much progress in dealing with the issue of child sexual molestation by priests. But progress is not the same as a satisfactory conclusion.

“The draft document that seemed to give a pass to those priests who previously abused a minor on one occasion has been altered to reflect a more realistic understanding of what lay Catholics want.

“But there is a problem regarding the rights of the accused. It appears that the charter may short-circuit some due process rights. When an attempt was made to say that all ‘credible’ allegations will be passed on to civil authorities, it was defeated. When an attempt was made to say that all ‘non-frivolous’ allegations would be passed on, it was also rejected. Does this now mean that there will be one standard for priests accused of child sexual abuse and one for the rest of the nation? Surely it would have been better for the

bishops to simply assert that they will abide by the laws in their states and localities.

“While the bishops dealt firmly with molesting priests, they did virtually nothing about those bishops who enabled offending priests. This omission is the most glaring exception in the charter. While no one realistically believed that the bishops would start pointing fingers at their colleagues who played musical chairs with child molesters, it is nonetheless outrageous that they exculpated themselves altogether. Unless some resignations are forthcoming, lay Catholics will not be satisfied.

“On the issue of the relationship between theological dissidence and behavioral deviance, nothing was done. This, and all the attendant forces that have driven the scandal, remain on the table. This issue must be forthrightly addressed if real progress is to be made.”

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## **NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER EXPLOITS MEDIA**

Thomas Fox, publisher of the *National Catholic Reporter*, warned the media today of the likelihood that the Vatican may veto the document that will be approved this afternoon by the U.S. bishops in Dallas. Fox based his remarks on a report by John Allen, the Rome correspondent for the weekly newspaper, that appears today on the website of the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:



“Nothing pleases the *National Catholic Reporter* more than division in the Catholic Church. They thrive on it and indeed contribute to it.

“The latest example is today’s irresponsible remarks by Thomas Fox. He pretended to be breaking a story when, in fact, there is nothing to break. Everyone knows that there are a few in the Vatican who have been advising the U.S. bishops not to overextend themselves in Dallas. But when the president of the bishops’ conference, Bishop Wilton Gregory, was asked about this yesterday, he rightly said, ‘I put more confidence in the Holy Father than all the other canonical opinions.’ Now let’s remember what the Holy Father said when the U.S. cardinals met in Rome in April. He called child sexual molestation a ‘crime’ and not just a sin. And he said there was no place in the priesthood for such men.

“Our problem is less with John Allen than with Tom Fox. Allen did not sensationalize his story the way Fox did on TV. What Allen said was that last Saturday he met a Belgian cardinal while waiting for his bags at an airport and, lo and behold, the cardinal offered some reservations about the bishops going too far. That’s it.

“It is irresponsible for any journalist, pundit or activist to exploit the Dallas conference for the purpose of furthering his agenda. And that’s exactly what the *National Catholic Reporter* did in this instance.”

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**BISHOPS BEWARE: AGENDAS ARE**

# IN THE AIR

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following cautionary note today regarding the bishops' meeting in Dallas:

"Even before the meeting begins, some activists have branded it a failure. Consider Call to Action. Its spokeswoman, Linda Pieczynski, is quoted as saying, 'We don't really trust the bishops to do the right thing and come up with the solutions.' For those unacquainted with this group, what this means is that because the bishops are not prepared to overturn virtually every Catholic teaching on sexuality—something Call to Action desperately wants—the fruits of the bishops' efforts are therefore dead on arrival. Given this organization's determination to prejudge the outcome of the bishops' meeting, it makes no sense to even give lip service to their demands. They should simply be dismissed.

"Dignity USA is another 'progressive' Catholic organization that has made up its mind in advance. For this group, the mere mention of the fact that the cases of priestly sexual molestation that have been in the news are mostly of a homosexual nature is, ipso facto, evidence of homophobia. It needs to be said that while most gay priests are not molesters it remains true that most of the molesters are gay. This is a fact that cannot be ignored any longer. Indeed, the best social science evidence on this subject shows that a man who is drawn to sexual encounters with adolescent boys will have seven to eight times as many victims as other, nonhomosexual abusers.

"Here's another problem. On Friday in Dallas, one of the women who will speak on the subject of 'The Abuse of Women by Catholic Clergy' (a meeting organized by SNAP), comes to the event with her own baggage. She says she had an on-going affair with a priest beginning in 1984 when she was 18 and he

was in his late 30s. In the fall of 1999, she declared victim status and triggered an investigation against the priest. This was a few months after she admitted having another sexual affair with the same priest. To top it off, this 'victim' was married in 1997.

"In short, the bishops should beware of all the agendas that are in the air."

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## **RULE OF LAW APPLIES—EVEN TO THE CHURCH**

Some who are targeting the Catholic Church in the wake of the sex abuse scandal are seeking to exploit the law to make their case. Catholic League president William Donohue cited the following examples today:

"In some parts of the nation, local D.A.'s are seeking to obtain the personnel records of priests extending back decades ago. But if their real interest is protecting the kids, why are the clergy of other religions being given a pass? The rate of pedophilia among priests is comparable to that found among ministers, rabbis and others. Moreover, why are the records of teachers not sought? Or social workers? Or therapists?

"Then we have the spectacle of victims' rights groups asking that the statute of limitations be lifted in cases of priestly sexual abuse. But there is a reason why the law provides for a statute of limitations—it is called fairness. How can someone realistically be expected to defend himself when he is being charged with a crime that allegedly occurred several decades ago? And since when did priests become second-class

citizens: if the statute of limitations is not being invalidated for everyone else, why should an exception be made for priests? The Fourteenth Amendment clause ensuring equal protection before the law applies to everyone.

“Now we learn that a class-action lawsuit has been filed to void the secrecy provisions in all settlements signed by those involved in such cases. Notwithstanding the fact that such a lawsuit is bound to fail (this is the work of steeple-chasing lawyer Jeffrey Anderson), the most absurd part of this is that the alleged victims want the secrecy part of their agreement lifted but insist they have every right to keep the money they got. In short, they want a selective interpretation of the law so they can go on TV bashing the Church while hoarding their stash. It would be as if the Church asked for its money back while demanding that the secrecy provision remain in force.

“No wrongdoing by the Church justifies attempts to plunder its resources by rewriting the law. This is the work of bandits disguised as attorneys.”

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## **BILLBOARD ERUPTS IN ANTI-CATHOLIC FUROR**

The May 25 edition of *Billboard*, the music newsweekly, carried a piece by editor-in-chief Timothy White that congratulated Irish singer Sinead O'Connor for ripping up a picture of the pope on *Saturday Night Live* in 1992; O'Connor declared, “Fight the real enemy.” In reference to the current scandal in the Catholic Church, White cheered O'Connor by stating “it would appear with each passing day that Sinead O'Connor has less and

less to apologize for.” The rest of the article condemned the Catholic Church for being intolerant, misogynist and fascistic. It even manages to cite Galileo.

The June 8 *Billboard* continues with its condemnatory remarks of the Catholic Church, this time allowing those in the entertainment industry to attack the Church in its letters section. Brian Philips, senior vice president and general manager of Country Music Television, praised White for his “sensitive treatment of the issue.” Bob Leon, projects director of the Songwriters Hall of Fame, recalls his years in Catholic schools as being ones of “dread, anxiety and nausea”; he also says he remembers being whacked with a ruler. Sinéad O’Connor wrote to convey her thanks to White as well.

Catholic League president William Donohue answered the critics today:

“*Billboard* is replete with articles on the music and television industry. One no more expects to read an article on Catholicism in *Billboard*—by either friend or foe—than one would expect *Field and Stream* to opine on Puerto Ricans. But Timothy White just can’t resist the opportunity to sucker punch. Just as revealing are his fat-cat buddies in the entertainment industry. They, too, experience orgasmic delight in bashing the Catholic Church, all the while crying over their bruised knuckles from yesteryear. There is a word in the English language for these guys—they’re called spoiled brats.”