

# PHILOMENA AND THE POPE



Bill Donohue discusses the latest lies about “Philomena”:

Today’s *New York Times* rates “Philomena” as a contender to “12 Years a Slave” for Best Adapted Screenplay; it says it has no chance of winning an Oscar in three other categories where it received a nomination. It says it is a contender because one of its “advantages” is “its backing by the Weinstein Company, which even orchestrated an audience with Pope Francis.”

It is true that the Weinstein boys, Harvey and Bob, have spent an enormous amount of money lobbying this movie. The non-stop ads in the *New York Times*, multiple each day, and in every section of the paper, are just one index. The lavish parties that Harvey throws in Hollywood—everyone wants an invitation—also position him to score. While this may go down well with those in Tinseltown, it does not sit well in the Vatican.

Father Frederico Lombardi, head of the Holy See Press Office, explicitly said that the pope would not see the movie, and he took umbrage at those who were exploiting the pope to cash in on the film. “It is also important to avoid using the pope as part of a marketing strategy,” he said.

Regarding the so-called meeting of Philomena Lee and Pope Francis, she was denied a private audience; all she got was a pass to join the general audience. According to Vatican Radio, in the nine months that he was the pope in 2013, “over 6.6 million people attended events led by Pope Francis at the Vatican.” Of that number, 1.5 million attended the pope’s weekly general audience. Philomena Lee was one of the 1.5

million people who “met” the pope.

Not sure how many children “meet” Santa at Macy’s each year, but at least they can be forgiven for hyping their encounter. More important, they actually spend more time with him than Philomena spent with the pope.

---

## PHILOMENA NEVER FOUND HER SON



**Lies Lies & More Lies**

Bill Donohue comments on more lies being told about “Philomena”:

The lies never stop. The latest lie is that Philomena Lee found her son.

Yesterday, the website of “People” quoted the 80-year-old Lee as saying, “I’m thankful and happy I did find him, and that’s all I ever wanted to do.”

Similarly, in the entertainment section of “Time” yesterday, it was written, “Many other Irish women found themselves in similar situations [pregnant out-of-wedlock at age 18 in 1952] but, unlike Lee, never managed to find the children who were taken from them.”

All of this is a lie. Lee never found her son: he died in 1995 and was buried on the grounds at the very convent that took her in when she was in need. She is lying about this because it fits with the lie about her looking frantically for him for 50 years. In the movie, she is depicted as searching for her son in the United States.

Philomena Lee never set foot in the United States until last November when she went to Los Angeles to hawk her movie. Indeed, she never even bothered to tell her daughter, Jane, about the brother she never knew she had until Philomena had too much to drink at a Christmas party in 2004.

Kevin Cullen of the *Boston Globe* adds to the lies when he says the nuns “gave him [the son] away to an American family behind Philomena’s back.” In fact, Philomena voluntarily signed adoption papers relinquishing custody of her son when she was 22 years of age.

None of this is by accident. It is as deliberate as it is malicious.

---

## CPAC IS A DISGRACE



Bill Donohue comments on the decision by the American Conservative Union (ACU), host of the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), to invite American Atheists to this year’s conference; the decision has since been rescinded:

It took Brent Bozell, president of the Media Research Center, to set off the alarms at CPAC. But it is too late: Bozell is right to say that it makes no difference that the ACU and CPAC have backed down. I have my own reasons for agreeing with him.

In 1989, I spoke at the 16th annual CPAC conference on the subject, “Liberty and the ACLU.” Even back then, it was clear to me that conservative principles were being compromised, which is why I wound up debating an empty chair: after Ira

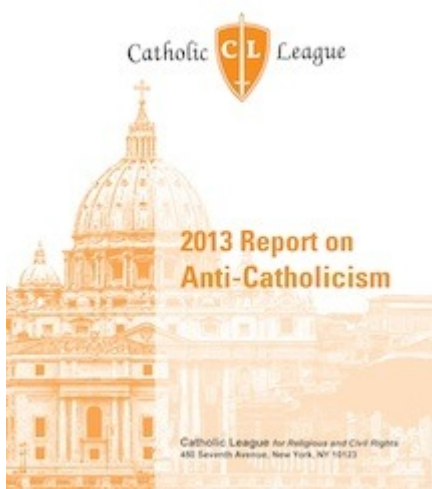
Glasser, the head of the ACLU, refused to debate me, I was disinvited. Were it not for a protest by Reed Irving of Accuracy in Academia, and the support I received from The Heritage Foundation (I had just completed a year there as a Bradley Resident Scholar), the second invitation would not have been granted.

Regarding this latest incident, a spokesperson for ACU said that it withdrew the invitation to American Atheists because of the “divisive and inappropriate language” of its president, David Silverman. In other words, had Silverman used more temperate language, the invitation would still stand. Hate speech is hate speech, whether delivered with invective or polish.

There is more than incompetence at work here. CPAC is a disgrace. They should have learned by now that big tents have a way of collapsing in the middle.

---

## ANNUAL REPORT NOW AVAILABLE



The Catholic League's 2013 *Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism* is now available. This volume not only lists incidents of anti-Catholicism that came to our attention, it offers a detailed account of our response to serious issues.

The *Annual Report* features an Executive Summary by Bill Donohue: it discusses the Catholic League's most prominent

efforts to combat anti-Catholicism in 2013. The publication covers such areas as activist organizations, the arts, education, government, and the media. Special sections include "Bill Maher's Hate Speech," and "The War on Christmas." We also give wide coverage to the way the media reacted to the close of Pope Benedict XVI's tenure, and the election of Pope Francis.

Copies have been sent to many in government, education, the media, and law. Religious leaders, including the bishops, will receive a copy.

To order a copy, click [here](#), or call our office at 212-371-3191; they are available for \$10. Orders of ten or more are \$5 each, while supplies last.

---

## NYC COUNCIL UNIT BANNED FROM ST. PAT'S PARADE



Bill Donohue comments on the decision by New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito to ban an official City Council presence in this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade:

There is a growing contempt for tolerance and diversity in the homosexual community, and among their supporters, especially in New York. The latest example is the ruling by the New York City Council Speaker banning an official City Council presence, banner, and Sergeant-at-Arms in this year's march. When a government agent prohibits the celebration of St.

Patrick's Day, a tradition that has been honored for hundreds of years, it is an obscene exercise in censorship.

The St. Patrick's Day Parade does not permit pro-life activists to march under their own banner, but that hardly makes this Catholic event anti-life; it simply means this is not a day that centers on abortion. Ditto for gays: it is not about them. They are the only ones who are feigning exclusion (gays can march, just so long as they blend in like everyone else).

The protesters obviously loathe diversity: diversity means pluralism, a wholesale rejection of mandated, one-size-fits-all policies. What these activists want is the right to impose their agenda on Irish Catholics, neutering a day set aside to honor St. Patrick.

This issue is settled territory: the U.S. Supreme Court, citing diversity, ruled that a private parade cannot have its strictures dictated to by the law. The only ones who object are those who believe in bullying.

If some contrarians sought to use the club of the law, and public pressure, to force their way into the Gay Pride Parade—insisting on banners that read, “Straight Is Great”—they would be run out of town. So should our intolerant Mayor, Bill de Blasio, and his equally intolerant sidekick, City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. There can be no compromise when it comes to our First Amendment right to freedom of religion, speech, and assembly.

---

# PBS' 48th HIT ON CATHOLIC CHURCH



Bill Donohue comments on tonight's PBS "Frontline" 90 minute presentation, "Secrets of the Vatican":

"Secrets of the Vatican" marks the 48th time PBS has addressed sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. Though this problem is practically non-existent in the Catholic community these days, and is rampant in the public schools, as well as in the Orthodox Jewish community, PBS has devoted a combined total of ZERO episodes on both.

All the contrived melodrama is there: ominous dark images; dramatic music; a deep voice-over; bleak hallways; shadowy figures locking doors as a boy enters the room; the words "Power," "Money," and "Sex" flashing about, etc. The predictable villain: Pope Benedict XVI. Ironically, he did more than anyone to check this problem, but facts don't matter when Jason Berry is involved.

A dissident Catholic, Berry is a co-producer of this show; he was also featured in Alex Gibney's film, "Mea Maxima Culpa." Indeed, tonight's hit job is nothing more than a reread of Gibney's propaganda: a New Orleans reporter who previewed it says, "this film reminded me of 'Mea Maxima Culpa.'" These guys can't go to the sewer too often.

Catholic bashers love to focus on "persecuted" gays, without, of course, holding them responsible for anything. We are told how easy it is to meet a gay priest in Rome, "and then at the altar the following Sunday." Then we meet a promiscuous gay

priest who says the Church's teachings on homosexuality are "like a knife in your heart." No doubt some alcoholic priests find the Church's teachings on alcohol consumption difficult as well, but few would demand that the teachings must change.

None of these people at PBS give a hoot about the sexual abuse of minors, for if they did, they would cover those communities where it is thriving. No, their goal is to discredit the moral voice of Catholicism.

Contact Frontline Press Person, Patrice Taddonio:  
[Patrice\\_taddonio@wgbh.org](mailto:Patrice_taddonio@wgbh.org)

---

## DONOHUE'S "PHILOMENA" ACCOUNT DISPUTED



Bill Donohue comments on a news story in yesterday's *The Sunday Times* (of London):

Steve Coogan, a producer and screenplay writer for "Philomena," is quoted as saying that the nuns asked Philomena Lee's son, Anthony, "to pay thousands of pounds to be buried" on the grounds of Sean Ross Abbey. "We didn't put that in the film. We were restrained." He also says, "The film offers an olive branch to the church in showing Philomena's forgiveness. She dignifies her religion."

Coogan's arrogance is on a par with his inability to tell the truth. Since when has it been inappropriate for anyone to

charge a burial fee? Does Coogan know of some atheist-owned cemetery that waives fees? Next thing we know he'll condemn monks for making a profit off their wines.

Coogan, and the others associated with this film, have smeared the Church with lies, and now he has the gall to say they have been restrained in their depiction. As for Philomena Lee's dignity, it is called into question every time she lies about her life story.

Coogan concludes his remarks with this gem: "The Catholic League is a conservative wing of the Catholic church. They say no fee was charged for Anthony's adoption, but they did ask for a large donation. Well, call me stupid, but that sounds like a financial transaction."

Sister Julie Rose, an official at the convent in question, flatly denies charging a fee. "No children were sold by any mother or the congregation, to any party, nor did the congregation receive any monies in relation to adoption while we were running the mother and baby home." Even the author of the book upon which "Philomena" is based admits that it was "customary for the adopting party to make a donation," but that it was not mandatory.

So, yes, anyone who cannot distinguish between a fee and a donation is, in fact, stupid. On that we agree.

---

**MAHER      AND      COOGAN      DISCUSS**

# “PHILOMENA”



Bill Donohue comments on the Feb. 21 episode of Bill Maher's show:

Steve Coogan, a producer and screenplay writer of “Philomena,” was a guest of Bill Maher on Friday night's show. Maher said there were 60,000 Philomenas in Ireland, women who had children out-of-wedlock and gave their children up for adoption. Coogan claimed they were “maltreated and eventually their babies were sold to Americans.”

Maher said that Philomena Lee “looks like a slave in the movie,” stating she worked long hours in the laundries. Coogan went further contending that the women “were victims of actual slavery,” and were “incarcerated against their will.”

But no one—not a single woman—was ever incarcerated against her will in any of the laundries: *every last one of them came to the nuns—the nuns did not fetch the troubled women.* Moreover, they were not mistreated, never mind enslaved, and no babies were sold. How do we know this? One year ago, the Irish government released the McAleese Report on the Magdalene Laundries: it definitively debunks these myths, and many more, yet people like Maher and Coogan continue to promote them.

To read my account on this subject, click [here](#). Copies of my analysis were sent all over the U.S., England, and Ireland, and no one has disputed the accuracy of my work.

Maher also said that “every time I do something on the Catholic Church, the head of the Catholic Church, William Donohue, wants to fight me, actually fight me (he puts his fists up). A 58-year-old guy and a 65-year-old guy—it's gonna

be a really good match.”

I didn’t know I was “the head of the Catholic Church,” but in any event, I am now a year older. I did offer to box him a few years ago when I was on with Megyn Kelly; he told Larry King I threatened him with violence! The offer still stands—get the Everlast ready.

---

## “GMA” ADDS TO “PHILOMENA” LIES



Bill Donohue comments on today’s ABC show, “Good Morning America,” which featured a segment on “Philomena”:

“GMA” interviewed Steve Coogan, a producer and screenwriter of “Philomena.” In the voice over, the following was said: “Philomena is based on a true story about an Irishwoman played by Judi Dench who travels to the U.S. to track down the son she was forced to give up for adoption when she was a teenager.”

In his remarks, Coogan said that 50 years ago in Ireland, women who were pregnant out-of-wedlock, and abandoned by their family, would go to homes run by nuns where “your child would be sold to Catholic, often American, wealthy American couples.”

Regarding the lie that Philomena Lee went to the U.S. to look for her son, here is what Suzanne Daley and Douglas Dalby wrote in the *New York Times* on November 29, 2013: “In fact,

much of the movie is a fictionalized version of events. Ms. Lee, for instance, never went to the United States to look for her son with Mr. Sixsmith, who is played by Steve Coogan, a central part of the film.”

Not only did Philomena voluntarily sign an oath when she was 22 giving her son up for adoption, in the film itself, Dench says, “No one coerced me. I signed of my own free will.”

Regarding the lie about the baby being sold, in the book by Martin Sixsmith upon which the film is based, he says, “While neither the NCCC [National Conference of Catholic Charities] nor Sean Ross Abbey [the convent where Philomena resided] charge any fees, it is customary for the adopting party to make a donation....” Moreover, nuns at the abbey today insist that no fee was charged.

These lies are being aided and abetted by many in the media, for reasons that only underscore the existence of the Catholic League.

---

## **BBC LIES ABOUT “PHILOMENA”**



Bill Donohue comments on the BBC’s lies about Philomena Lee:

In a news story just published, Chris Buckler, BBC Ireland Correspondent, writes that Philomena Lee’s child was “taken away” from her. “When her son Anthony was three-and-a-half years old, the nuns in the convent gave him up for adoption to

an American couple. *It all happened behind Philomena's back.*"  
(My italics.)

This is a lie. The proof is the oath that Philomena signed. Here is what it said:

"That I am the mother of Anthony Lee who was born to me out of wedlock at Sean Ross Abbey, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, Ireland, on 5th July 1952.

"That I hereby relinquish full claim forever to my said child Anthony Lee and surrender said child to Sister Barbara, Superioress of Sean Ross Abbey, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, Ireland.

"The purpose of this relinquishment is to enable Sister Barbara to make my child available for adoption to any person she considers fit and proper inside or outside the state.

"That I further undertake never to attempt to see, interfere with or make any claim to the said child at any future time."

This oath was signed by Philomena Lee. Below her signature, it says:

"Subscribed and sworn to by the said Philomena Lee as her free act and deed this 27th day of June 1955." Signed, Desmond A. Houlihan, notary public.

It should also be noted that Philomena was not a teenager when she voluntarily put her son up for adoption—she was 22. Anyone who doubts what I have said should read p. 51 in Martin Sixsmith's book, *Philomena*. While he is a major part of the spin game regarding Philomena, the oath that he reprints settles the argument: her baby was not "forcibly taken" and nothing happened "behind her back."