

SUPPORT CONSCIENCE RIGHTS NOW

Catholic League president Bill Donohue calls on Catholics to stand with the bishops in supporting conscience rights:

Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, chair of the bishops' conference Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and Louisville Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, who heads the Committee on Religious Liberty, are asking Catholics to call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard today (202-224-3121), voicing their support for the Conscience Protection Act. The Congress will soon decide whether to enact this measure as part of the funding bill for fiscal year 2018.

Dolan and Kurtz are sounding the alarms because the "Increasing and fierce attacks on conscience rights regarding abortion cry out for an immediate remedy." They specifically cite the pressure that nurses and other healthcare providers are coming under to perform abortions, and attempts to force churches and religious non-profits to provide coverage for abortions in their healthcare plans.

We encourage all Catholics to stand with Cardinal Dolan and Archbishop Kurtz by contacting the Capitol Switchboard and their congressional representatives today.

CNN SERIES ON PAPACY DEBUTS SUNDAY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on what he has learned about a CNN documentary on the papacy:

CNN's six-part series, "Pope: The Most Powerful Man in History," debuts on March 11. It promises to be a comprehensive account of the history of the papacy, covering such historical events as the origins of the Catholic Church, the legalization of Christianity under Constantine, the split between the Catholic and Orthodox churches, the Crusades, the Reformation, and a series of reform measures, such as Vatican II, that have been taken by various popes.

From the trailers posted online, the documentary will feature comments by such distinguished persons as Cardinal Donald Wuerl. But it also profiles strident enemies of the Catholic Church, such as Anthea Butler, a professor who has called God a "white racist." Surely if CNN were doing a series on gays it would not invite gay bashers to opine, even if the commentary aired in the show proved to be inoffensive.

Hopefully, this documentary will be more accurate than "What the Pope Knew"; it aired on CNN in 2010. It painted a bleak, and sometimes factually incorrect, account of how Pope Benedict XVI handled the sexual abuse scandal. It also failed to interview key persons whose experience with these matters contradicted claims made in the show. To read my analysis of that documentary, click [here](#).

If there is one theme in this new series, it appears to be the incredible power of a "hierarchal" institution: the influence and reach of the Catholic Church is central to the documentary.

There is nothing inherently biased about such a perspective, but when seen through the lens of liberal-left producers and writers—CNN is not known for hiring practicing Catholics to do such shows—it can evince an ideological edge. Moreover, a fixation on power and hierarchy is a signature of left politics.

So for example, one of the segments is dedicated to

“Unearthing the Secrets of the Vatican.” The notion that the Catholic Church is riddled with “secrets”—all of which are inexplicably uncovered by industrious producers and writers—is right out of the playbook of its most fierce critics.

In its promotional material, CNN says the series “goes inside the Vatican to reveal the *true* power held by popes throughout the ages.” (My italic.) An article posted on Beliefnet about the show mentions that viewers learn how Christians “created a hierarchy,” one whose purpose was “to make sure that everyone was worshipping correctly.” In this rendering, the Church is not so much interested in salvation as it is control.

This perspective fits in with comments made by Liam Neeson, the show’s narrator. Calling himself “an amateur scholar,” Neeson is excited about discussing how “the Catholic Church came to be a prevailing force through fair means and foul.” Prevailing force for what? Good or evil?

CNN likes to hire Neeson to do commentary on Catholicism. In 2010, he narrated a two-hour special, “After Jesus—The First Christians.” Three years later he told CNN viewers how the Church evolved. “Armed with a hierarchy, a distinct set of beliefs and rituals, and canon of sacred texts, the Christian church not only had structure, but had power....” Hierarchy. Power. Those are the defining elements of Catholicism for this “amateur scholar.”

Why does CNN like to hire Neeson? He says he was “raised” Catholic, and we all know what that means. Today he is more well known for his lobbying efforts against the Catholic Church: He wants abortion legalized in Ireland. A few years ago, while Muslims were raping and beheading Christians, he fell in love with Islam and almost converted.

On March 8, CNN posted an interview with Neeson about the new series and other matters. What would he like to ask Pope Francis? He answered, “When will Mary Magdalene be canonized

and when can we have women priests?"

Fortunately, I can help the "amateur scholar" out. The answer to the first question is: Mary Magdalene is regarded by the Catholic Church as a First Century saint; her feast day is July 22. The answer to the latter question is: Never.

Neeson aside, it appears that CNN's obsession with power and hierarchy more accurately reflects what it has become, more than what the Catholic Church is.

In 2015, *Business Insider* concluded that the Vatican was worth about \$3 billion. In 2014, Morgan Stanley estimated CNN's worth around \$10 billion. And while the Catholic Church is a global institution, so is CNN. It has two dozen branded networks and services accessible to more than 2 billion people in more than 200 countries and territories. That's a lot of power and hierarchy.

Here's another nugget. The series on the papacy is the joint work of CNN and Glass Entertainment Group. Guess who runs Glass Entertainment? Nancy Glass. Guess who is also one of the executive producers of the CNN series? Nancy Glass. Jon Hirsch is another one of the executive producers, and he is Vice President and Producer at Glass Entertainment.

Power and hierarchy—seems CNN just can't get enough of it.

POPE'S PERFORMANCE RATINGS SLIP

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a new survey on Pope Francis:

Next week, Pope Francis will celebrate his fifth anniversary as pontiff. Fortunately, Pew Research Center has just published a survey of his tenure, giving us a good idea of how he is doing.

Most news reports are focusing on his high favorability rating—84 percent among Catholics—noting that Republican Catholics are slightly less inclined (79 percent) to see him that way. That analysis masks some deeper problems for the pope.

Regarding the pope's favorability rating, he compares well against his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, but fares poorly against Pope John Paul II. Unfortunately for Benedict, John Paul II was a hard act to follow—his favorability rating hit over 90 percent in the mid-1990s. Moreover, unlike Francis, the media never warmed to Benedict, and in some quarters were openly hostile.

Favorability ratings are not unimportant, but they lack specificity: they tell us nothing about a leader's performance on important issues. This is where Pope Francis' numbers have been slipping.

Have the changes made by Pope Francis been for the better or the worse? Five years into his papacy, the percent who say he is a major change for the better has fallen from 69 percent to 58 percent. The percent that say he is not a major change for the better grew from 17 percent to 26 percent (7 percent say he is a major change for the worse, up from 3 percent).

These changes are statistically significant; they are also troubling. What accounts for the falloff?

The percent of Catholics who think he is "too liberal" has grown in five years from 19 percent to 34 percent; during that same time, the percent who dub him "naive" has spiked from 15 percent to 24 percent.

In 2013, 84 percent of Catholics said the pope was doing an “excellent or good job,” but today that figure is 70 percent. Five years ago 10 percent said his performance was “only fair or poor,” but today it has climbed to 25 percent.

How is he doing with “standing up for traditional morals”? Not well—his numbers are going south. In 2013, 80 percent rated him “excellent or good,” but in 2018 the figure dropped to 70 percent. Those who say he is doing “only fair or poor” rose from 13 percent to 26 percent.

What about addressing the sex abuse scandal? When he began his tenure, 55 percent rated his work as “excellent or good,” but now only 45 percent feel this way. Conversely, five years ago 34 percent said he was doing “only fair or poor,” but now that figure is 46 percent. Even worse, the Pew survey was taken before the pope’s disastrous trip to Chile (the sex abuse scandal blew up during his visit).

It won’t be easy for the pope to change these numbers. If a third of Catholics see him as “too liberal,” and a quarter label him “naive,” the prospects for him to pivot are not auspicious.

WASHINGTON ST. TAXPAYERS TO FUND ABORTIONS?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a taxpayer-funded abortion bill:

The state senate in Washington has passed a bill forcing health insurance companies that pay for maternity care to pay for abortion as well. There is no “opt-out” clause for

religious institutions. The bill would allow the state to tap Medicaid funds to pay for abortions; contraception and sterilization are also covered. Governor Jay Inslee is expected to sign it.

The name of the bill speaks volumes: The “Reproductive Parity Act.” Translated, this means that the proponents of the bill believe it is unfair to allow taxpayers to pay for a mother to give birth to her baby while denying funds to a mother who elects to have her baby killed. Live or die—that is their sick idea of parity.

Conscience rights obviously have little standing in Washington, though if the draft were suddenly reintroduced, it is a sure bet that such rights would quickly be discovered. The bill will certainly be challenged in the courts and is not likely to pass muster, not, at least, at the highest level. We stand with the bishops of Washington, ably led by Seattle Archbishop Peter Sartain, in opposing this unconstitutional infringement on religious liberty.

It is a tribute to the nation that Americans are appalled by mass killings in the schools. It does not speak well that so many are not equally appalled by mass killings in the womb, funded, perversely, against the will of millions.

NYS CHILD VICTIMS ACT IS FLAWED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue explains the flaws in the Child Victims Act, a measure included in this year’s budget by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo. It is being widely distributed to lawmakers, bishops, and the media. To read it,

click [here](#).

80th ANNIVERSARY OF POPE PIUS XII

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the election of Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli as pope; he took the name Pius XII:

On March 2, 1939, Eugenio Pacelli was elected pope and took the name Pius XII. No one did more to save Jews during the Holocaust than he did.

Last year, the BBC announced the results of an internal probe of the war record of Pope Pius XII. It said it was wrong to characterize him as being “silent” during the Holocaust. In 1999, the author of *Hitler’s Pope*, John Cornwell, admitted that he was wrong in making this assessment, and retracted his charge that the pope supported Hitler.

Here is a timeline of notable comments made about Pope Pius XII during and after World War II.

1940

- In the December 23, 1940 issue of *Time* magazine, Albert Einstein was quoted as saying, “Being a lover of freedom, when the Nazi revolution came to Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it, but the universities were immediately silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers, but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks....Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler’s

campaign for suppressing the truth.”

1941

- In its Christmas Day editorial, the *New York Times* said, “The voice of Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas.”

1942

- In its Christmas Day editorial, the *New York Times* wrote, “No Christmas sermon reaches a larger congregation than the message Pope Pius XII addresses to a war-torn world this season.”

1943

- Hitler’s biographer, John Toland, said, “The Church, under the Pope’s guidance, had already saved the lives of more Jews than all other churches, religious institutions, and rescue organizations combined, and was presently hiding thousands of Jews in monasteries, convents, and Vatican City itself.”
- Speaking about events in 1943, Sir Martin Gilbert, perhaps the foremost historian of the Holocaust, noted that “the test for Pacelli was when the Gestapo came to Rome in 1943 to round up Jews. And the Catholic Church, on his direct authority, immediately dispersed as many Jews as they could.”
- In 1943, the World Jewish Congress thanked the pope for persuading Italian authorities to remove 20,000 Jewish refugees from internment camps in Northern Italy.
- On July 25, 1943, Hitler began his plan to kidnap the “Jew-loving” pope.

1944

- Jewish scholar Jeno Levai describes what happened in the spring of 1944 in Hungary. “Over 20,000 passports had been issued by the papal Nuncio—on the average of 500 a

day.”

1945

- Israele Anton Zolli, the Chief Rabbi in Rome, converted to Catholicism. He explained why in his book, *Why I Became a Catholic*. “No hero in history has commanded such an army; none is more militant, more fought against, none more heroic than that conducted by Pius XII in the name of Christian Charity.” He chose the name Eugenio as his baptismal name.

1958

- When the pope died, Golda Meir, Israel’s foreign minister (she would later become prime minister), telegraphed the Vatican saying, “When fearful martyrdom came to our people in the decade of Nazi terror, the voice of the Pope was raised for the victims. The life of our times was enriched by a voice speaking out on the great moral truths above the tumult of daily conflict. We mourn a great servant of peace.”
- Among the Jewish organizations that praised the pope were the following: Anti-Defamation League, the Synagogue Council of America, the Rabbinical Council of America, the New York Board of Rabbis, the American Jewish Committee, the World Jewish Congress, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the National Council of Jewish Women.

Former Israeli diplomat and author Pinchas Lapide estimated that approximately 860,000 Jewish lives were saved by Pope Pius XII. One thing is certain: no leader, religious or secular, did more to save Jews than Pope Pius XII. He is more than a “Righteous Gentile”—he deserves to be made a saint.

Note: The evidence is documented in my book, Why Catholicism Matters.

KIMMEL SHOULD ADDRESS BIGOTRY AT OSCARS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on what subject needs to be addressed at the Oscars:

Coming on the heels of the #MeToo movement, all eyes will be on Jimmy Kimmel as he hosts the Oscars on Sunday. Will he speak to this issue? "It will definitely be part of the show," he said. "How big a part I'm not sure, because I'm still digging through a mound of material."

I have another assignment for him. He can dig through the mound of material that the Catholic League has gathered for him. The subject is related to the #MeToo cause: Hollywood sexual abusers and enablers who have a record of anti-Catholic offenses. To see the evidence, click [here](#).

Kimmel has won many plaudits for bravery by speaking up on a range of controversial issues over the past year. Let's see if he has the courage to speak about the biggest stain on Hollywood's reputation—its raging anti-Catholicism