

TWO NEWSPAPERS TARGET BISHOPS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a lengthy article published on November 4 by the *Boston Globe* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on the U.S. bishops:

The *Boston Globe* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* published a 5400-word article on November 4 discussing how the bishops have handled sexual abuse matters since the Dallas norms were published on this subject in 2002.

The front-page story in the *Globe* shows a photo of four bishops: Bishop Robert Finn, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop John Nienstedt, and Bishop Richard Malone. It says all of them “resisted calls for transparency.” This is factually inaccurate: only McCarrick has done so.

Regarding Kansas City-St. Joseph Bishop Finn, who resigned in 2015, the article says, “He never alerted authorities about photos of young girls’ genitals stashed on a pastor’s laptop. He kept parishioners in the dark, letting the priest mingle with children and families.” It notes that he was found guilty (of a misdemeanor, it should be noted) for failing to report the priest’s suspected child abuse.

Here is what the newspapers did not tell their readers.

- In 2010, a computer technician found disturbing crotch-shot photos of girls fully clothed on the computer of Father Shawn Ratigan; there was one naked photo of a non-sexual nature.
- Even though there was no complainant, a police officer and an attorney were contacted by diocesan officials. They both agreed that the single naked photo did not constitute pornography.
- After Ratigan attempted suicide, he was evaluated by a psychiatrist—at the request of Finn. Ratigan was diagnosed as depressed, but not a pedophile.
- Finn put restrictions on Ratigan, which he broke. The

diocese then contacted the authorities, though it had no legal mandate to do so.

- When it was found that Ratigan was again using a computer, an examination revealed hundreds of offensive photos.
- The Vicar General, Msgr. Robert Murphy, then called the cops (Finn was out of town).
- A week later Ratigan was arrested.

On what basis do these two newspapers claim that Bishop Finn “resisted calls for transparency”? Had it not been for the diocese calling a police officer and an attorney, this case would not have gone forward. And had it not been for the diocese calling the cops when Ratigan failed to abide by the restrictions placed on him, no one would have known about him. The priest never touched or abused a child, though it is clear that he is a disturbed person.

The newspapers say that Minneapolis-St. Paul Archbishop John Nienstedt was warned in 2009 by canon lawyer Jennifer Haselberger not to promote Father Curtis Wehmeyer. In 2010, the priest abused two brothers, 12 and 14, during a camping trip. Haselberger quit in protest in 2013 and contacted the authorities. The archdiocese was subsequently charged with ignoring Wehmeyer’s sexual misconduct and Nienstedt stepped down.

Here is what the newspapers did not tell their readers.

- In 2004, three years after being ordained, Wehmeyer made sexually suggestive remarks to two men, 19 and 20, but they never complained. The archdiocese found out and sent the priest for counseling. Two years later he was found cruising in an area known for gay sex. Though neither of these instances involved breaking the law, they were the kind of red flags that concerned Haselberger.
- Regarding the abuse of the two boys in 2010, the mother of the boys told a priest about it in early June 2012. He urged her to call the cops. On June 14, she provided the details and

was told to report it to the archdiocese. On June 19, she met with church officials and one of the boys was questioned. On June 20, the police were contacted. On June 21, the priest was relieved of his duties. In September, the Ramsey County Attorney commended the archdiocese saying, "They did the right thing."

On what basis do these two newspapers claim that Archbishop Nienstedt "resisted calls for transparency"? Furthermore, there is no report of Nienstedt voluntarily stepping down in 2014 when he was accused of touching a young man's buttocks in 2009 while posing for a Confirmation picture. He was exonerated by the Ramsey County Attorney's Office on March 11, 2014.

The newspapers say that Buffalo Bishop Malone covered up cases of abuse. They cite no examples, relying on allegations made against him by his former executive assistant, a person who has quickly turned into an activist.

"I'm a man who can make a mistake," Malone is quoted as saying in the November 5 edition of the *Buffalo News*, "and that is what I did in two cases where we had allegations of misconduct by a priest with adults." When asked about a New York State Attorney General probe, he said, "I'm glad that is happening. Absolutely, bring it on." That doesn't sound like someone who is "resisting calls for transparency."

It must also be said that the priest on "60 Minutes" who recently accused Malone of keeping in ministry eight or nine priests who should be kicked out of the priesthood, Father Bob Zilliox, has suddenly gone mute when asked to name them. He should be investigated.

There are many other parts of the story as reported by the *Boston Globe* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* that deserve rebuttal, but for now let it be said that their account is incomplete, misleading, and in some cases, downright irresponsible.

“NUNS ON THE BUS” SHOULD HAIL TRUMP

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the “Nuns on the Bus” tour that ended today:

It’s been a tough four weeks for the few “Nuns on the Bus.” The anti-Trump bus tour began in early October and ended November 2, after visiting 21 states over 27 days. The grand finale took place outside the president’s Mar-a-Lago resort. It is not certain who paid for this gambit nor how much damage was done to the environment.

Sister Simone Campbell, the executive director of Network, is the activist behind the tour. She runs a left-wing Catholic organization that is agnostic on the subject of abortion. Well, not quite. She is angry that abortion has allegedly “hijacked” Catholicism, and it is her goal to make the economy the key issue. Her biggest supporter is Nancy Pelosi, a rabid defender of partial-birth abortion.

The bus tour has been a lot of fun. “Do you know how to floss?” That was the question that Sister Mary Ellen put to reporters. She stumped them—the question was not about dental floss. It was about a “deceptively difficult dance move” that Sister Susan McCarthy created. A reporter from the *Nation*, a Stalinist magazine, said the 73-year-old gave a demonstration “shaking her hips side to side while her arms wave in an opposite motion.”

The nuns take their job seriously. When Sister Simone hears someone say that the economy is thriving, her erudite response is to scream, “Liar, Liar, pants on fire.” That’s what she told the few people who greeted her outside a Methodist church

in Wilmington, Delaware recently.

Fans of the nuns whom they met along the way included a woman from Richmond, Virginia. On board the bus, she sang a hip song by Gene Autry, the deceased cowboy actor, called "Back in the Saddle Again." It was released in 1941, the year Bernie Sanders was born.

The same gal who joined the nuns said that during the first hour on the bus, Sister Simone and her staff spoke to her about "Introduction to Life and Ministry on the Bus." It included such topics as "how to flush." It also included some mystical exercises. "We also had a Ceremony of the Beads in which we chose a bead expressing the hope we have for our week on the bus." We can assume they were not rosary beads.

On a more serious note, Sister Simone explained why the bus tour was necessary. "We care for the 100 percent, not just those at the top." Trump, she is convinced, does not. Unfortunately for the nuns, the economic news reported on their last day on the bus was not supportive of their thesis.

On November 2, Labor Department data showed the United States added 250,000 jobs in October, way above the 188,000 that was forecast. The unemployment rate held steady at 3.7%, and average-hourly earnings rose 3.1% from last year, the best pay raise in nearly a decade.

What about African American and Hispanic unemployment? Under President George W. Bush, the average for blacks was 10 percent. Under President Barack Obama, after six years it was 14%, dropping to 8% when he left office. Under Trump—less than two years on the job—it is 6.2%. The unemployment rate today for Hispanics is 4.4%, the lowest figure for them in American history.

What about food stamps? Under Obama, the figure hit almost 48 million people in 2013. Under Trump, there are 3.5 million fewer on food stamps since he took office, down to less than

40 million.

No wonder black radio and TV pundit Tavis Smiley said in 2016 that “Black Americans have ‘lost ground’ under Obama.” Similarly, black activist Horace Cooper opined in 2016 that “the black community has suffered tremendously under the president’s [Obama’s] policies.” In the same vein, black commentator Larry Elder wrote an article in 2015 headlined, “Under Obama, Blacks Are Worse Off—Far Worse.”

Here’s something else that must be noted. When asked this past May if their financial situation had gotten better (or stayed flat or gotten worse), 31% of Americans said they were better off. The figure for Hispanics was 30%; for blacks it was 33%.

Does any of this matter to the “Nuns on the Bus”? If it did, they would have been hailing Trump, not berating him. Ideology can be blinding.

VICIOUS ATTACK ON REP. LEE ZELDIN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an unusually cruel attack on Long Island Rep. Lee Zeldin:

The Catholic League does not endorse candidates for elected office, nor does it side with Republicans or Democrats, but we do address issues of interest to Catholic voters, such as abortion. This issue has now exploded on Long Island, and the Democrats are responsible for the fireworks.

Rep. Lee Zeldin has represented his constituents in Suffolk County, New York for several years: prior to becoming a

congressman, he was a state senator. His opposition to abortion is a source of consternation to his challenger, Perry Gershon. That is of little interest to the Catholic League. But when the New York State Democratic Committee comes to the defense of Gershon by engaging in a vicious attack on Zeldin's pro-life record, that changes everything.

A campaign mailer sent by the New York State Democratic Committee shows a picture of a coat hanger with the inscription, "Lee Zeldin's plan for women's healthcare." On the other side of the flyer it says Zeldin is a "danger to Long Island women."

The real danger is the demagoguery of the New York State Democrats. To exploit the fears of women by portraying Zeldin as some kind of barbarian who would subject women to self-induced abortions is obscene. Those responsible for this vile assault owe Zeldin an apology, and that includes Gershon.

For the record, the Catholic League would register a vigorous protest if a Republican organization were to send a mailer with graphic pictures of bloody unborn babies, attacking an abortion-rights Democrat.

Everyone talks about the need for civility these days, but with examples like this morally low-class attack on Rep. Lee Zeldin, it is obvious that not everyone is sincere.

BEHIND "60 MINUTES" SHOW ON BISHOP MALONE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the "60 Minutes" report on Bishop Richard J. Malone:

Buffalo Bishop Richard J. Malone didn't come across too well on the October 28 edition of "60 Minutes." But there is more to this story than what the CBS show aired. None of the parties to this story come to the table with their hands clean.

Bishop Malone has admitted making bad decisions, but he maintains that his overall record is defensible. The "60 Minutes" segment detailed some of those bad decisions. For example, giving Father Arthur Smith, a known homosexual predator, a clean slate, and then assigning him to the post of cruise ship chaplain was indefensible.

Some priests have come forward with complaints against Bishop Malone. Father Bob Zilliox contends there are eight or nine priests in the Buffalo diocese who should not be in the priesthood. If he is correct, then this would be a very serious situation, one in need of immediate redress.

The "60 Minutes" episode focused heavily on the claims made by Bishop Malone's former executive assistant, Siobhan O'Connor; she worked for him for three years. The 35-year-old quit her job on August 10, but not before anonymously turning over to WKBW-TV copies of files she obtained. The ABC-affiliate ran a three-part series on her and the church documents, and that, in turn, led CBS to interview O'Connor.

Did O'Connor ever apprise Bishop Malone of her concerns? Yes, she spoke to him in March. He said he was handling these matters. Did she do anything further, in the five months before she quit? She wrote an opinion column in the *Buffalo News* in May, stating her sympathy for the victims of abuse, but she never said a word about any wrongdoing by the bishop or anyone else in the diocese. "60 Minutes" did not ask her to explain herself.

O'Connor has moved quickly from the inquiring assistant to the courageous activist. According to CBS News, she wants a

“cleansing” of the Church, saying that “full financial bankruptcy” is preferable to what she witnessed. That is quite a statement given her limited experience working with priests and bishops. Interestingly, on November 13, when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops assemble in Baltimore for their fall meeting, she will be speaking at a rally organized by anti-Church zealots.

It appears O'Connor is fast learning the ropes of how to “cleanse” the Church. Most of those who work for the Catholic Church have never heard of Mitchell Garabedian, but somehow O'Connor has. He is a Boston attorney with a long-standing hatred of the Catholic Church—he does not hide his animus. He was at her side at a press conference on October 30 in Buffalo, saying he is prepared to defend her, if necessary.

Garabedian and I locked horns in 2011 when a Boston priest, Father Charles Murphy, died. As I said at the time, Murphy died “a broken man.” The man who broke him was Garabedian.

In 2006, Garabedian sued Father Murphy for inappropriately touching a minor 25 years earlier; on the eve of the trial, the woman dropped her suit. In 2010, he sued the priest again, this time for allegedly fondling a man 40 years earlier. The accuser was deep in debt and his credibility was questioned even by his own family!

When Father Murphy died, Brian McGrory of the *Boston Globe* called what Garabedian did to him “a disgrace.” I called Garabedian at the time to see if he had any regrets about pressing charges against Father Murphy, and he immediately went into a rage, screaming like a madman. I asked him to calm down, but he continued to go ballistic, making sweeping condemnations of all priests. This is the kind of lawyer that the former executive assistant managed to find.

The media involved come across even worse. On October 30, Bishop Malone released an email that O'Connor sent to

employees at the diocese the day before she quit. In it, she commended the bishop for his great work, saying “it has been a privilege to work by your side as you shepherd our diocese.” She specifically singled out his holiness, as well as his “Sheen-like eloquence” (a reference to one of the Church’s towering American figures, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen).

O’Connor closed her letter thanking Bishop Malone for “all the opportunities I’ve had and lessons I’ve learned while working for you and with you.”

Remember, she had already leaked damaging information to the press about Malone. Did she lie about the bishop in her praiseworthy remarks, or is she simply a duplicitous activist?

When Bishop Malone released O’Connor’s letter, the Associated Press, the most powerful wire service in the nation, took the occasion to make him the bad guy. In a short news story, it said, “Bishop Blasts Whistleblower Who Copied Sex Misconduct Files.” Malone did nothing of the kind: He made public her letter, noting how contradictory it was. AP intentionally misled readers, trying to exculpate O’Connor.

CBS, and “60 Minutes” in particular, also deserve to be criticized. It has had its share of accused molesters working in the most important jobs in the company—Charlie Rose, Jeff Fager, and Les Moonves—yet it never has time to turn its “60 Minutes” cameras on them. In August, Brian Steinberg, writing for *Variety*, said, “The allegations are worthy of an investigation by ‘60 Minutes’—if only they weren’t about the news division that produces the show.”

Dozens of women have accused Rose, the CBS anchor and pundit, of sexual misconduct—he allegedly likes to expose himself—dating back to 1986. According to a *Washington Post* blog story, “Rumors about Rose’s behavior have circulated for years.”

One of Rose’s assistants, Kyle Godfrey-Ryan, “recalled at

least a dozen instances where Rose walked nude in front of her while she worked in one of his New York City homes.” He also made sexually charged phone calls to the then-21-year-old late at night or in the early morning.

Did she report it? Yes, she told Yvette Vega, Rose’s long-time executive producer. “She [Vega] would just shrug and just say, ‘That’s just Charlie being Charlie.’” To show what a class act Rose was, when he found out that Godfrey-Ryan told a mutual friend about his behavior, he fired her.

Before he became chairman of CBS News in 2011, Fager was the executive producer of “60 Minutes.” He then took over the reins at “60 Minutes” again in 2015. He has been accused by six women of sexual misconduct, especially when he was drunk. Fager is also accused of covering up for his sexually compromised workplace buddies who reported to him.

Moonves was CBS chief executive for 20 years; it ended in September when he stepped down amidst serious sexual misconduct allegations. He has also been accused of promoting several men known for their sexual misconduct. This may sound familiar: CBS quietly paid settlements to the women who complained.

Just recently, it was reported that more than 250 women who work at CBS have spoken to investigators. Some, however, refuse to talk because they don’t trust the company.

Not only will CBS not authorize “60 Minutes” to disclose the depth of its own sexual abuse scandal, it has the nerve to claim that all priests are engaged in a cover-up. The “60 Minutes” producer of the O’Connor segment, Guy Campanile, told CBS News that “the church is made of people, but the ones in charge are priests [evidently they are not people] and priests are so good at keeping secrets.”

Would that include New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan, who outed Theodore McCarrick? It wasn’t the media which did that.

Moreover, just this week Dolan made public some accusations against one of his auxiliary bishops, stemming from alleged offenses that occurred decades ago. Does CBS—or any media outlet in the nation—have a program like the New York archdiocese that outs suspected abusers? Why not?

NBC is just as phony. Its Buffalo affiliate, WGRZ-TV, has unveiled a petition asking the public to pressure the Buffalo diocese to publicly release the full list of accused priests. If it were serious about the issue of sexual abuse—and not “getting the Church”—it would begin by pressing NBC to make public a list of all those employees who have been accused of sexual misconduct.

After all, Matt Lauer is hardly the only NBC employee to have been accused of being a predator. Last year, *Variety* wrote the following. “Lauer’s conduct was not a secret among other employees at ‘Today,’ numerous sources say. At least one of the anchors would gossip about stories she had heard, spreading them among the staff. ‘Management sucks there,’ says a former reporter....They protected the s*** out of Matt Lauer.”

Addie Zinone, who worked for Lauer, and media critic Ken Auletta, confirm that many others knew something was wrong. Joe Scarborough, co-host of MSNBC’s “Morning Joe,” had this to say about Lauer. “The whole theme was that he does the show and then he has sex with people, with employees. So this was whispered behind closed doors? No, it was shouted from the mountaintops and everybody laughed about it.” Including, evidently, Scarborough, who never said a public word about it.

Jessica Steyers, who worked at NBC Sports, has spoken out about the constant harassment by coworkers, and the nonchalant reaction by executives. Karin Roland, a feminist who has examined NBC, says “this happens as the result of a culture and a pattern of protecting stars and making them untouchable.”

Most of the sexual abuse in the Catholic Church occurred in the last century, primarily between 1965 and 1985. But when it comes to sexual abuse in Hollywood and in the media, it is as bad today as it ever was. Lucky for them there is little interest in outing the dregs among them. They'd rather focus on accused priests from a half-century ago.