

UTAH LAWMAKER STILL AT WAR WITH CATHOLICS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the Utah legislator who is at war with Catholics:

Earlier this week, we contacted the Speaker of the House in the Utah legislature, Rep. Brad R. Wilson, expressing our outrage over a bill sponsored by his Democratic colleague, Rep. Angela Romero, that would vitiate the seal of Confession. The pretext of her legislation is knowledge of the sexual abuse of minors learned in the confessional.

We are very pleased with the response by Speaker Wilson: he is opposed to the Romero bill. Rep. Romero is now doubling down, saying she is going forward with her bill, accusing me of making a “soft threat.”

Romero is obviously referring to the following concluding portion of my letter of January 10 to her. “You are treading on dangerous territory. When the government seeks to police the sacraments of the Catholic Church—or encroach on the tenets and practices of any world religion—it is gearing up for a court fight. The First Amendment secures religious liberty, and that entails separation of church and state.”

I stand by that statement. Regarding her remark, I would never accuse her of making a “soft threat.” She moved well beyond the “threat” stage when she introduced a bill that attacks a sacrament of the Catholic Church—and there is nothing “soft” about that. Now she is claiming victim status because of a pushback by Catholics. What did she expect? That Catholics would allow an agent of the state to trample on their constitutionally protected rights?

Here is what Romero told the media. “Am I against organized religion? No. I’m Catholic. Maybe this is a little more

personal for me. I've had victims here in Utah, people who have experienced and sexual abuse and child abuse. Their perpetrators were protected by a religious institutions. I have a problem with that." [This is exactly the way she was quoted.]

I have a problem with so-called Catholics telling me they are not against the Catholic Church when they seek to destroy one of their sacraments. That gets real personal. As for the perpetrators, there is *no evidence*—I have asked her to give it to me—showing that breaking the seal of Confession would result in prosecuting molesters.

It is a red herring, a contrived pretext that would allow the government to effectively cause the Sacrament of Reconciliation to implode. No practicing Catholic would ever sponsor such a bill, nor would a member of the faithful from any another religion.

Does Romero really think that if she succeeded that priests would cooperate? They would go to jail before putting themselves at risk of being excommunicated.

It would be too kind to say that she has embarked on a fool's errand: she will never succeed in getting what she wants, and what she wants is much more than foolish—it is obscene.

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SETH MEYERS LIKES NEO-NAZI TACTICS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks

made last night by Seth Meyers on his NBC show:

Brooklyn has been hit with a wave of anti-Semitic attacks, and no one uses this as a pretext to make light of them. A Catholic church in Brooklyn was vandalized on January 12—a man interrupted Mass and desecrated the altar with red juice—and Seth Meyers took the occasion to make fun of it.

“A Brooklyn man was arrested at a Catholic church on Sunday for allegedly pouring juice on the altar and splashing it at the priest. Wow, that’s crazy, a crime in a Catholic church that led to an arrest. We will tolerate a lot of stuff here, but you can’t splash the juice. That’s where we draw the line.”

The Nazis used to bust into houses of worship in Germany, and now we have people like Seth Meyers thinking it is cute when neo-Nazis bust into Catholic churches in America. No, Catholics are not fearing pogroms, but it is alarming nonetheless to think that public personalities think it is cute to disrupt a religious service and vandalize a church. The man is sick.

Meyers crossed the line this time. We are going right to the top executives at NBC about this one.

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CELEBRATING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DAY: OBAMA vs. TRUMP

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Religious

Freedom Day, comparing the record of President Trump to that of President Obama on this issue:

The Catholic League's interest in the public policy arena is first and foremost religious liberty. That is why we were delighted when two years ago President Donald Trump proclaimed January 16 as Religious Freedom Day. He did so in tribute to the work of Thomas Jefferson: On January 16, 1786, Jefferson's bill, the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, was passed by the Virginia General Assembly.

The timing is right to compare the religious-liberty record of President Donald Trump to that of his predecessor, President Barack Obama. Both men are the source of much commendation and condemnation—on many issues—and their admirers and detractors are united only in the conviction that their man has not been treated fairly. They may both be right.

To read our summary of how Trump and Obama match up on the issue of religious liberty, click [here](#).

UTAH HOUSE SPEAKER OPPOSES CONFESSIONAL BILL

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the response of the Utah House Speaker to yesterday's news release:

Yesterday, we asked those who receive our emails to contact the Utah Speaker of the House, Rep. Brad Wilson. We need his help in opposing a bill by his Democrat colleague, Rep. Angela Romero, who would gut the confidentiality of the Confessional seal. Here is how he responded:

“I have serious concerns about this bill and the effects it could have on religious leaders as well as their ability to counsel members of their congregation. **I do not support this bill** in its current form and—unless significant changes are made to ensure the protection of religious liberties—I will be voting against this bill.” (His emphasis.)

Many thanks to all of you who answered our call. Once again, your input has made a difference. We need everyone to get involved—that’s how we can change the culture.

SECULAR ELITES LIKE HBO’S “THE NEW POPE”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the HBO film, “The New Pope,” which starts tonight:

HBO previously treated us to “The Young Pope,” and tonight it is ready to roll out its new mini-series, “The New Pope.”

We have been tracking what the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have been saying about the Catholic Church for decades, and it will shock no one to learn that they are not exactly our biggest fans. More proof was offered today with the reviews of the first episode of “The New Pope.” What they said tells us as much about them as it does HBO, another media outlet that likes to stick it to the Church.

Here are some excerpts from Mike Hale’s review in the *New York Times*:

- “The initial series ended with Pius XIII, the beautiful

young pope [Jude] Law embodies, collapsing just as he appeared to find his faith.”

- “‘The New Pope’ begins nine months later with Pius in a coma....Our first sight is a naked Pius receiving a sponge bath from a trembling young nun. She gazes at the small cloth covering the papal package, then lies down while the camera pulls in on her Vermeer-like visage.”
- The film deals with “the real-world issues that dog the church—pedophilia scandals, retrograde attitudes toward homosexuality, lousy treatment of women.”
- “Opening credits play over recurring scenes of cloistered nuns shrugging off their shapeless smocks and dancing before a towering neon cross.”
- “[Cécile] De France, as the church’s image director, and [Ludivine] Sagnier, as a woman closely connected to Pius, are consigned to subsidiary and often half-clothed roles. In a particularly risible conjuration of the virgin-whore paradigm, Sagnier’s Esther slides into prostitution to the sound of ‘Ave Maria.’”
- “Among the men, Law’s Pius is a silent presence through much of the season and [John] Malkovich’s John Paul is mostly sad-eyed and mopey. Malkovich makes the ennui pretty consistently amusing, especially in a scene in which a star-struck John Paul gets to meet Sharon Stone (playing herself), complete with sophomoric ‘Basic Instinct’ joke.”
- “And the real theme of ‘The New Pope,’ as it tracks the machinations of the small circle of cardinals and laypeople who operate behind the papal skirts, is not philosophy or God but the exercise of power. It has strong elements of workplace sitcom, but it even more closely resembles another venerable genre: the Mafia movie.”

Here are some excerpts of Hank Stuever’s review in the *Washington Post*:

- The film is “filled with forbidden delights, such as the sight of young nuns disrobing and dancing to this season’s throbbing new theme song (‘Good Time Girl’ by Sofi Tukker featuring Charlie Barker, one of many ace picks on the show’s playlist) as their cloister house pulses with colorful strobes. Their superior—a cigar-chomping little person in full habit—dances her own jig.”
- “The director is similarly committed to conveying church corruption as something one senses rather than reveals, picking up on visual cues that range from the awkward to the sinfully repugnant to outright garnish and menacing, all set against extravagant interiors and exquisite exteriors.”
- “Though [Cardinal Angelo] Voiello aspires to be the next pope, the college of cardinals elects an easily intimidated Franciscan, who names himself Francis II and immediately goes on a power trip, bringing in a troop of enforcer monks to liquidate the Vatican’s wealth and give it all to the poor. Small wonder, then, that he mysteriously drops dead.”
- “John Paul muddles through an agenda that seems primarily focused on meeting his favorite celebrities. These include Marilyn Manson, playing himself, a rock star so out of touch he has no idea who or what the pope is, and Sharon Stone, also appearing in a brief cameo as herself. (Stone tells the pope that it’s time for the church to approve same-sex marriage. ‘Can’t the Bible be upgraded?’ she asks.”)

No one at the Catholic League will be watching. That’s because we’ll be tuned in to the LSU-Clemson game. No doubt the giddy crowd will be watching.

CONFESSIONAL SEAL AT RISK IN UTAH

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a bill that targets the Confessional seal:

Utah Rep. Angela Romero, a Democrat, is sponsoring a bill that would gut the seal of Confession. She maintains that it is necessary because priests learn of the sexual abuse of minors in confession and do not report this to the authorities.

I wrote to Rep. Romero today asking her some pointed questions. To read my letter click [here](#). We are contacting all of her colleagues in the Utah legislature.

It would be great if you contacted the Speaker of the House, Rep. Brad R. Wilson, a Republican, to express your concerns about Romero's bill. If Romero hears from you, she may not want to tell her colleagues of all the correspondence she is receiving, but if the Speaker hears from you, it is not likely that your voice will be ignored.

Contact: bradwilson@le.utah.gov

GEORGE CONWAY WANTS TO DIVIDE CHRISTIANS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a video that seeks to divide Christians:

George Conway, the man whom no one would know of were it not for his successful wife, hates President Trump. Few care. But

we do care when his mania seeks to drive a wedge between Catholics and evangelicals. That is exactly what his latest video attempts to do.

The Lincoln Project, of which Conway is a part, has posted a video online that portrays evangelicals as hypocrites for backing such an un-Christian man like President Trump. There is one part of the video—all the clips are spliced together in classic out-of-context form—that is particularly offensive. It implies that Trump (who was a presidential candidate at the time) called the pope a “pussy.” He never did.

On February 18, 2016, presidential candidate Donald Trump said the following about Pope Francis: “I respect the pope, and I love the pope in many ways. I love what he stands for, and I like his attitude. He’s very independent, and he’s very different. He’s sort of a modern day pope if you think about it.”

Later that same day, Pope Francis was interviewed by reporters on the papal plane. A reporter from Reuters [misrepresented](#) Trump’s position on immigration, and then asked the pope “if an American Catholic can vote for someone like this.” The pope replied, “A person who thinks *only* about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian.” He added an important caveat, saying, “I say only that this man is not Christian *if* he has said things like that...and in this *I give the benefit of the doubt.*” (My italics.)

In the video, it shows Trump’s reply to what the media portrayed as an attack on him by the pope. Here is that part of the video.

Trump: “The pope would have only wished and prayed...”

Rev. Ramiro Peña: “Thank you, sir, for uniting our Nation and
calling us to prayer...”

Trump: "that Donald Trump would have been president..."

Rev. Robert Jeffress: "I think the pope needs to seek Donald Trump's forgiveness."

Trump: "He's a pussy."

The video makes it seem as though Trump said this about the pope. He did not. It is a vicious lie. [Note: At the time, I criticized Jeffress for what he said, and I also criticized Sean Hannity for agreeing with Jeffress on his show.]

Here is what Trump said at the time: "If and when the Vatican is attacked by ISIS, which as everyone knows is ISIS's ultimate trophy, I can promise you that the pope would have only wished and prayed that Donald Trump would have been president because this would not have happened."

This is an entirely different understanding of what the two men said. Inexcusably, it has been cruelly manipulated by Conway to slam the president. But if that is all it did, it would not interest the Catholic League. What angers us is the deliberate attempt to drive a wedge between Catholics and evangelicals.

The video suggests that Trump used a vulgar term to describe the pope, which he never did (in point of fact, Trump's comment was actually a restatement of what a woman said about Sen. Ted Cruz at a rally).

This kind of propaganda—it is vintage Catholic baiting—by George Conway tells us much about the man. He wants Catholics to think that Trump insulted the pope, thus driving them away from the president's evangelical supporters. The man must be desperate to stoop this low.

Contact Conway at his law firm: GTConway@wlrk.com

BLOOMBERG MEDIA TARGET CATHOLIC CHURCH

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an article that questions the Catholic Church's strategy in handling abuse claims:

On January 8, Bloomberg News published a lengthy article by Josh Saul titled, "The Catholic Church's Strategy to Limit Payouts to Abuse Victims." While much of what he said is not questionable, the unstated premise deserves a response: the piece suggests that somehow it is unseemly of the Catholic Church to limit its exposure to abuse claims.

Saul notes that various dioceses have pursued different means of protecting their assets from being raided by alleged victims and their lawyers. He offers an example of what happened in Milwaukee when the archbishop there, now Cardinal Timothy Dolan, the Archbishop of New York, moved \$57 million into a trust for maintaining cemeteries.

It is true that monies from a perpetual care fund, which had been in archdiocesan accounts, were moved to a trust for the purpose of caring for the cemeteries. The Finance Council encouraged him to do so. When this was contested in the courts, Dolan won. End of story.

It would be instructive if Saul were to tell readers which institutions—secular as well as religious—refuse to limit their liability when they are sued. Moreover, does he, or anyone at Bloomberg, know of any individual or family that doesn't try to minimize their risk?

Come to think of it, are we to believe that when Saul's boss,

Michael Bloomberg is sued (or one of his endless holdings) that he doesn't try to limit his exposure to liability? Of course he does—he buys the best lawyers money can buy to protect his wealth. Why shouldn't he?

The article begins with the usual error: it talks about pedophile priests. Wrong. Most of the abusers were homosexuals. This is indisputable.

The second error is saying that “victims and their families” were “intimidated or shamed into silence,” which is why they signed confidentiality agreements. No doubt some were. But many *insisted* on confidentiality. Saul never mentions this. Nor does he mention the fact that unlike Hollywood molesters, the Church has had a ban on such agreements for many years.

Here is something else Saul never mentioned, and with good reason: it reflects badly on Bloomberg (see the January 7 article on this subject published by [businessinsider.com](https://www.businessinsider.com)).

In October, 2019, a former Bloomberg LP employee who alleges she was discriminated against, asked the court to invalidate her non-disclosure agreement. In December, her lawyer went further, asking New York Supreme Court to void all confidentiality agreements for similarly situated employees. The complaint says Bloomberg LP fraudulently coerced employees to sign these agreements, maintaining they were vague, misleading, and strewn with errors and omissions.

Why hasn't Michael Bloomberg seen to it that confidentiality agreements are banned, the way they are in the Catholic Church? Is he acting ethically if he pays blue chip lawyers to fight for his right to maintain hush-money settlements?

Like many practicing Catholics, I contribute to my parish, as well as to my diocese. When my diocese is hit with a lawsuit for past cases of abuse—most of the molesting priests are either dead or out of ministry—I want justice done. That means reasonable compensation for victims. It does not mean breaking

the bank.

Therefore, any legal tactic that the diocese can use to limit its liability, is entirely justified. Not to do so would be to punish those who are counting on diocesan funding today (many of whom are sick, disabled, or poor) so that lawyers can skim a third of the cash right off the top for old cases of abuse.

As usual, it is the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church alone, that is under the microscope of reporters. We know why.

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WHY ARE THE BOY SCOUTS BEING SUED?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on lawsuits filed against the Boy Scouts of America:

Several states have passed laws suspending the statute of limitations for crimes involving the sexual abuse of minors; they provide for a look-back period, usually 1-3 years, where offenses that previously were time barred can be filed. In those states that have not passed such laws, attorneys for Boy Scout victims filed a lawsuit yesterday in federal court in Washington, D.C. seeking to establish the nation's capital as a legitimate venue for such suits.

The lawyers are taking a novel approach: the Boy Scouts of America were incorporated in D.C. in 1910, and six years later it received a congressional charter there. Ergo, D.C. should qualify as a proper venue to hear a national case against the

Boy Scouts. Will it work? No one knows.

Leaving this atypical case aside, the larger question is: Why are the Boy Scouts the subject of a wave of new lawsuits? Many would say it is because the suspension of the statute of limitations allows the suits to be filed. That is true. Still, why are the Boy Scouts being hit so hard? There is no avalanche of lawsuits against the public schools, even in states where they are subject to being sued under new laws.

The reason the Boy Scouts are being sued is the same reason why the Catholic Church is being hit with a flood of new lawsuits: both are bastions of traditional morality.

In the summer of 2000, six Boy Scouts and one adult leader walked on stage at the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles. They were roundly booed by delegates and some held signs expressing their displeasure. These homosexual activists and supporters were unhappy with Boy Scout rules prohibiting homosexual Scouts and leaders.

The pressure was enormous and eventually the Boy Scouts caved. In 2013, homosexual scouts were allowed, and in 2015 so were homosexual leaders. In 2017, girls who considered themselves to be boys were welcomed.

The Boy Scouts, like the Catholic Church, are a rich target. The first Scout Oath, published in 1911, required boys to pledge that they would be “morally straight.” This was considered unexceptional until the dawn of the gay rights movement: ever since it has been seen as a dog whistle to bar homosexuals.

Ironically, just as in the case of the Catholic Church, the typical victimizer in the Boy Scouts was not a pedophile—he was a homosexual. This, of course, is almost never acknowledged. In fact, in the lawsuit attempting to establish Washington, D.C. as a proper venue to file suits, it accuses the Boy Scouts of acting as “magnets to tens of thousands of

pedophiles.” In truth, homosexuals infiltrated the Boy Scouts, not pedophiles.

It is worth noting that there has never been a wave of lawsuits charging the Girl Scouts with sexual abuse. That is because the leaders, being women, rarely commit sexual crimes against minors. It must also be said that in the case of the Boy Scouts, it was not heterosexual men who created the problem. Moreover, the relative scarcity of heterosexual pedophiles—they are disproportionately homosexual—is another telling factor that is generally overlooked.

This is perverse. Those who are mostly responsible for these crimes in the Catholic Church and in the Boy Scouts are the very ones being given a pass. We don’t need, nor should we desire, witch hunts. What we need is a commitment to the truth and the prudential exercise of reforms. To do that, however, requires fortitude, a cardinal virtue that is unfortunately in short supply.

FLORIDA CBS AFFILIATE APOLOGIZES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on how WTSP St. Petersburg responded to our news release yesterday:

On January 6, we issued a news release on WTSP, the CBS affiliate in St. Petersburg, for posting on its website a misleading headline in a story about a Protestant bishop charged with battering a child. The headline said, “‘It’s Disheartening’: Former Catholic Church Abuse Victim Says Local Bishop Could Have More Victims.” In the story, mention was made of a Catholic man who says he was abused 50 years ago. No

Catholic bishop had anything to do with this story.

We are happy to report that after giving our readers the email address of Kelly Frank at WTSP, the station issued an apology. Here is the reply.

“After reading the headline and the story, we have added language to the headline and provided a clarification to make it clear that while the alleged victim we spoke to was a member of the Catholic Church, the Bishop in question represented a non-denominational church. We regret this omission and apologize for it.”

Good for WTSP. It is always better to remedy a wrong and apologize for making it than to stonewall your critics.

Thanks to all of those who made their voice heard. Unless you follow through, progress will not be made. We can't do this by ourselves.