

# NEW WAVE OF ACCUSATIONS; POLITICS EVIDENT

We're calling it Scandal II. Scandal I was the Church-driven one that resulted in the explosion of priestly sexual abuse cases that came to light in 2002. Scandal II is driven by lawyers, activist groups, pundits and the media: it is responsible for the second wave of accusations.

Scandal II deals exclusively with old cases, and that's because there are hardly any new ones. Moreover, those leading the charge have expressed no interest in the subject of sexual abuse, per se: they simply want to get the Catholic Church.

In other words, the politics of "gotcha" is in play: grand juries are reconvened after the first is found wanting; new subpoenas are issued about cases dating back several decades; new laws are proposed that exempt the public schools; and selective reporting about abuse cases in the Church are routine. In other words, the real scandal this time around stems from outside the Church.

This issue of *Catalyst* offers several stories on Scandal II. The Milwaukee and Philadelphia archdioceses have come under heavy scrutiny, and things are heating up again in Los Angeles and Boston. Consistent with our policy, we never defend the guilty. But we are resolute in our defense of the accused: priests, no less than any other segment of the population, are assumed innocent until proven guilty. That this even needs to be said is proof positive of the anti-priest environment that has taken root.

Some of those who have been leading the charge against the Catholic Church are vindictive, irrational and utterly without ethics. No reform will ever satisfy them. Make no mistake about it: they don't want reconciliation, they want revenge.

Bill Donohue sent an op-ed article he had submitted to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to the more than 200 pastors in the Philly archdiocese. While his article was not printed (they do not allow op-ed replies to editorials), the newspaper printed a summary letter of his on the subject. Donohue also wrote a half-page ad which was printed in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* blasting steeple-chasing attorney Jeffrey Anderson.

New York Archbishop Dolan, speaking about the situation in his previous archdiocese, Milwaukee, sums it up well when he reminds us that some of the Church's enemies are on record saying they won't stop until an "out of business" sign is posted in front of every parish, school and church charitable center.

This is what we're up against. This is what Scandal II is all about. Not to worry—the Catholic League will not back down and allow these vengeful activists to prevail.

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## PETITION FILED

The Thomas More Law Center has filed a petition with the U.S. Supreme Court asking it to reverse a Ninth Circuit ruling which upheld San Francisco's hate-filled attack on the Catholic Church. The Ann Arbor-based law firm is representing the Catholic League.

This case began when a resolution was passed by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors that laced into the Catholic Church on March 21, 2006. Simply because the Catholic Church is opposed to homosexual adoption, government officials went on a tear.

They branded the Vatican a "foreign country" that was "meddling" in the affairs of San Francisco. They called the

Catholic Church's teachings on homosexuality "insulting to all San Franciscans," "hateful," "insulting and callous," "defamatory," "absolutely unacceptable" and "insensitive and ignorant."

The Thomas More Law Center argues that the anti-Catholic resolution violated the First Amendment, which forbids "an official purpose to disapprove of a particular religion, religious beliefs, or of religion in general." The government officials even went so far as to urge the Archbishop of San Francisco and Catholic Charities to defy Church directives.

Richard Thompson, who heads the Law Center, notes that the same Ninth Circuit which ruled against us barred a government display of the passive symbol of the war memorial cross on Mt. Soledad! The double standard could not be more plain.

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## **MEDIA MANTRAS**

### **FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK**

**William Donohue**

One might think that in this day and age of multiple news sources—newspapers, broadcast TV, free tabloids, radio, cable, pay-per-view, magazines, the Internet—that it would be harder for faulty information to survive without being refuted by a reliable source. This has not been my experience.

Quite frankly, the central problem is a lack of reliable media outlets. Moreover, there is the "follow-the-leader" syndrome: the big, established media, e.g., the *New York Times*, still set the tone, and others blithely get in line. Here's an innocent example. A while back, there were several stories on David Letterman's sexual relationships with staffers. I held

on to them for only one reason: they offer a textbook case on what's wrong with the media.

On October 2, 2009, the *New York Times* posted on its website a story about "the intensely private Mr. Letterman." In updated stories that appeared later that day, the *New York Daily News*, the *Arizona Republic* and London's *Evening Standard* spoke about "the intensely private Letterman." The next day, Alessandra Stanley, a columnist for the *New York Times*, wrote that "Mr. Letterman is an intensely private celebrity." So "intensely private" is he that on October 5, the print edition of the *Times* ran its initial Internet story labeling him "intensely private." On the same day, the Associated Press, which feeds news stories across the nation, chose to call the CBS host "the intensely private Letterman." The next day, CNN showed its originality by referring to him as "the intensely private Letterman." *People* magazine, in its October 19 edition, made sure it did not err when it described Letterman as "intensely private."

Whether there is something at work here besides the "follow-the-leader" syndrome, and/or just plain laziness, is an interesting issue, but it is not what concerns me. What bothers me is how lacking in independence many in the media are. This is especially problematic when faulty information is presented; it tends to get repeated.

The sexual abuse issue is back in the news, and with it are some rather amazing claims. Anyone who is truly interested in justice clearly makes a distinction between an accusation, a credible accusation and a finding of guilt. Unfortunately, many reporters cite information found on websites that simply list accusations—not convictions, not even substantiated accusations—and then pass it off as if the data were uncontested.

A few years ago, a woman reporter interviewed me in my office about this subject. She was a bit testy, wanting to know why

all dioceses didn't print the names of accused priests (not *credibly* accused ones or those found guilty). I asked her for her boss's name and his phone number. She was perplexed and asked why. I said I was going to accuse her of sexually harassing me. She was beside herself. She really went nuts when I told her that her name should immediately be posted on her company's website as an employee accused of sexual harassment. She got the point and the interview proceeded smoothly. By the way, I repeated this story recently to another female reporter who was acting up. She quickly fell mute.

Those who want to malign priests like to drop the figure 100,000. Here are three quick examples.

You all know who Father Cutié is—he is the former Catholic priest and TV personality (“Padre Oprah”) who was caught having an affair with some gal and decided to bolt. Then he became an Episcopal priest and made the rounds on TV whining about the vow he violated, namely celibacy. He likes to say that he is one of 100,000 priests who quit to get married. We challenged him on this figure and he was not a happy camper. He was even less happy when we pointed out that a more realistic figure, culled from a Jesuit priest in Rome, is 57,000.

John Walsh, the “America’s Most Wanted” investigator, told CNN that 100,000 victims of priests showed up in Rome last fall looking for a meeting with the pope. We proved to CNN that the real figure was 100, and they corrected the record.

*Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen recently wrote that “well in excess of 100,000” minors have been abused by a priest since 1950. The real figure, as we demonstrated, is between 10,000 and 12,000.

It's not easy getting the media to correct these figures. And once the bogus numbers are out there, they just get picked up over and over again. It soon becomes a media mantra.

In fairness to TV talk-show hosts (as opposed to reporters who have time to fact-check their stories), they can't possibly know what the accurate figure is on any given subject; thus, those who bandy about bogus numbers are rarely challenged. The problem, in these cases, are the so-called experts.

That's the difference between those who mistakenly float information (what is called misinformation), and those who intentionally distort information (disinformation). The former are forgivable; the latter are a disgrace.

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## **UNSEEMLY ATTACK ON ARCHBISHOP DOLAN**

Recently we came to the defense of New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan after lawyer Jeffrey Anderson alleged that he hid money while in charge of the Milwaukee Archdiocese.

Anderson, who has made a killing suing the Catholic Church, was angry there isn't more money in the Milwaukee Archdiocese for him to milk. So he pointed his finger at the one Milwaukee archbishop who did more to render justice than any of his predecessors, Timothy Dolan (he headed the Milwaukee Archdiocese from 2002-2009).

Anderson wanted to know why the Milwaukee Archdiocese moved \$75 million to the parishes in 2004. Because it was held as an investment account for the parishes (not archdiocesan money) and was returned to them at the request of its auditors and lay finance council. That's why. If this is illegal, then Anderson would need an army of lawyers: huge transfers of funds take place every day in religious and secular institutions. Only those with base motives just assume

wrongdoing.

Anderson also wants to know why \$55 million was moved to a cemetery trust in 2008, a year after a Wisconsin court said victims could sue for fraud. Actually, the cemetery transfer took place in 2007, and was entirely consistent with previous practices: the cemetery trust existed, de facto, since the early 1900s but was not formalized until 2007.

Assisting Anderson in this witch hunt was Los Angeles lawyer, Gillian Brown. She is cut from the same cloth: she recently got so out of hand in her rambling attacks against the archdiocese that presiding Assistant U.S. Trustee, David Asbach, had to put the arm on her. As if we needed any further proof of the vindictiveness at play, Brown asked about the monetary value of the bishops' rings and crosses. This is exactly the kind of shakedown we would expect from the likes of Anderson and Brown.

SNAP, the professional victims' group, once again was salivating. And no wonder: their latest 990 tax return shows they're in big trouble—their revenues are plummeting and they're operating in the red. So they badly need Anderson to grease them again. They are incapable of being shamed.

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## **ARCHBISHOP DOLAN IS A HERO; ANDERSON LIES**

Only a couple of weeks after Jeffrey Anderson went after Archbishop Timothy Dolan for his alleged money hiding, the unscrupulous lawyer once again went after Dolan accusing him of covering up sex abuse cases during his time as the head of the Milwaukee Archdiocese.

Anderson is a liar and the media were giving him a free ride. Anderson said he possessed a “smoking gun” that showed when Archbishop Dolan led the Milwaukee archdiocese before coming to New York, he and the Vatican worked in concert to “keep secrets and avoid scandal” in their handling of an abusive priest, Franklyn Becker. If lying were a crime, Anderson would have been imprisoned.

Instead of focusing on Dolan’s predecessor, Archbishop Rembert Weakland, the disgraced darling of dissident Catholics who left office after revelations of a homosexual affair and ripping off the Catholic Church of close to a half-million dollars, Anderson and his army of Catholic-bashing lawyers deliberately twisted the meaning of the word “scandal,” as understood in ecclesiastical parlance, to indict an innocent man, Archbishop Dolan.

Unlike Weakland, Dolan moved with dispatch to get Becker out of ministry. In his letter of May 27, 2003 to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (then in charge of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), he said that all efforts to rehabilitate Becker were a failure, and that “it is clear that he will never be able to assume public ministry” (Becker had just been arrested in California for crimes he allegedly committed in the 1970s). Furthermore, Dolan said that if the California trial goes forward, it “makes the potential for true scandal very real.”

The term “scandal” in the Catholic lexicon is very specific: it is defined as “a word or action evil in itself, which occasions another spiritual ruin.” In other words, once the public finds out more about Becker, his misconduct will give scandal to the Church by causing the faithful to question their faith.

For that reason, and for his past record—that Becker had abused his status as a priest to gain access to vulnerable boys—Dolan said he wanted him out of the priesthood “in order that justice may be made manifest and healing of the victims



and the Church may proceed.”

Jeffrey Anderson knows his way around Catholic circles and knows full well what Archbishop Dolan meant, yet he chose the more conventional understanding of the word “scandal” to condemn him. It didn’t matter to him that Dolan even recommended against Becker slipping away on a technicality!

When taking a closer look at this story, it is apparent that Dolan is a hero—he’s the one who moved to get Becker kicked out of the priesthood. There was no “smoking gun,” but rather a stench coming from Anderson and his lackeys.

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## **SINGLING OUT ONE GROUP**

Rep. Peter King was recently lambasted for starting congressional hearings on radical Islam. Robert Kolker, writing in *New York* magazine, said the congressman’s “opponents say that by singling out Muslims, King is promoting anti-Islam hatred and could actually trigger a domestic terror attack,” adding that “America is a tinderbox of prejudice and fear.”

Kolker, like most pundits, never objects to singling out priests. For example, in a 2009 article, he wrote that although New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan condemned sex abuse, “he also fully supported the work of the archdiocese’s lobbying arm to sideline two bills in Albany that would have rolled back the statute of limitations and allowed more alleged abuse victims to make their claims in court.” Kolker failed to note that these bills didn’t apply to public school teachers and singled out those who work in private institutions.

Here's another example. In 2005, a Philadelphia grand jury investigation into sexual abuse singled out priests. Dissatisfied with the results, another was convened. What no one can explain is why no other group has been investigated. This kind of selective probe is also being carried out in other cities. Priests are being singled out, absent any public outcry.

A recent Associated Press column raised the question of why miscreant clergy who have left the priesthood were not being monitored by the authorities. But why were ex-priests singled out?

It's not just Muslims who benefit from elite opinion when singled out; it's true of many other communities, as well. The bias against priests is striking.

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## **IF ONLY PRIESTS WERE TERRORISTS**

On March 1, the *New York Times* ran two editorials that demonstrated the paper's duplicitous nature. In the first editorial, "A Right Without a Remedy," was a strong plea for the U.S. government to respect the constitutional rights of detainees at Guantánamo Bay. The other editorial, "Acts of Contrition," took the Catholic Church in Ireland to task for cases of priestly sexual abuse. The former editorial said nothing about why suspected Muslim terrorists are being held in custody, and the latter said nothing about the rights of accused priests. If only priests were terrorists.

It said the Church in Ireland “has a long way to go to cleaning house,” insisting that “reforms are lagging” and “some predator priests are still in ministry.” It was wrong on all three charges.

In 2005, the Irish Bishops’ Conference issued a comprehensive report on reforms underway, “Our Children, Our Church: Child Protection Policies and Procedures for the Catholic Church in Ireland.” In 2008, another report was released, “Safeguarding Children: Standards and Guidance Document for the Catholic Church in Ireland.” In 2010, the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland published its 2009 Annual Report.

The latter document shows that 42 percent of the new allegations made in 2009 were about deceased priests. “None of the allegations reported to the National Office originated from children or young people. Some went back to events that took place in the 1950s and 1960s.” Not one priest who has had an accusation made against him is in full ministry, and those who are in limited ministry are there despite the fact that “the allegation that caused the removal from full ministry has not been confirmed through any civil or canonical court process.” In other words, the *Times* got it wrong again.

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## **IF ONLY PRIESTS WERE TEACHERS**

If priests were teachers, they would be afforded special protections under state law, insulated from changes in the statute of limitations, never be fired (meaning they would be kept in ministry), treated with kid gloves by the media, and generally be held unaccountable for misconduct.

Michael Goodwin, a columnist for the *New York Post*, recently cited documents showing that 7,300 teachers in New York City have been found deficient to teach but are protected by unions, at a cost of well over \$100,000 each in salary and benefits. Moreover, *there are some 500 teachers who have been convicted of criminal offenses, "including assault, sex crimes, kidnapping, burglary, prostitution and lewdness."* [Our emphasis.]

This is nothing new. We know from previous studies that approximately 10 percent of public school students nationwide have been sexually victimized by teachers and other staffers. Four years ago it was reported that the incidence of sexual abuse in New York State had tripled in recent years. Last year, we learned that New York City was laying out over \$40 million a year in salaries alone for teachers not to teach, many of whom were charged with sexual molestation. To top things off, New York City still has no background checks for new teachers (last year a former prostitute got tenure after her former status was disclosed).

Unlike the situation with priests accused of wrongdoing, these are not old accusations. But don't look for Jay Leno or "The View" girls to weigh in on this issue. It is obviously not the offense that gets them exercised, it's the status of the offender.

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## THE SCANDAL OF CHURCH CRITICS

In a recent post on Beliefnet, Mark Silk looked at charges made by attorney Jeffrey Anderson against New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan. Silk weighed Bill Donohue's defense of Dolan saying he was correct to say that the term "scandal" in the

Catholic lexicon has a special meaning: as Donohue had indicated, it means “a word or action evil in itself, which occasions another spiritual ruin.” No matter, he declared, the term, “in the doctrinal sense, is itself highly problematic.” Silk concluded by saying, “It’s time for the doctrine to go.”

Elsewhere, Andrew Sullivan condemned the Catholic Church for its “homophobic doctrine,” and for operating “one of the biggest pedophile conspiracies in the world for decades if not centuries.” He concluded by saying “it seems to me that increased police involvement [in the Catholic Church] is necessary.”

Neither man had any ethical standing to make these kinds of remarks, and indeed both smack of hubris. Silk is not a Catholic—he is a Jew. Imagine a Catholic professor telling observant Jews that they need to change one or more of their doctrines. Donohue addressed the media saying, “If such a character could be found, I would be the first to tell him to mind his own business.”

Ten years ago, Sullivan was forced to admit that he had listed himself on the Internet as a HIV-positive gay man looking to have unprotected sex with other HIV-positive men. He also expressed an interest in “bi-scenes, one-on-ones, three-ways, groups, parties, orgies and gang bangs.” His standards, however, did not allow for “fats and fems.” So nice to know this is the same guy who wants cops to police the priests. It just doesn’t get much sicker than this.

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# RICHARD COHEN SMEARS PRIESTS

On March 8, syndicated *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen ran a piece objecting to the congressional hearings by Rep. Peter King on terrorism, arguing that if it is okay to probe Muslims for terrorism, it should be okay to probe priests for sexual abuse: “The organization BishopAccountability.org reports that ‘perhaps more than 100,000 children’ have been sexually abused since 1950 by Catholic clergymen of one sort or another.” The figure is wildly in error. Moreover, even his source mentions these are *accusations*.

The “organization” he cited specializes in publishing accusations against priests—no matter how flimsy—not findings of guilt. The figure of 100,000 they cite is taken from an article written by Andrew Greeley in 1993 that was based purely on conjecture.

Greeley said the data on the general population “suggests that during a ‘career’ of abuse *some* victimizers *may have* as many as 200 or even 300 victims.” [Our italic.] He then picked a “conservative number of 50 victims” to work with, but this was pure posturing: there is nothing “conservative” about a number based on a guesstimate of the highest number of victims committed by a small minority of the offenders.

Greeley then guesstimated that between 2,000 and 4,000 priests might be guilty of the sexual abuse of minors, settling on a figure of 2,500. Finally, he multiplied 2,500 by 50 to arrive at the celebrated figure of “well in excess of 100,000.”

Over a decade later, the real figures were made available by social scientists from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice: an estimated 4 percent of priests have had accusations made against them since 1950, and the majority, 56 percent, were alleged to have abused one victim. Doing a little math (see the “Executive Summary” of the 2004 report)

we find that the total number of alleged victims at the hands of 4,392 priests is roughly between 10,000 and 12,000. That's a very long way from 100,000. Cohen should offer a retraction.