

“VICTIMS ’ GROUPS” CONDEMN POPE

Almost everyone loves Pope Francis, but not among his admirers are two groups known as SNAP and Bishop-Accountability.org, two of the most hate-filled activist outlets in the nation.

SNAP has condemned the pope for doing “nothing—literally nothing—that protects a single child, exposes a single predator or prevents a single cover up.” Not a single example, anywhere in the world, was cited of the pope’s alleged delinquency.

Moreover, Terence McKiernan of BishopAccountability.org condemned the pope for his “tired and defensive rhetoric,” saying the pope’s rigorous, and wholly justified, account of the Catholic Church’s reaction to sexual abuse is “breathtaking.” He cited one bishop, Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph, “who was convicted in 2012 of failing to report suspected child abuse,” as an example of the pope’s alleged intransigence.

What McKiernan did not tell AP was that the case did not involve child sexual abuse: no child was ever abused, or touched, by a disturbed priest, Shawn Ratigan. Nor did the case involve child porn: it involved crotch-shot pictures of children (one showed a girl’s genitals, determined by the police to be of a “non-sexual” nature).

The short of it is that the review board was contacted, the authorities were notified, and an independent investigation was ordered (the Graves Report). It was later discovered that more disturbing photos were found on Ratigan’s computer, and Bishop Finn was found guilty of one misdemeanor for failing to report suspected child abuse. Had Finn elected to do nothing, no one would have known about Ratigan, because *there was no*

complainant. This is why the pope has not acted against Finn—what happened was a far cry from what McKiernan was saying.

PBS' 48th HIT ON CATHOLIC CHURCH

“Secrets of the Vatican,” a 90 minute “Frontline” presentation, marked the 48th time that PBS 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 was 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 was a co-producer of this show; he was also featured in Alex Gibney’s film, “Mea Maxima Culpa.” Indeed, the recent hit job was nothing more than a retread of Gibney’s propaganda: a New Orleans reporter who previewed it said, “this film reminded me of ‘Mea Maxima Culpa.’”

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."

None of these people at PBS give a hoot about the sexual abuse of minors. No, their goal is to discredit the moral voice of Catholicism.

MORE LIES ABOUT "PHILOMENA"

Although the movie "Philomena" received four Oscar nominations, it did not win a single award. The film was shut out despite the fact that numerous lies were spread about it. The *New York Times* said it was a contender because one of its "advantages" was "its backing by the Weinstein Company, which even orchestrated an audience with Pope Francis."

It is true that the Weinstein boys, Harvey and Bob, 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, were just one index. The lavish parties that Harvey Weinstein throws in Hollywood—everyone wants an invitation—also positioned him to score. While this may have gone down well with those in Tinseltown, it did 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. Furthermore, he took umbrage at those who were exploiting the pope to cash in on the film. According to Lombardi, "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.

Recently, the website of "People" quoted the 80-year-old Philomena Lee as saying, "I'm thankful and happy I did find him [her son], and that's all I ever wanted to do."

Similarly, in the entertainment section of "Time," 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 was a lie because Philomena 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 was lying about this because it fit with the lie about her looking frantically for him for 50 years. In the movie, she was 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, Philomena 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* added to the lies when he said 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 was done by accident. It is as deliberate as it is malicious.

Steve Coogan, a producer and screenplay writer for the film "Philomena," was recently quoted in *The Sunday Times* (of London) 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 stated that "The film offers an olive branch to the church in showing Philomena's forgiveness. She dignifies her religion."

Furthermore, Steve Coogan concluded 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 [the nuns] 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 denied 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.

Coogan was also a guest of Bill Maher on his HBO show, "Real Time with Bill Maher." 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."

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

will."

No woman was ever incarcerated against her will in any of the laundries: *every last one of the women 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 debunks these myths, and many more, yet people like Maher and Coogan have continued to promote them.

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."

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

The Independent.ie (Irish Independent) ran a story by Liz O'Donnell on "Philomena" saying that Philomena Lee's "child was stolen by the nuns." This is incorrect: the 18-year-old Lee, pregnant out-of-wedlock, was taken to the nuns by her widowed father, hoping they would care for the baby. They did. At age 22, Lee voluntarily signed a contract awarding the nuns her son. The nuns then got her a job. That is the undisputed truth.

At the British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards, "Philomena" won the Adapted Screenplay prize. Dame Judi Dench, who played Philomena Lee, did not win Best Actress, but had they had an award for Biggest Fool, she would have won going away: at the awards ceremony, she flashed her butt in front of Oprah Winfrey; tattooed on it was the name Weinstein, in

reference to the film's distributor, Harvey Weinstein. Dench is 79.

"Good Morning America" on ABC also interviewed Coogan; 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."

In regards to the lie that Philomena went to the United States 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 U.S. to look for her son with Mr. Sixsmith, who is played by Steve Coogan, a central part of the film."

Not only did Philomena Lee 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 Philomena's baby being sold, in the book by Martin Sixsmith upon which the film is based, he states that, "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, the nuns at the abbey today insist that no fee was charged.

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

In a recent news story by BBC, Chris Buckler, the BBC Ireland Correspondent, wrote 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.*" (Donohue's 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.

The Catholic League has greatly emphasized the fact that Philomena was not a child when she voluntarily put her son up for adoption—she was 22. Anyone who doubts what has been said should read p. 51 in Martin Sixsmith's book, *Philomena*. While he was a major part of the spin game regarding *Philomena*, the oath that he reprinted settles the argument: her baby was not

“forcibly taken” and nothing happened “behind her back.”

WHY IS DE BLASIO PUNISHING THE POOR?

The following article by Bill Donohue was published by Newsmax on March 5:

When the Marxist Sandinistas ousted the Somoza family in Nicaragua in 1979, they dressed in Castro-like fatigues to show their solidarity with the poor. They wound up crushing them, while conveniently living in the same mansions as the Somozas.

Helping to raise money for the Communists, and working alongside them in Nicaragua, was a young man whose birth name was Warren Wilhelm, Jr. He would later change his name twice, settling on Bill de Blasio. This is the same man who lied to his own children about where he went on his honeymoon: he went, illegally, to Cuba, to show his solidarity with the Communists. Now the New York City Mayor has repaired to his roots, rhetorically championing the poor, while punishing them with his public policies.

The poor are striking back. On March 4, busloads of inner-city African Americans and Latinos showed up in Albany to protest the mayor’s decision to kill three charter schools that had been approved by the Bloomberg administration.

There were actually two rallies in Albany: the one led by de Blasio, and the one led by Eva Moskowitz, a former New York City councilwoman who runs Success Academy Charter Schools. He drew 1,000 supporters, mostly union teachers; she drew 11,000,

mostly non-union teachers, parents, and students. No one of any significance spoke at the mayor's rally, but Governor Andrew Cuomo spoke at the charter-school rally.

Moskowitz won the backing of de Blasio's predecessor, Michael Bloomberg, and it is no secret that the Marxist Mayor hates them both. But aside from the teachers' unions, which are perpetually frightened of competition, few New York notables are on the mayor's side. In addition to Cuomo and Bloomberg, de Blasio has incurred the wrath of former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, and the editorial boards of the *New York Times*, *New York Post*, and the *Daily News*. Attacking de Blasio from the left are two of the most wild-eyed elected officials in the nation, City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and Public Advocate Letitia James: they want to destroy all the charter schools.

"There's little question that New York has one of the nation's most successful charter school systems," is how the *Times* put it. The *Post* posed the right question: "Why are these charters under attack? Mostly because they show poor and minority children can learn if given a good school." The *Daily News*, which is the paper of choice for most blacks and Latinos, said, "The charter school sector has been a high-wattage bright spot in New York City public education of late. The de Blasio administration's crusade against it is an ignorant insult to a decade-and-a-half of progress on behalf of children."

The facts are indisputable: 93 percent of charter school children in the city are black or Latino. Moskowitz explains why New Yorkers support charter schools by a margin of 56-34 percent (much higher among minorities): "We're in the top one percent in the state of New York in math and we're in the top 7 percent in reading and writing. And that is all schools. And our students in Harlem, in the South Bronx, in Bed-Stuy are significantly less socio-economically advantaged."

There are 50,000 kids on a waiting list for charter schools, all a direct result of the abysmal failure of traditional public schools in poor areas. These are the schools the mayor is attacking. So which schools does he want to keep open? According to the *Times*, when he was campaigning for mayor, de Blasio said “he would end the practice of closing low-performing public schools.” To top things off, charter schools cost \$5,549 less a year per student than district public schools.

Why is de Blasio punishing the poor? There are three reasons, two of which are easy to pinpoint: he is a petty man bent on paying back Bloomberg and Moskowitz, and he is totally committed to the unions. To understand what is really driving him, however, we need to consider why he supported the Sandinistas and Castro. Control. It’s all about control.

De Blasio is not a liberal: he is a hard-core left-wing ideologue. Charter schools represent independence, and that is not something that those who lust for power can tolerate, much less the notion of an independent public school. He is not interested in helping the poor—he is interested in owning them. He sees himself as the Grand Custodian of the dispossessed, but in reality he is acting more like their Master.

Those outside of New York who are looking to de Blasio as a model of “progressive” success better keep their eyes open. He is shaping up to be the biggest disaster New York City has ever experienced.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, HOLY FATHER

To see the op-ed page ad placed in the *New York Times* on March 3, 2014, click [here](#).

MICHAEL NOVAK'S REMARKABLE LIFE JOURNEY

Rick Hinshaw

Michael Novak, *Writing from Left to Right: My Journey from Liberal to Conservative* (New York: Image, 2013)

"It is not those who cry, 'the poor, the poor' who will enter the Kingdom, but those who truly help the poor."

More than 20 years ago, that paraphrase of Scripture from the distinguished theologian, philosopher and political and social commentator Michael Novak resonated with me as I covered a talk by Mr. Novak at our diocesan seminary. For he was articulating the thinking of many of us who, while taking to heart our Church's admonition to give special priority (a "preferential option") to the needs of the poor, have found conventional approaches to that priority at least somewhat wanting. He was saying that good intentions are not enough, and that although the welfare state may *seem* the most compassionate approach, if it is not working, it is not Christian to perpetuate it simply for appearance's sake.

Most importantly, what he was affirming was not, primarily, particular *conclusions*; but rather the importance of the

search, of *opening our minds* to new ideas, new approaches, new insights in service to the common good.

In *Writing from Left to Right* Michael Novak chronicles a life lived doing exactly that, in the process offering us a road map on how to arrive at our own best prudential judgments as how to best apply the principles of Catholic social teaching to the critical issues of our time.

This work is a treasure on several levels: first, as a remarkable inside historical account of so many epochal events of the latter half of the twentieth century – in our Church, in our nation, in the international community – from someone who was not only in the center of it all, but who exerted a profound influence on emerging social, political, cultural and religious thought, and in policy approaches in areas ranging from economics, to foreign policy and human rights, to cultural issues.

On a second level, Novak offers his specific insights in many of these areas, even as his own views at times shifted – for example, from support of the Vietnam war to opposition, and then somewhat back again in retrospect; from support for the welfare state approach to combating poverty, to an embrace of free-market capitalism and job-stimulating tax cuts; and ultimately, away from purely economic responses to poverty, to a realization of the cultural factors that must also be addressed; and, as a result, from years of activism in national Democratic Party politics – at the service of such luminaries as Robert Kennedy, George McGovern and Sargent Shriver – to involvement in the emerging neoconservative movement and active service, in various capacities, in the Reagan Administration.

But it is on the third level – Novak's description of his own detailed, open-minded but principled *search* for the best solutions to the issues of human suffering he has sought to address – that this work is of greatest value; because, as he

laments near the book's conclusion, he sees less and less inclination today – on all sides of our nation's great partisan divide – toward the kind of sincere, respectful dialogue, mutual charity and openness to new ideas that can best advance the common good.

Novak shares with us how his Slovak roots implanted in him an early and lifelong commitment to human rights and opposition to the Communist philosophy under which his family members were then being oppressed; and also how those eastern European roots would later give him a special kinship with "the Pope who called me friend," John Paul II. He explains how his upbringing in the Pennsylvania mining town of Johnstown gave him early exposure to, and sensitivity toward, economic deprivation; yet at the same time how his father taught him never to "envy the rich," and how he came to understand, and sees today, that class envy, far from being a solution to poverty, can actually perpetuate it, while also engendering damaging conflicts within and between nations.

He recounts how after some 12 years of seminary training, he found himself in 1960 drawn instead to lay vocation, and to "the war of political ideas." Subsequent studies in philosophy led him to the "Christian Realism" of Reinhold Niebuhr, which would reinforce his natural inclination toward trying to explore all sides of an issue.

"I was born with a conservative temperament," he writes, "but I tried hard to inspect opposing arguments closely." He would take as his own guide—and today urges on all of us—Niebuhr's admonition that "In my own views there is always some error; and in the views of those I disagree with there is always some truth."

Travel to Rome in 1963 to report on the Second Vatican Council furthered his belief in the importance of such humble introspection – within institutions as well as individual minds.

"If the most time-encrusted and hidebound institution in the world was examining its conscience, instituting reforms, and taking in large gulps of fresh air," he writes, "well, then, any institution in the world could do so. And *should* – that seemed to be the subtext."

Novak describes how his growing opposition to the Vietnam war, while teaching at Stanford in the late 1960s, pushed him into a philosophical "left turn"– moderately at first, then more sharply after an erstwhile hero, then-Vice President Hubert Humphrey, delivered a "glib, insensitive" speech at Stanford defending the war. True to form, however, Novak did not stop his own examination and re-examination of his positions, traveling to Vietnam to experience first hand the war he was writing and speaking against, and concluding at war's end that he had allowed himself to be somewhat deceived about the true nature of the conflict – that far from being simply a homegrown revolution by the Viet Cong, it had in fact been a war of outside Communist aggression from the north.

While Novak marks "The publication of *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* in 1972" as his "declaration of independence from the cultural left," that was not his intention. He was hoping to be seen as offering a needed corrective to what he saw as "the unworthy prejudices of the cultural left" against "family people, traditional values and ethnic neighborhoods."

"I was still writing as a man of the anti-capitalist left," he observes, "but I was, in truth, departing from left-wing orthodoxy by singling out cultural issues (rather than economic issues) as the primary neuralgic point in American life." He discovered that this departure from liberal orthodoxy offended the cultural left, "at that time the preeminent force watching over what couldn't be said in American culture and what could." He experienced for the first time "the fury of the Left when it marks someone as beyond the pale of acceptability," and found himself so banished – as

many Catholics likewise have found ourselves ostracized by the Catholic left, the self-appointed gatekeepers of Catholic social teaching, if we dare to posit applications of that teaching that stray from their liberal political orthodoxy.

Novak would subsequently find a home with the American Enterprise Institute, where he would join a growing number of similarly disaffected Democrats determined to explore alternative approaches to accomplishing social justice goals; and he found himself from its outset called to serve the Reagan Administration in its global human rights efforts and domestic economic initiatives.

"Four main inquiries drove me in the 1980s," he recounts:

"1) how to rethink capitalism in a moral and religious language," an effort that would afford him influence not just in national and international political circles (Margaret Thatcher said of his book, *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, "You are doing the most important work in the world"), but also in the Church, where his insights were welcomed by Pope John Paul II;

"2) what are the root concepts of human rights and how are they best protected?" – "by strong associations in free societies" was his answer, which he worked to advance as Ronald Reagan's ambassador to the UN Commission on Human Rights;

"3) how to ... defeat communism in the Soviet Union and China," which he worked to do on the board of Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe; and

"4) how to break the chains of poverty throughout the world," which inquiry he terms "my personal favorite," reinforcing his lifelong commitment to this moral imperative that he knew must transcend partisan politics.

He documents the great strides that have been made worldwide

in this effort – “over the last 30 years we have reduced the number of poor in the world by over 1 billion persons”– and observes that the “two propositions” tested over the last, “bloodiest century” have been disproven: that “dictatorship is better for the people than democracy,” and “socialism is better for the people than capitalism.” The opposite, he says, has been proven true: “democracy is better, and capitalism is better.”

Yet amid such progress, he worries about the destructive effects of growing appeals to class envy, and about the cultural factors exacerbating economic deprivation. “Poverty in America (is) no longer characterized solely by low income but also by self-damaging behaviors” which must also be addressed.

Novak warns of a coming “demographic tsunami” brought on by a “de-population” crisis. Low birthrates, and “54 million abortions in the United States since 1973,” he writes, have blasted “a gaping hole” in projected funding for Social Security and Medicare, and threaten shrinking future generations with insurmountable national debt. And he worries that the re-definition of marriage is undermining the state’s ability to preserve an institution essential to “bearing children and nurturing them” in the “civic virtues and skills” essential to an ordered, prosperous society. He also laments the trend toward forcing “the traditional religious heritage of the nation’s institutions and morals ... out of the public square” in favor of a secularism that is “not neutral” but “totalitarian” in its ideology.

Of perhaps greatest concern to Novak however, is what he sees as the growing hostility to the kind of “honest argument” that has been his life’s work, and that he knows is essential to building community and working together to develop the most effective responses to the critical issues of our time.

“I am more discouraged in 2013 than I have ever been over the

determination of so many to refuse to talk with those with whom they disagree," he writes.

He is not calling on us to compromise our principles. Rather, he is urging an openness in exploring the most effective ways to implement those principles – for Catholics, the principles of our Church's social teaching – in service to the common good.

Michael Novak's life story, chronicled so compellingly in this work, shows us how to do that.

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