

EDITORIAL CREEP MARKS NEW YORK TIMES

We recently commented on an article by Rachel Donadio of the *New York Times* as an example of its tendency to allow editorial commentary to creep into its hard news stories.

Donadio wondered whether the Vatican “will confront the failures in church leadership that allowed sexual abuse to go unpunished.” She added that “the culture of the church was for decades skewed against public disclosure and cooperation with the civil authorities,” and that only now are the bishops required to report abuse to the authorities. She consistently referred to the problem as pedophilia.

Perhaps she missed the *Times* story of April 10 on Leslie Lothstein, a psychologist who has treated about 300 priests. He said that “only a small minority were true pedophiles.” The data show that most have been homosexuals.

Yes, most abusers went unpunished, but it was wrong to imply some sinister motive like “secrecy.” For example, the Murphy report on abuse in Dublin found that most bishops followed the advice of therapists—not canon law. In short, had Church law been followed things might have been different.

The idea that the Church is just now reporting cases of abuse is a red herring: *no institution has a record of reporting abuse*. Here is what Paul Vitello of the *Times* wrote last October: “For decades, prosecutors in Brooklyn routinely pursued child molesters from every major ethnic and religious segment of the borough’s diverse population. Except one.” The exception was the Orthodox Jewish community, and this is because Orthodox Jews have “long [been] forbidden to inform on one another without permission from the rabbis who lead them.”

There is no law in most places mandating the reporting of any

crime, and that is why fingering the Church smacks of bigotry.

NEW YORK TIMES POLL PROVES REVEALING

According to a recent *New York Times* poll, the pope's favorability rating among Catholics at the end of March was 27 percent. After hearing the non-stop negative media reports over the past month, his favorability rating jumped to 43 percent. How can this be? It was due to the backlash. When asked whether the media have been harder on the Catholic Church, 64 percent of said yes, and almost half said the abuse stories were blown out of proportion.

Three in four Catholics believe the Vatican today is more interested in preventing abuse than trying to cover it up; this represents a 180 degree turnaround when asked how it handled the problem in the past. Yet about the same number think that abuse is still going on. This is likely due to two factors: the realization that sexual misconduct will never be wholly stamped out; and the dearth of media coverage on the success the Church has had. Regarding the latter, the latest annual report on this subject shows that between 2008-2009, there were only six credible allegations made against over 40,000 priests. But the *Times* story on this subject (which totaled 92 words) merely said that the number of accusations had declined, never citing the figure of six.

The news story on the survey said that "most Catholics are unconvinced" that there is an underlying problem in the priesthood with homosexuality. Yet the data show that only 37 percent say homosexuality is not a factor: 30 percent say it

is a major factor and 23 percent say it is minor. This is striking given the media propaganda—led by the *Times*—that the scandal involves pedophilia. In fact, most of the cases involve homosexuality.

Those of us who have been defending the pope, criticizing the media and telling the truth about the link between homosexuality and sexual abuse have reason to be pleased with the survey results.

NEW YORK TIMES CONTINUES ITS AGENDA

There is no media outlet more obsessed with old stories about sexual abuse in the Church than the *New York Times*. In a recent front-page story, complete with a color photo, there was a story on William Cardinal Levada, former archbishop of San Francisco and current head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. One might expect a front-page story to contain something dramatic, but there was nothing there: just a rehash of old stories.

The headline said more about the *Times* than Levada. It read, “Cardinal Has a Mixed Record on Abuse Cases.” Front-page stories, of course, typically deal with current events, exceptions being new revelations about important historical events. But neither was the case with Levada. To learn that a leader has a “mixed record” extending back a quarter century is not exactly news. That’s why it reads like an agenda.

Here’s the story. When Levada was an archbishop, he learned that some homosexual priests molested post-pubescent males. Of course, the *Times* refused to use the term homosexual, but it

is obvious from reading the story that the victims were not children. Then Levada did what *nearly all leaders did at the time—and many still do*—he sent the abuser to therapy. As usual, it didn't work.

We are still waiting for the *Times* to do similar stories on the clergy from other religions, as well as school superintendents. But we won't hold our breath.

SHOULD THE POPE VISIT ENGLAND?

There are many ominous signs surrounding the visit by Pope Benedict XVI to England in September. First, there are now over 100,000 Brits who have signed “certificates of de-baptism” renouncing their former Christian status. Second, there are hate-ridden atheists like Richard Dawkins who are paying anti-Catholic lawyers to investigate the possibility of arresting the pope for “crimes against humanity.” Third, Catholic bashing by the British media is flourishing. Fourth, freedom of speech and freedom of religion are in a very tenuous state for Christians.

Regarding the latter, just recently a Christian street preacher was arrested in Britain for the crime of spreading the Gospel. To be specific, a 42-year-old Baptist male was arrested by a policewoman when she heard him declare as sinful such matters as blasphemy, drunkenness and gay relations. It was his comment that homosexuality is a sin that got him into hot water—he was thrown in jail for breaking a 1986 law that penalizes “abusive” speech. Not only that, he was fingerprinted, given a DNA swab and retina scan. Now this

modern-day revolutionary must stand trial.

Had the preacher been a young Muslim calling for jihad, or an ordinary Brit ripping on Catholics, he would have been tolerated, if not cheered. And this is no exaggeration.

There are times when dialogue is a mistake. This is one of them.

BRITS GO EASY ON ANTI-POPE OFFICIAL

Steven Mulvain, a 23-year-old employee of Britain's Foreign Office, sent an e-mail memo to Downing Street and other government offices saying that when Pope Benedict XVI visits England in September it would be "ideal" for him to open an abortion clinic, bless gay marriage and introduce a "Benedict" brand of condoms; there were other suggestions of a similar nature. Though the Foreign Office issued an apology, the guilty Oxford graduate was merely transferred to another office.

The Brits are bigger hypocrites than their like-minded liberal Americans. Back when Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, a law known as Section 28 was passed banning government funds from being used to support homosexual families, declaring lesbian liaisons to be "pretend" families. Now Tory leaders are scrambling to apologize for Section 28, boasting how gay-friendly their party has become.

Similarly, two years ago, the British government renamed Islamic terrorism "anti-Islamic activity," maintaining that not only is there no such thing as Islamic terrorism, all such

violence is really anti-Islamic. Yet when it comes to government officials who insult the pope, no punitive sanctions are taken—he is simply shuffled from one office to another.

Following the logic of the British government with regard to Muslims, they should declare all cases of priestly sexual abuse to be “anti-Catholic activity.” But we Catholics have no reason to believe that we will ever achieve parity with Muslims. Maybe that’s because we are too nice.

PULLMAN IMAGINES JESUS

Philip Pullman’s new book, *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*, became available in the U.S. on May 4; it is published by Canongate U.S.

The publisher was kind enough to send us an advance copy of the new book, no doubt hoping that we would give it some free publicity by hammering it. They may be disappointed: it’s an interesting fable.

Our beef with Pullman’s trilogy, *His Dark Materials*, and more specifically with the movie based on the first book, “The Golden Compass,” centered on the attempt to seduce young people into thinking that atheism is the answer and the Catholic Church is the problem. But this book has no hidden agenda—it’s a fanciful account of the Gospel story, one that displays the author’s fervid imagination.

Pullman’s most recent fairy tale sees Mary giving birth to twins: Jesus, a figure who bears resemblance to the Son of God known to Christians, and Christ, a less admirable character who is preoccupied with institutionalizing his legacy.

The most important statement about the book is not its contents, rather it is the decision to write it in the first place. Why would England's most famous atheist storyteller find it necessary to repair to the Gospels to write this book? What is it about Christianity—Catholicism in particular—that Pullman can't live without? And why does his fascination with religion not extend to other religions? To be sure, had Pullman taken liberties with Islam, he would have been a marked man. So much easier to deal with those Christians, most of whom are very nice.

The real issue remains. Christian novelists are not known for finding material in atheistic accounts of human existence—they simply ignore them—but the contra is not true. Perhaps Pullman can write another story explaining why.

VICTORY IN CONNECTICUT

As the term ended in May for the Connecticut State Legislature, a bill seeking to extend the statute of limitations in cases of sex abuse cases never came to a vote, thus securing a victory for Catholics. This victory was in no small part due to our tireless work in educating the public on how HB 5473 was inherently discriminatory towards the Catholic Church.

Just as we had seen in the past with the anti-Catholics in Colorado and New York, the “let's-get-the-Church” gang was in full gear in Connecticut. None of those supporting the legislation, including the bill's sponsor Rep. Beth Bye, was truly interested in combating child sexual abuse: if they were, they would not have given public institutions a pass. As it stood, the bill would have done absolutely nothing to bring

relief to those who had been abused by a public school employee save for filing a civil suit against the individual.

Contrast that with a child abused by an employee of a Catholic school. Not only would the victim be able to file a suit against the individual, but the victim could then file suit against the diocese thus costing the Church millions of dollars.

As is the case in other states, public entities enjoy sovereign immunity from such claims and cannot be sued for damages unless a bill specifically authorizes it. Accordingly, we called Bye's bluff: we said to make it inclusive of all institutions, public as well as private, or pull it.

It was hardly surprising that we heard nothing coming from the teachers' unions and all of the other lobbyists for the public schools. They knew that if the statute of limitations was eliminated in cases of childhood sexual abuse that took place in public schools, many former administrators and teachers—to say nothing of current school districts—would be forced to face the fire. We said that justice demands that they suffer the same fate of those in private institutions. Either that, or they should stop grandstanding and withdraw the discriminatory bill altogether.

We were pleasantly surprised when we found out that State Senator Andrew McDonald, Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, opposed the legislation stressing the importance that statutes of limitations have in the judicial system. We were surprised because it was McDonald, along with Rep. Michael Lawlor, who in 2009 drafted a bill "To revise the corporate governance provisions applicable to the Roman Catholic Church and provide for the investigation of the misappropriation of funds by religious corporations." (The bill was pulled because the Connecticut bishops, the Catholic League and thousands of Connecticut Catholics fought it.)

Soon after we learned of HB 5473, we spoke to someone at Rep. Bye's office and were told that this bill *did* apply to public schools and that there is a difference between state employees and public school employees when it comes to sovereign immunity. After we heard this we said that it was time to end the duplicity and have an equal playing field for everyone regardless if they are employees of private or public institutions.

Accordingly, we extended a challenge to Bye: submit a bill that would repeal sovereign immunity for all public employees. Then, and only then, would Connecticut Catholics and Catholic institutions know that they would not be treated in a discriminatory manner in law.

Following our challenge to Bye, Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport sent a letter to Connecticut lawmakers unjustly condemning the bishops for seeking to "mislead, mischaracterize and spin the facts in an effort to preserve their temporal, rather than spiritual authority." In doing so, the organization went way beyond the pale for even a dissident Catholic group—it portrayed an animus so vile as to rival the antics of rank anti-Catholics.

We wrote to the Connecticut Legislature and let them know that the Connecticut bishops speak for the Church in the state, not some morally bankrupt lay organization. In our letter we noted that some Catholics were falsely positioning themselves as being legitimate competitors to the voice of the bishops and that Voice of the Faithful were the most irresponsible.

We said: "To be sure, lay Catholics have a right to speak to all public policy issues that touch on the affairs of the Catholic Church. But no lay Catholic organization has the right to portray itself as a substitute to the canonical authority of the bishops. That is what Voice of the Faithful has done."

We also noted that the supporters of Voice of the Faithful,

unlike loyal lay Catholics who support the palpable reforms made by their bishops, have never found a reform worth cheering. In other words, there is nothing the bishops could ever do that would satisfy them.

We respectfully asked the lawmakers to weigh the real-life concerns of the bishops regarding the draconian implications of the bill. We also asked that they not be distracted by those who harbor an agenda of their own.

On May 3 our work paid off: proponents of the bill announced that there were not enough votes in the House or Senate to push the bill forward this year.

Although this bill failed to move forward, we will make sure to keep an eye on similar efforts in the future. Legislation like this seems to creep up from time to time

TIMES TRIES TO NAIL ARCHBISHOP DOLAN

On May 17, the *New York Times* ran a front-page article on New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan trying to pin some dirt on him, but as usual the story contained nothing.

Times reporter Serge F. Kovalski had been investigating Archbishop Dolan for a year, and he gave it his best shot in this article. There was nothing for Dolan to worry about—Kovalski failed to lay a glove on him. But it wasn't for lack of trying: unprofessionally, he allowed a professional victims' group, SNAP, to drive his 3784-word story.

No other newspaper in the nation would post a front-page story on a religious leader that led nowhere, save for the *Times*. In classic fashion, the reader was teased at the beginning with this nugget: the professional victims were disappointed when they learned that Dolan, then the newly installed archbishop of Milwaukee, “had instructed lawyers to seek the dismissal of five lawsuits against the church.” Now the only question that really mattered is whether Dolan made the right decision—not whether those reflexively inclined to believe the worst about the Catholic Church were disappointed. But the reader had to search in vain to find an answer: the story never addresses this issue again. So we know Dolan was right.

Much coverage is given to a priest who sued his accuser. Interestingly, the accuser had a psychiatric history of lying and blaming others, and no one ever spoke badly about the priest. Largely unresolved, one wonders why this case was even mentioned, unless it was to put Dolan in a bad light for standing by the priest. Isn't that what those who run the *Times* would do if a less than credible accusation were made against one of their reporters? Or would they throw the accused overboard?

The story made a big deal about the fact that not all dioceses post the names of guilty priests, and that many do not list religious order priests. So what? Why should the Church be held to a different standard? Where are the names of all the public school teachers found guilty?

In any event, the story on Dolan revealed more about the *New York Times* than it did Archbishop Dolan.

NEW YORK TIMES GETS VINDICTIVE

On May 16, the *New York Times* ran an editorial titled, "Justice for Child Abuse Victims," that unfairly criticized the Catholic Church.

The *Times* said "The Catholic Church is working against the interests of child abuse victims in state legislatures around the country," citing as proof its attempt to block laws in states that would amend the statute of limitations for alleged victims of sexual abuse. It also urged New York lawmakers to pass a bill on this issue, noting opposition from the New York State Catholic Conference and Orthodox Jewish officials.

The editorial was deceptive and patently unfair. What the Catholic Church is doing is protecting itself from a vindictive campaign to settle old scores by looting the coffers of the Church. Interestingly, the *Times*, which is quick to demand constitutional rights for accused Muslim terrorists, has no such interest in protecting the rights of accused priests.

Last year, there were two bills introduced in New York State on this issue: one applied only to private institutions; the other applied to both the private and the public sectors. The *Times* endorsed the former, thus showing its preference for sticking it to Catholics and for (some) discriminatory legislation.

The *Times* editorial failed to note that in addition to Catholics and Orthodox Jews, those opposed to the New York bill include the New York State School Boards Association, the New York Council of School Superintendents, the New York Association of Counties, the New York Conference of Mayors, the New York Farm Bureau, the New York Medical Society and the

New York Society of Professional Engineers. But to mention these groups would have worked against the *Times*' agenda of convincing readers that the Church is "working against the interests of child abuse victims."

Evidently, the *Times* is incapable of being shamed these days.