

# VANDALS STRIKE ON BOTH COASTS

Vandalism against Catholic icons marked the Easter season in New England, while in California the severed head of a statue of St. Junípero Serra that had been missing since October was found.

Just days after Easter, Father Frank Silva of St. Margaret's Church in Burlington, Vermont found a statue of the Blessed Mother on church grounds that had been desecrated. "I immediately noticed the head had been chopped off and as I got closer the hands had been broken off" as well, he said. And that was not the end of the destruction: further up the hill, two other statues were also found to have been vandalized.

Also just days after Easter, a statue of the Virgin Mary was found decapitated at St. Mary's Church in Billerica, Massachusetts. This statue too had its hands cut off in what Billerica police chief Daniel Rosa termed a "disturbing crime." It was the third such act of vandalism at Catholic churches in the area, following a similar incident in Norwood, Massachusetts.

Meanwhile, in northern California, police announced in early April that the head of a statue of St. Junípero was found by a girl walking in shallow water. The statue at the lower Presidio of Monterey was one of several that had been targeted by vandals in the Monterey Peninsula last fall, after Pope Francis canonized the 18th century missionary who brought the Catholic faith to California. A statue in the city of Carmel and one at the Carmel mission had also been desecrated.

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# ABORTION CONFOUNDS HILLARY

When Hillary Clinton was recently a guest on NBC's "Meet the Press," she said the following about abortion:

"Under Roe v. Wade, as you know," "there is room for reasonable kinds of restrictions after a certain point in time." She did not say why she has never found a restriction she could support, including the reasonable restriction on stabbing the skull of a baby who is 80 percent born (otherwise known as partial-birth abortion).

"The unborn person doesn't have constitutional rights," she said. Having conceded that pregnant mothers are carrying the life of another person, she did not feel obligated to protect that life. Moreover, she did not say why constitutional rights can be denied to one class of persons without greasing the slide to denying other classes of persons.

Hillary's position is eerily reminiscent of what U.S. Supreme Court Justice Roger Taney said in his infamous 1857 Dred Scott ruling on slavery: He declared that blacks had "no rights which the white man was bound to respect."

Hillary also told "Meet the Press" host Chuck Todd that "in the third trimester of pregnancy there is room for looking at the life and the health of the mother." This shows how abortion totally confounds her—it is not just Donald Trump who needs to develop a coherent position.

Third trimester discussions do not focus exclusively on "the life and the health of the mother"; rather, they focus on "the life and the health" of the baby, as well. She knows that but can't admit to it.

Last year, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker signed legislation banning abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy. "At five months," he said, "that's the time when that unborn child can

feel pain.” Hillary labeled his decision “dangerous.” Dangerous to whom? According to her reasoning, expounded recently, it couldn’t be the child. After all, unborn persons have no constitutional rights.

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## BISHOPS PUSH FOR CONSCIENCE RIGHTS

Cardinal Timothy Dolan and Archbishop William Lori, who head the pro-life and religious liberty committees of the bishops’ conference, respectively, recently urged congressmen to support the Conscience Protection Act of 2016.

The Act is necessary to protect the rights of healthcare workers and providers from being pressured into servicing an abortion. Dolan and Lori acknowledge that there are laws on the books that offer protection, but unfortunately attempts to coerce pro-life Catholics into performing an abortion have not ceased, and existing laws may not be enough to ward off a new round of demands.

Cardinal Dolan and Archbishop Lori asked members of the House to “recall that rejection of abortion is an integral part of the Hippocratic oath that for many centuries has helped define medicine as a *profession*, an ethical vocation dedicated to the life and well-being of one’s patients” (*italic in the original*).

Noting that while abortion is legal, the archbishops also noted that the U.S. Supreme Court has acknowledged that abortion is “inherently different from other medical procedures,” and that the government may help to “encourage childbirth” over abortion. That is an important concession

that must be acted upon.

There is another reason why it is wise for the bishops' conference to undertake this initiative: the ACLU. Over the last several years, the ACLU has sued one Catholic hospital after another, trying to force them into performing abortions. Indeed, they have made this matter their number-one issue affecting religious liberty. While the civil libertarians have lost continuously in the courts, they are determined to harass and intimidate Catholic institutions into compliance with their pro-abortion position.

The pro-abortion lobby has never believed in "pro-choice"—they have always believed in denying the choice of life, so zealous are they in championing the cause of death in the womb. That is one more good reason why the Conscience Protection Act of 2016 needs to be passed.

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## POPE PROVES FLEXIBLE WITHIN LIMITS

*The following article written by Bill Donohue was published by Newsmax on April 8.*

Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, "The Joy of Love," does not change a single teaching of the Catholic Church, but he does call on Catholics to be more understanding of the irregular family unions that so many find themselves in these days.

The Holy Father acknowledges that there are those, in and out of the church, who harbor "an immoderate desire for total change without sufficient reflection or grounding." These

Catholics will be disappointed, if not angry, that they did not get what they wanted.

This unhappiness will also be found among those who possess “an attitude that would solve everything by applying general rules or deriving undue conclusions from particular theological considerations.”

In short, Catholics who consider themselves very liberal or very conservative will have another opportunity to sulk.

The Pope makes plain how inadequate it is to cast all discussions on family issues in terms of the nuclear family. He wants us to address the conditions that mark irregular families, and to minister to those in need.

Priests, in particular, must exercise discernment in tending to those in unconventional unions: the ultimate goal is to implement “the logic of pastoral mercy.”

Lest he be misunderstood, the Pope is not suggesting that priests exercise flexibility outside the limits prescribed by church teachings. “It is true that general rules set forth a good which can never be disregarded or neglected,” he says, “but in their formulation they cannot provide absolutely for all particular situations.”

For example, the divorced and remarried must not be treated with disdain, and indeed they must be approached with mercy. The same is true of those who live in other irregular unions.

Still, on four occasions in his statement, the Pope cites the indissoluble nature of marriage; he also restates the church’s teaching on marriage as a union between those of the opposite sex. “There is a failure to realize that only the exclusive and indissoluble union between a man and a woman has a plenary role to play in society as a stable commitment that bears fruit in new life,” he says.

The Pope acknowledges that given the multiplicity of lifestyles, difficult moral judgments abound. He cautions against “thinking that everything is black and white,” as if there were some kind of theological GPS device that can answer these questions with precision. This leads him to emphasize the role of conscience in making moral judgments.

Unfortunately, some commentators are already saying that the Pope has decided that obeying one’s conscience is all that is necessary to resolve moral problems. What is not being reported is that he is speaking about a “well-formed conscience,” not some purely individualistic exercise absent a tutorial role for the church. So when he says that “We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them,” his emphasis on forming consciences cannot be ignored.

It is worth repeating his exact words on this subject. “Naturally,” he instructs, “every effort should be made to encourage the development of an enlightened conscience, formed and guided by the responsible and serious discernment of one’s pastor, and to encourage an ever greater trust in God’s grace.”

The Pope’s comments fit perfectly with what the Catholic Catechism has to say: “Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened.” The Catechism also stresses that it “can happen that moral conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgments about acts to be performed or already committed.”

Thus, those who see conscience as a piece of putty that can be twisted to justify any moral act will find no support in the Pope’s document or in the teachings of the church.

The term “gay” is nowhere found in the Pope’s apostolic exhortation. There is one mention of homosexuals and two mentions of same-sex marriage. Nothing is said about the church’s teaching that the homosexual condition is

“intrinsically disordered,” meaning that the status quo has been upheld. At the same time, the Pope wants us to respect homosexuals and to refrain from any unjust discrimination against them.

The Pope affirms what the Synod Fathers said about same-sex marriage. He notes that “there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family.” Similarly, he finds attempts to pressure Catholics into approving homosexual unions to be objectionable.

In short, the Pope rejects the role of a scold, and looks askance at those who bury their head in the letter of the law. At the same time, he wants us to appreciate the wisdom of the church’s teachings on marriage, the family, and sexuality. He has not changed the bar, but he is asking us to help everyone clear it.

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## **NEW YORK STATE ABUSE BILL: OUR EFFORT PAYS OFF**

In mid-April, two New York state senators announced that they will introduce legislation to eliminate the statute of limitations for sexual abuse crimes against minors—in public as well as private institutions. The announcement followed a determined effort by the Catholic League to insist that any such legislation must end the special protections that have long shielded public sector employees—like public school teachers—and equally protect all childhood victims.

On April 1, we appealed to state Senator Brad Hoylman to amend his bill eliminating the statute of limitations for sexual

abuse, to include those abused in public institutions.

"In your March 30 column in the *Daily News*," Bill Donohue wrote, "you say, 'Until every childhood sexual abuse victim has the opportunity to confront their abuser in court, the headlines will remind us that our business is unfinished.' This is so true. That is why I implore you to amend your bill on this subject to include all childhood victims: Your bill does not address those who have been abused in the public schools." Noting Hoylman's desire to provide a "one-year 'look-back' period in which past claims could be resolved," Donohue wrote: "That is a commendable position but its application is limited to private institutions."

Noting that Hoylman had written that he was using an ongoing *Daily News* series on this issue to get his Senate colleagues to support his bill, we called his attention to a *Daily News* editorial of March 30:

"'All institutions that are responsible for protection of the welfare of minors must be treated equally before the law,' it said. The editorial also notes that pending legislation would perpetuate an 'inequity,'" in that "changes would 'apply only to private institutions, and not to local government institutions, such as the public schools.'"

"If you are as impressed as we are with the *Daily News* editorial," we urged, "then please amend your bill to be inclusive of all institutions."

Hoylman's initial response was unsatisfactory. Asked by *Daily News* reporter Ken Lovett about our request that he amend his bill, the senator said that while he supports treating private and public schools alike, "it would be wrong to hide behind the issue to block legislation from being passed."

Accordingly, the Catholic League contacted every member of the New York legislature and asked them to submit a bill that would suspend the statute of limitations for the sexual abuse



of minors, with one caveat: that it cover only the public schools. If anyone objects, all they need do is take a page from Sen. Hoylman and say that while private and public schools should be treated the same, "it would be wrong to hide behind the issue to block legislation from being passed."

Then on April 10, in a *Daily News* exclusive, Lovett (who, we noted, "has covered this issue better than anyone") reported that Hoylman and Sen. Andrea Stewart-Cousins would introduce a new bill that covers all institutions equally, whether public or private. We commended Hoylman for this pivot: "That is how it should be: justice demands that young victims of sex crimes be treated equally, independent of the venue of the offense."

But the battle is far from over. Assemblywoman Margaret Markey has for years been pushing a bill that would extend the statute of limitations for abuse in private settings, while leaving the public schools alone. In 2009, she tried amending the bill to include public schools—and was met with such a firestorm of opposition from public sector interests, including the powerful teachers unions, that the bill went nowhere. Hoylman and Stewart-Cousins can expect that same type of upheaval against their bill from public sector interest groups. Let's hope they show more courage and staying power than Markey, who retreated in the face of public sector opposition back to the safety of a private institutions-only bill, which she has continued to propose every year, with no success. Her latest ploy was to try to hold a screening of the movie "Spotlight" in the state Capitol this May to build support for her bill. Her own Democratic Assembly majority rejected that scheme.

There is also, as Donohue conceded, legitimate concern about tampering with the statute of limitations. "As someone who has written two books on civil liberties," he noted, "I am well aware of the solid legal grounds upon which the statute of limitations has been crafted, and I support them. But as president of the Catholic League, I have a different charge:

our goal is to fight defamation and discrimination against Catholics and the Catholic Church. That is why I commend Senator Hoylman and Senator Cousins for their initiative.”

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## NY TIMES ABUSE STORY OMITTS KEY FACTS

On the front page of a recent edition of the *New York Times* there was a story about priestly sexual abuse that occurred “long ago” in a western Pennsylvania diocese. The story’s omissions were glaring. Here are some of them:

- Readers never learn what “long ago” means. In fact, the cases of alleged abuse extend back to World War II.
- Readers never learn why old cases of alleged abuse at one high school in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown was sufficient cause for the local D.A. to refer these cases to the state Attorney General.
- Readers never learn why a grand jury of decades-old allegations in the diocese was summoned, but no other institution, public or private, was probed. It simply cannot be that there are no old cases outstanding in any other institution in the state. So why the cherry-picking?
- Readers never learn that the attorney who took the case in western Pennsylvania came from out-of-state, and that he has a tarnished ethical record.
- Readers never learn that the two bills that are proposed to revise the statute of limitations on sexual abuse cases involving minors only apply to private institutions. Neither bill would affect the public schools, even though Pennsylvania public school teachers

have the second worst record in the nation when it comes to raping students.

Other than that, the story was accurate.

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## **HBO SPINS “MAPPLETHORPE”**

HBO recently aired a documentary called “Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures.”

Robert Mapplethorpe was a homosexual who lived a reckless life; he died in 1989 at the age of 42. He was also known for his tortured relationship with the Catholic Church. But no one would know this from watching the HBO celebration of him.

“I think the way I arrange things is very Catholic,” he is quoted as saying, “even though I was never a religious person.” The film uses this as a platform to understand his fixation on Satan. To Mapplethorpe, Satan was not some evil figure; rather, he was a convivial playmate who enjoyed seducing young women. According to one of the photographer’s friends, he also thought there was “something very ritualistic about sadomasochism,” noting that it was “kind of a Black Mass.”

What the documentary did not focus on was Mapplethorpe’s vicious assault on New York’s Cardinal John O’Connor. In a catalog featuring Mapplethorpe’s work, he is quoted as saying, “This fat cannibal from the house of walking swastikas up on fifth avenue should lose his tax exempt status and pay retroactive taxes for the last couple of centuries.”

For the record, Cardinal O’Connor quietly visited hospitals that tended to AIDS patients, cleaning their bed pans. Those

who, like Mapplethorpe, behaviorally contracted AIDS—and died of it—were the ones whom O'Connor helped. Indeed, the Archdiocese of New York, under his tutelage, did more to help AIDS patients than any other private provider in New York City.

HBO clearly decided that viewers need not know anything about this, which is why it was not reported. Why should they—it would only complicate their lives and get in the way of the documentary's narrative.

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## **BIGOTRY EXPLODES AT COMEDY CENTRAL**

On five occasions over a period of just three days, five different television shows on Comedy Central went on a tear bashing Catholicism.

- A clip was shown of a priest greeting children, shaking their heads. Tosh implied that the priest was overcompensating, as if to say, “look at me not fondling these children!” (“Tosh.0,” 3/15)
- Comedian Pete Holmes said “my girlfriend from Christian college” offered to perform oral sex on him (he used an obscenity), “but I turned it down for the Lord. You owe me, Jesus.” (“Not Safe with Nikki Glazer,” 3/15)
- Comedian Bret Ernst recalled how his grandma demanded that he clean his room, stating that “I’m Roman Catholic, so my grandmother had those crazy saint statutes—she bitch-slapped Saint Peter on the floor.” (“This Is Not Happening,” 3/15)
- Chris Hardwick asked Lauren Lapkus and John Early what

Instagram filter the pope would use. Lapkus said, "Whatever best shows off that body of Christ." Early said, "The filter that obscures all the child abuse." ("@Midnight with Chris Hardwick," 3/16)

- Trevor Noah said St. Patrick's Day "is supposed to be a religious holiday," but Jesus didn't authorize a drunken fest. But because blacks don't participate, "you can have six million drunk white people screaming on the streets." ("Daily Show," 3/17)

Noah's comment may not be over the line, but the others are; his remark is noted because he wouldn't dare make a crack about the violence that accompanies the West Indian Day Parade in Brooklyn every September. Indeed, Comedy Central almost never finds it comedic to obscenely bash other demographic groups the way it does Catholics. Point of fact: In the course of a year, the network doesn't trash the protected classes as much as it does Catholics in just three days. There is something really sick going on there.

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## CRUDE COMEDIAN ON "CONAN"

We never heard of comedian Emily Galati, and that may explain why she crossed the line recently on "Conan"—she is getting desperate. Her solo performance, fortunately, had no interaction with the host.

Galati's monologue centered on birth control and Christians. "I'm not that into Jesus if you haven't been able to tell," she said. We noticed. We also noticed her crude commentary: "Can't make fun of Jesus, he's coming back. Yeah, Jesus promises a second coming. Yeah, every guy does."

Galati ought to know such commentary may be seen as offensive

to many practicing Christians, and this is especially true when it happens during Holy Week. Even someone “not that into Jesus” should be able to connect the dots.

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## **SPIKE IN BIBLE BANNING**

There was a time when religious groups sought to ban obscene books from public libraries, but these days it is militant secularists who are seeking to ban the Bible. Here are four examples. What makes this special is that they all occurred during the same week.

- A host of activist groups contacted the Department of Veterans Affairs asking it to put an end to the practice of banning the Bible at Veterans’ medical clinics, and on military installations
- An Ohio congressman registered his objections to the removal of the Bible from a POW display at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base
- The American Library Association reported that (for the first time) the Bible made the “Top Ten” list of books that citizens sought to ban from libraries
- The Governor of Idaho, Butch Otter, vetoed a bill permitting the Bible to be used as a Reference book in the public schools

In some cases, malicious intent was operative; in others, ignorance was at work. Take the last example.

Gov. Otter said that allowing the Bible as a Reference book in a public school violated the Idaho Constitution. He offered the following quotes: “No sectarian or religious tenets or doctrines shall ever be taught in the public schools,” and, “No books, papers, tracts or documents of a political,

sectarian or denominational character shall be used....”

This is patently false. It has been legal to teach about religion, using religious texts, since the beginning of the republic. It is the teaching of religion that is unconstitutional. Gov. Otter looks even more enfeebled when he relies on the Idaho Constitution to make his point. Is it not a decidedly political document? Does he think it is a comic book? Moreover, don't they teach the U.S. Constitution in Idaho schools? Has any teacher ever been arrested for distributing the Declaration of Independence?

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