

MEDIA COVERAGE OF POPE IS MIXED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue looks at how the media are covering the papal visit to the U.K. thus far:

The coverage has been mixed. The Tribune newspapers, the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times*, were quite fair. The extensive piece in the *Washington Post* was also very fair. These newspapers focused on the pope's remarks and the reception he received, mentioning the abuse scandal but not making it the focal point.

On the other hand, the *New York Times* story led with the scandal, relegating what the pope had to say to the back of the article. Perhaps most telling was the fact that the gay-obsessed newspaper put the story on the pope below the fold on the first page of the "International" section: top billing was given to the discovery that monkeys first contracted AIDS 32,000 years ago. *Newsday*, the scandal-ridden Long Island daily, had nothing to say about what the pope had to say, but it did discover two more alleged victims; due to serious budgetary problems, the newspaper could not afford to buy a plane ticket for its reporter, so he wrote from home.

The broadcast evening news was just as mixed. ABC's coverage was fair; NBC's was dismissive; and CBS's read like a "60 Minutes" indictment, never mentioning anything the pope said.

CNN.com gave space to an English homosexual who hates the Catholic Church, never mentioning that he wants to lower the age of consent for adult-child sex. The *National Catholic Reporter*, a dissident weekly, afforded space to a nun who refuses to identify herself as a nun, suffers from priest envy, and generally hates the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality.

There was a time when the elite media could be counted on to be relatively fair. Those days, however, are long gone, save for stories blaming monkeys for AIDS.

VATICAN GOES ON THE OFFENSIVE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a statement made by Cardinal William Levada, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

Cardinal Levada directly takes on the *New York Times* for its coverage of the Fr. Murphy abuse case in Wisconsin. Commenting on the news story by Laurie Goodstein, Levada writes, "The point of Goodstein's article, however, is to attribute the failure to accomplish this dismissal [of Fr. Murphy] to Pope Benedict, instead of to diocesan decisions at the time."

Cardinal Levada has it just right. The wrongdoing in this case rests in Wisconsin. Why did the victims' families wait as long as 15 years to report the abuse? Why were the civil authorities unconvinced by what they uncovered? Why did Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert Weakland wait almost two decades before he contacted the Vatican?

Weakland's record in handling sex abuse cases is a matter of record. In 1984, he branded as "libelous" those who reported cases of priestly sexual abuse (he was rebuked by the courts for doing so). Ten years later he accused those who reported such cases of "squealing." And, of course, he had to resign when his lover, a 53 year-old man, revealed that Weakland paid him \$450,000 to settle a sexual assault lawsuit (Weakland took the money from archdiocesan funds). It's a sure bet that if Weakland were a theological conservative—and not a champion of liberal causes—the media (including the *National Catholic*

Reporter and Commonweal) would be all over him.

We also need to learn from Laurie Goodstein why she waited until Wednesday, March 30, to interview Fr. Thomas Brundage, the priest who presided over the Murphy trial. Brundage has said that the pope, then Cardinal Ratzinger, had absolutely nothing to do with the Murphy case. And we need to know why Weakland never gave Brundage a letter he wrote asking him to call off the trial.

There's dirt in the Murphy case, but it sits in the U.S.A.—not Rome.

CONNECTICUT ANTI-CATHOLIC BILL PULLED

The bill that would allow the state legislature in Connecticut to reconfigure the governing structure of the Catholic Church has been pulled. Introduced by Rep. Michael Lawlor and Sen. Andrew McDonald, the bill was withdrawn at the behest of the person who proposed it, Tom Gallagher; he is a contributor to the *National Catholic Reporter*, a left-wing Catholic newspaper. Attorney General Richard Blumenthal will now review the constitutionality of the bill.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

“Every pre-law undergraduate knows that what Lawlor and McDonald tried to pull off—in stealth fashion—was flagrantly unconstitutional. For their fascist stunt, they should at least be censured by their colleagues. Ideally, they should

resign or be forced out of office.

“The big losers are the Catholic left-wing activists who pushed for this measure. To be specific, Voice of the Faithful, a dissident Catholic group comprised mainly of senior citizens, has been promoting a lay Catholic takeover of the Catholic Church for many years. Also, their ideological kinfolk at the *National Catholic Reporter* republished an article by Gallagher calling for an aggressive civil law approach to parish governance.

“Lawlor, McDonald, Gallagher, Voice of the Faithful, and the *National Catholic Reporter* totally underestimated the reaction of rank-and-file Catholics. Chalk up a big victory for Catholics who are loyal to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church and to the religious liberty provisions of the First Amendment.”

ELECTION ISSUES SPARK VITRIOLIC RESPONSE

The Catholic Church’s opposition to abortion, and its endorsement of the pro-marriage resolution in California, Proposition 8, has triggered an avalanche of criticism, much of it vitriolic. Here is a sampling:

- The *National Catholic Reporter* blasts all the bishops—“Not one among the bishops has had the courage”—to take on pro-life Catholics who have allegedly “distorted” the abortion issue
- Rabbi Brad Hirschfield criticizes Cardinal Egan for being anti-abortion, saying, “We need to stop litmus testing each other over single issues” like abortion. “We”?
- Catholics for Choice says that pro-abortion Catholics “are

in good company, and in good conscience” for rejecting the Church’s teaching on this subject

- Rev. Daniel Kanter, a Unitarian, says the Catholic Church “employs a measure of fear” to get Catholics to oppose abortion

- Rev. Jonathan Tran, a Baptist, opines, “If the Church doesn’t tell us what to do with our ballots...and genitalia, who will?” “Us”?

- Professor Frank K. Flinn says the Catholic Church has not always been opposed to abortion, implying that the *Catholic Catechism*, the bishops and the pope are all wrong

- Rev. Geoffrey Farrow, a gay priest, says the Catholic Church’s opposition to gay marriage represents a “hurtful” theology

- Atheos, a musician, says Proposition 8 “is nothing but Bigotry—good ol’ Christian bigotry”

- *Los Angeles Times* writer Steve Lopez says that “Speaking up for the dignity of gay people must be a greater sin than being accused of molesting minors”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responds as follows:

“Even worse are American Atheists, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the Freedom from Religion Foundation. All accuse the Catholic Church of abusing its power by favoring Proposition 8, yet none says anything about the *more than 100 houses of worship and religious organizations* which oppose it. Their hypocrisy is appalling.”

CENSORS TARGET KANSAS CITY

ARCHBISHOP

On May 9, Kansas City Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann publicly asked Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius to refrain from going to Communion. Sebelius not only supports abortion-on-demand, and works closely with Planned Parenthood, she has received funding from Dr. George Tiller of Wichita; he is nationally known for performing late-term abortions.

Over the past few weeks, Archbishop Naumann has been roundly criticized for his decision. Defending him is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

“A small group called Catholic Democrats has blasted Archbishop Naumann for using ‘Holy Communion as a political weapon to take her [Sebelius] down.’ The *National Catholic Reporter*, which runs ads by anti-Catholic and pro-abortion groups, labeled Naumann ‘rigid’ for using ‘political tactics.’ Tim Rutten of the *Los Angeles Times* condemned him for setting in motion ‘about as nasty and as utterly avoidable a church-state confrontation as you’re likely to see.’ *Kansas City Community News* opinion page editor Bob Sigman agreed, saying Naumann’s decision ‘has serious consequences for those who believe in the firm line between church and state.’ And Barbara Shelly, who sits on the editorial board of the *Kansas City Star*, takes the same line, branding his request ‘harsh.’

“All of them are hypocrites. Democratic candidates for public office have been receiving endorsements, and in some cases contributions, in African American churches for decades, yet none of them see a violation of church and state. The reason they are upset with Archbishop Naumann is because Sebelius is on Sen. Barack Obama’s shortlist as a vice presidential running mate. They would make an excellent pair: she supports partial-birth abortions and he supports selective infanticide.

“Archbishop Naumann said it best when he met with Sebelius: ‘I

challenged the governor to produce a single instance in her legislative or executive career [which spans 30 years] where she has supported any effort to limit abortions.' She could not. Which explains why her fans love her."

ABC NEWS REPORTS WOMEN "PRIESTS"

On the June 19 edition of "World News Tonight," there was a report by ABC News correspondent Dan Harris that led viewers to think that eight women are about to be ordained as Catholic priests in the U.S.

The lead piece in this story, "From Priesthood to Bishops, Women Gain Ground in Christian Organizations," covered the election of the first female presiding bishop in the Episcopal Church. Then came the following: "Most evangelical denominations and the Catholic Church steadfastly refuse to ordain women. However, that is changing. In late July, Joan Clark Hauk [sic], a grandmother from Pennsylvania, will be ordained as a Catholic priest, along with seven other women. It will be the first ceremony of its kind in this country, but one the Vatican will not condone."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

"Some at ABC News are obviously hyperventilating over the election of the first female presiding bishop in the Episcopal Church, and that no doubt led them to package this story with a bogus account about women being ordained as Catholic priests. Joan Clark Houk, and seven other women, will hold an 'ordination' ceremony on a boat in Pittsburgh on July 31, but no one save mad feminists will give it any credence. Indeed,

this happens every day in the asylum: some actually think they're the pope.

"ABC News also errs in thinking that this make-believe game has never been played before. In 1981, AP picked up on a story by the *National Catholic Reporter* which said a woman 'has been ordained and has been performing the duties of a priest for the past year.' In 1996, *Catholic World Report* ran a story on a meeting of the Women's Ordination Conference (which supports next month's game) wherein four women dressed as Catholic bishops and then 'solemnly blessed the audience as they made their way to a stage that was filled with dancing women.' And just last month, Victoria Rue, wearing a white robe, appeared before a crowd in San Jose and declared, 'I am a Roman Catholic woman priest.'

"In other words, this madness is old hat. Nonetheless, I am asking David Westin at ABC News for an on-air clarification of this bogus story."

SCHIAVO CASE REVEALS MORAL PRIORITIES

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following news release today on the Terri Schiavo case:

"Mention Terri Schiavo to left-wing Christians and feminists and immediately they panic. That's because they find it impossible to think about euthanasia without first thinking about abortion. And anything that might jeopardize their precious right to abort a child must be resisted at all cost. Tragically, as this case has revealed, even when the specter of domestic violence is raised, it is not enough to get the

'pro-women' advocates to take Terri's side. Consider the following.

"The most left-wing Catholic publications in the nation are the *National Catholic Reporter* and *Commonweal*. Neither is on Terri's side, and both have taken positions on euthanasia that are directly contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Similarly, Pax Christi, the nation's leading Catholic pacifist organization, is outraged over the condition of health care, but it has nothing to say about the condition of Terri's health. Those looking for wisdom about this issue from the Catholic Theological Society of America had better look elsewhere: it's too busy defending the non-Catholic teachings of a so-called Catholic theologian whom the Vatican recently disciplined. Catholics Speak Out and Catholics for a Free Choice are both dissident groups whose latest musings involve women's ordination and a condemnation of the Vatican; neither has spoken to the Schiavo case. Among Protestants, the National Council of Churches has been predictably silent on this issue, preferring to opine on the 'immorality' of the federal budget.

"The latest issue for the Feminist Majority is not why the police didn't pursue a homicide investigation against Michael Schiavo—even though a police report listed homicide the night they found Terri. No, their latest issue is the need to tell young girls that abstinence doesn't work. Meanwhile, the National Organization for Women is too busy celebrating gay marriage to be worried about a woman whose cheating husband allegedly asked Terri's nurses, 'When is that bitch gonna die?'"

POYNTER GUILTY OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Soon after the *Boston Globe* broke the story of the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church in 2002, a website dedicated to journalism began to post stories in a section titled, "Clergy Abuse Tracker." The website, Poynter Online, typically posts articles found in newspapers that deal with clergy abuse.

Effective January 1, 2004, the Tracker will find a new home: it will be on the webpages of the *National Catholic Reporter*. In making this announcement yesterday, an employee from Poynter, Bill Mitchell, admitted that he has been a member of the board of directors of the *National Catholic Reporter* since 1999. Anticipating charges of a conflict of interest, Mitchell said, "I've invited scrutiny from Poynter colleagues on the situation, and we haven't come up with any conflicts."

Catholic League president William Donohue was amused:

"It is so utterly predictable. Those who rail against corruption in the Catholic Church have no problem compromising elementary standards of ethics themselves. Poynter alleges to track clergy abuse in all religions, but over the past couple of years the Catholic League has noticed an almost total fixation on the Catholic clergy (note: there is a story by AP today about a former Protestant youth minister arrested again for molesting another boy, but you won't see it on Poynter). Moreover, we have brought stories to the attention of Poynter several times—stories about clergy sexual abuse committed by non-Catholic clergy. We have also been struck by the posting of stories that have nothing to do with sexual misconduct, but nonetheless are unflattering to the Catholic Church.

"Now the cat's out of the bag. This has been a inside job all

along. The *National Catholic Reporter* is home to the most dissident Catholic views of any media source. Moreover, its refusal to tell the truth about the homosexual scandal in the Catholic Church is shameful.

“It’s so reassuring to know that Mitchell’s buddies at Poynter have given him a clean slate. They all deserve a Jayson Blair award for integrity.”

ANTI-WAR CROWD EXPLOITS THE POPE

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke today on how the pope’s words on the war are being exploited by anti-war activists:

“It comes as no surprise that the pope is viscerally anti-war. But he is also no pacifist. Pope John Paul II has said repeatedly that war cannot be decided upon ‘except as the very last option.’ What he has not said, though such words have been attributed to him, is that there is no legal or moral justification for the war. In any event, it is striking how many new friends the Pontiff has these days.

“Jessica Lange is anti-war and pro-abortion. The NARAL enthusiast is now praising the pope for his position on the war. What she fails to mention is that when the pope told a gathering of world leaders to say ‘No To War’ on January 13, he began by admonishing them to say ‘No To Death’; he specifically cited ‘the incomparable dignity of every human being, beginning with that of unborn children.’ Hear that Jessica?

“Michael Moore is quoted today saying, ‘The pope even came right out and said it: This war in Iraq is not a just war and, thus, it is a sin.’ But the pope never said this is not a just war, never mind a sinful exercise.

“The reaction of Catholic dissidents and anti-Catholics who are part of the anti-war crowd to the pope is even more comical. The *National Catholic Reporter* is a Catholic weekly that never tires of railing against papal authority; ditto for Call the Action, an organization of Catholic malcontents. Yet both are now lauding the pope for his leadership on the war. Even that inveterate Catholic basher Frances Kissling is now speaking of the ‘humanitarian’ vision of the Vatican and the ‘religious authority of the pope.’ Maybe she’ll convert to Catholicism yet.

“We’ll call these people sincere when they stop exploiting the pope’s words on the war and start showing real and consistent respect for his teachings on all subjects.”

NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER EXPLOITS MEDIA

Thomas Fox, publisher of the *National Catholic Reporter*, warned the media today of the likelihood that the Vatican may veto the document that will be approved this afternoon by the U.S. bishops in Dallas. Fox based his remarks on a report by John Allen, the Rome correspondent for the weekly newspaper, that appears today on the website of the *National Catholic Reporter*.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“Nothing pleases the *National Catholic Reporter* more than division in the Catholic Church. They thrive on it and indeed contribute to it.

“The latest example is today’s irresponsible remarks by Thomas Fox. He pretended to be breaking a story when, in fact, there is nothing to break. Everyone knows that there are a few in the Vatican who have been advising the U.S. bishops not to overextend themselves in Dallas. But when the president of the bishops’ conference, Bishop Wilton Gregory, was asked about this yesterday, he rightly said, ‘I put more confidence in the Holy Father than all the other canonical opinions.’ Now let’s remember what the Holy Father said when the U.S. cardinals met in Rome in April. He called child sexual molestation a ‘crime’ and not just a sin. And he said there was no place in the priesthood for such men.

“Our problem is less with John Allen than with Tom Fox. Allen did not sensationalize his story the way Fox did on TV. What Allen said was that last Saturday he met a Belgian cardinal while waiting for his bags at an airport and, lo and behold, the cardinal offered some reservations about the bishops going too far. That’s it.

“It is irresponsible for any journalist, pundit or activist to exploit the Dallas conference for the purpose of furthering his agenda. And that’s exactly what the *National Catholic Reporter* did in this instance.”