

# MEL GIBSON'S "THE PASSION" COMES UNDER FIRE

Actor Mel Gibson is spending \$25 million of his own money to finance a movie about the last 12 hours of Christ's life. "The Passion" will open during Lent next March or April. It has already come under fire for being allegedly anti-Semitic. Curiously, only those who have not seen the movie are making this charge.

Leading the fight against Mel Gibson has been a group of Catholic scholars and the ADL. None of them has seen the film, but this doesn't matter—they have condemned it for being anti-Semitic anyway. On what basis? On the basis of a stolen script.

The Catholic scholars are Sister Mary C. Boys of Union Theological Seminary; Philip Cunningham of Boston College; Eugene Fisher of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB); Paula Fredriksen of Boston University; and Rev. John T. Pawlikowski.

These scholars were mentioned in the press as being an official committee of the USCCB. Not only is this false—they are an ad hoc committee that has no official status—the USCCB had to issue an apology to Mel Gibson for their misdeeds.

On June 11, William Donohue debated Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Institute on MSNBC over the controversy surrounding Mel Gibson's film. Donohue defended Gibson and the New Testament's account of the death of Jesus. Gibson saw Donohue on TV and subsequently called to thank him.

On Sunday, July 6, Gibson met Donohue in the Catholic League's headquarters. He showed a VHS tape of the movie to Donohue, Father Philip Eichner, chairman of the league's board of

directors, and Bernadette Brady, vice president of the Catholic League. Gibson also joined the Catholic League. On July 22, Gibson showed the film to about 20 New Yorkers; at his invitation, Donohue saw it again, this time with Louis Giovino, the league's director of communications.

Gibson has allowed a select group of Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians and Jews to preview the movie. The reaction has been virtually unanimous: this is the most powerful portrayal of the life and death of Jesus ever made. And it is anything but anti-Semitic.

This is going to be a protracted battle and the Catholic League is going to play a major role. We are answering every unfair attack on Mel Gibson; we will yield to no one.

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## RELIGIOUS TEST FOR CATHOLICS

Over the summer, the Catholic League became very involved in the nomination of Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor for a seat on the federal court of appeals in Atlanta. The Catholic League contends that Democrats on the Senate Judiciary Committee have subjected him to a *de facto* religious test. Accordingly, William Donohue wrote to all 100 Senators asking them to reject this invidious litmus test.

Pryor is a Catholic who is strongly opposed to abortion. Senator Charles Schumer of New York did not hold back in questioning Pryor about his "deeply held beliefs." Indeed, he said Pryor's beliefs "are so deeply held that it's very hard to believe that they're not going to influence" him on the bench. This, of course, is code for questioning Pryor's deeply held religious convictions.

Senator Richard Durbin is a Catholic who sits on the Senate Judiciary Committee. He rejected the charge that the committee is opposed to Catholic nominations for the federal bench.

We responded by commenting,

“No one has ever said that the Senate Judiciary Committee is bigoted against *all* Catholic nominees for the federal bench. Indeed, to the extent that the nominees reject the Church’s teachings on abortion, as Senators Durbin, Kennedy and Leahy do, they will be welcomed. What has been said, by the Catholic League et al., is that a *de facto* religious test is being applied to Catholic candidates who accept the Church’s teachings on abortion.”

For more on this, see [“NO CATHOLIC JUDGES NEED APPLY”](#)

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## MALIGNING MEL GIBSON

**William A. Donohue**

There are several reasons why Mel Gibson is under attack for his movie, “The Passion.” But at bottom it all comes down to the fact that our secular elites have a hard time dealing with traditional Catholics. Add to this the fact that there is a group of Catholics who are more interested in currying favor with these elites than they are in defending their own religion.

The furor over the movie stems from a controversial piece by the *New York Times Magazine* back in March. Gibson was painted as a hopelessly traditional Catholic who was following in the footsteps of his elderly father. Hutton Gibson, Mel’s father, was depicted as a sort of retro Catholic—a throwback to pre-

Vatican II days. Thus was the seed sown: Gibson is an ultra-conservative Catholic who is doing a film on a subject that is bound to make Jews nervous.

It didn't take long before some Catholic scholars joined with the ADL to do the ultimate hit job: working with a stolen script, they blasted Gibson for making a Jew-baiting film. Sister Mary C. Boys, a professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York, said the movie "could be one of the great crises in Christian-Jewish relations" because "all the way through, the Jews are portrayed as blood thirsty."

Sister Boys has not seen the movie but she thinks it will provoke a crisis. However, the crisis is in her head. It is she who fantasizes about a Christian-Jewish crisis. What disturbs her, and the other Catholic members of this unofficial panel, is the fact that Gibson didn't ask her to vet his film.

Gibson got all the theological advice he needed from Jesuit Father William J. Fulco, a National Endowment for the Humanities professor of ancient Mediterranean studies at Loyola Marymount University in California. When questioned about the concerns of the Catholic panelists and the ADL, Father Fulco said "there is no hint of deicide" (the charge that Jews are Christ-killers) in the movie. He's right.

The two most prominent Jewish leaders who have attacked the film are Abraham Foxman of the ADL and Rabbi Marvin Hier of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Both men have blasted the film, though neither has seen it.

In a televised debate I had with Rabbi Hier, he came pretty close to denying any Jewish role in the death of Christ. MSNBC host Joe Scarborough got exasperated listening to him and then threw me this question: "How does Mel Gibson do this film and do a biblically-based film without at least having Jewish leaders in there that play such a key role in the story of the crucifixion?" To which I answered, "Well, you can't do it. All

right? I mean, they weren't the Aleutian Islanders. They weren't the Pacific Islanders, all right? It wasn't the Puerto Ricans."

I also made it clear that there is an attempt being made by some to sanitize history. I specifically mentioned "a notorious anti-Catholic bigot by the name of Daniel Goldhagen." He and others object to the New Testament account of Jesus' death. For example, Alex Beam of the *Boston Globe* has said that "the film will be perceived as anti-Semitic, because the Christian Bible holds that Jesus was a Jewish prophet rejected by his own people." In other words, the problem is the Gospels, not Gibson's movie.

Frank Rich, writing in the *New York Times*, wrote a particularly disturbing piece on this subject. He said, "Whether the movie holds Jews of two millennia accountable for killing Christ or not, the star's pre-emptive strategy is to portray contemporary Jews as crucifying Mel Gibson." All of which is a lie.

Rich can't seem to figure out why Gibson is wary of allowing some people to preview his film. As I told the *New York Times*, Gibson "has had his script stolen; his elderly father has been maligned; his integrity has been attacked; his religion has been labeled anti-Semitic; his film has been branded as bigoted—by those who haven't seen it—and he has been accused of fomenting violence."

Regarding the latter charge, Paula Fredriksen, one of the so-called Catholic scholars, made exactly this point in an incredibly irresponsible piece in *The New Republic*. In the July 28-August 4 edition, she wrote, "When violence breaks out, Mel Gibson will have a much higher authority than professors and bishops to answer to."

Note she did not say if violence breaks out, but when. I immediately branded her remarks demagogic and concluded, "How

disappointed she will be when none occurs.” It is worth noting, too, that it was in *The New Republic*, where Goldhagen wrote a lengthy attack on the Catholic Church.

So this is what Mel is up against. He is a decent man who is being unfairly attacked. The Catholic League is honored to defend him.

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## AN INTERVIEW WITH SOL STERN

*Louis Giovino, director of communications, recently interviewed Sol Stern, author of Breaking Free: Public School Lessons and the Imperative of School Choice(Encounter Books). Here is an excerpt from their exchange:*

**Louis Giovino:** Can you talk about your background?

**Sol Stern:** I grew up in the Bronx. I’m actually an immigrant. I came to the U.S. from Israel as a three year old actually before Israel was a state. My parents were originally German refugees to Palestine and then we came here.

I was working for city government, and all of a sudden my two kids are getting ready to go to the public schools because we were public school supporters. But what I saw...led me to begin to take on this public school system in terms of trying to understand what it is that produced these outrageous things that I saw happening in my kid’s schools—everything from derelict teachers who couldn’t be fired, to the kinds of issues in terms of the subtle, political indoctrination—the left wing tilt in the schools. That’s how I got into this business.

**Louis Giovino:** How did you come to the conclusion that Catholic schools are better than public schools?

**Sol Stern:** First of all, I don't make the general conclusion that Catholic schools are better than public schools. In fact, a lot research indicates that at the upper levels... there is no indication that Catholic schools are outperforming.

It's in fact at the middle range or even lower than the middle range. It is difficult to educate kids in the inner city. Clearly there is tremendous evidence that Catholic schools are outperforming public schools. And certainly, if you do it on any kind of assessment that is, they're doing a better job, an even better job considering that they spend far less per pupil than the public schools. I came to that conclusion partly as a result of doing research. But the reason I did some of the research and looked into the data was because it just occurred to me as I walked around my own neighborhood that there is a whole other school system there that almost no one in the mainstream media and even among the journals that I usually write for, was really writing about. As I became disillusioned with certain aspects of the public school system it just naturally occurred to me, well, lets take a look at this other system and see what I can learn and what conclusions we can draw about why the public schools aren't doing as well.

**Louis Giovino:** What did you discover specifically about Catholic schools?

**Sol Stern:** What amazed me was what you could do with very little money if you had the dedication, the sense of mission, if you had the structure...if you had the right to create a real sense of order in the school and hold students accountable for their behavior, and instill some very basic ideas, which we have lost in public schools—what is good character for young people growing up, what's acceptable and not acceptable.

**Louis Giovino:** What could you see in Catholic schools that could be adopted by public schools?

**Sol Stern:** [First] the absence of the kind of crippling work rules that now pervade the public school system. Second, the

Catholic schools principals have a tremendous amount of autonomy. And the third most important—kids can't learn if there's no order, if there are no clear rules about what's permissible and not permissible in a school environment

**Louis Giovino:** Turning to the issue of vouchers. Vouchers and tuition tax credits, of the two, which one would you support?

**Sol Stern:** I would say whichever gets the job done. I don't have any ideological preference. I think tuition tax credits now in Florida are working real well, on the other hand, vouchers are working pretty well in Milwaukee. In my view it is a civil right, and if that can be done by giving the parent after the fact the amount of money that covers either all or part of the tuition in any private or parochial school through the tax system, that's fine. If it's done directly through a voucher, that's fine. As long as kids are getting out and you are creating a dynamic of competition. We can get to that, but that's the other issue of why I favor vouchers, it's not just for the kids getting out of a terrible situation, but it's also the effect on the public school system itself.

Louis Giovino: Now from your experience dealing with all this, have you seen anything specifically anti-Catholic from the unions?

**Sol Stern:** Of course. Absolutely. I say that in the book. Look, we know historically that the very development of the current public school system starting in the mid-nineteenth century was aimed against the hated Catholic Church and the new immigrants. Horace Mann, who is credited with developing the very idea of the common school, said it openly. So did the person who is credited for creating the New York City public school system at the turn of the century, Professor Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia. He represented a group of elite Protestant political leaders in New York that wanted to make sure that the public schools had one clear system for educating the immigrating kids in the values of a secular society.



**Louis Giovino:** We know historically there has been prejudice against Catholics. Do you have any examples today?

**Sol Stern:** I get comments like this all the time. Look, I live on the Upper West Side and for me coming out for vouchers was an act of betrayal for many, many so-called progressives. One of the reasons that they were very hostile about this issue was this idea that vouchers would undermine the public school system. They were very committed, devoted to the public school system. I have no problem with that. But clearly, in comments that were made to me, there was also this suspicion and hostility to the Catholic school sector, to the values that are taught in the Catholic schools, on all of the social issues. These are people, liberals, on issues such as abortion and gay rights and multiculturalism. They view the Catholic schools as a kind of bastion of regressive social policies. I think they are wrong. I understand that they have their positions, the liberal positions on these social issues. But they're just wrong to want to deny the kids the right to a decent education because of their hostility to the Catholic Church on all these other questions.

**Louis Giovino:** Within the Christian community, especially the Evangelical Protestants, first they were against vouchers and now they are for them. Do have any comments on that?

**Sol Stern:** I think it's a phenomenon of disenchantment with the public school system and they realize that the public schools have, in their view—and to some extent I agree with them—have gone off the deep end in terms of some of the values we have just talked about. You can hardly mention God in the public schools, but of course you could have a curriculum that is quite friendly to gay rights and gay liberation. So the Protestants, the evangelicals as you referred to them, are also sensing that need for exit, to be able to basically vote with their feet, their kid's feet. To be able to say, "Look, this is not the kind of character training that I want for my child, and I want the right to have my child allowed into an

educational institution which meets my needs as a parent for development of his or her character.” And so, there is some support there, you are right, for the idea of vouchers.

**Louis Giovino:** What do you think about the prospect of Jews getting on board with vouchers?

**Sol Stern:** You do now have the Orthodox Jewish community supporting vouchers or tax credits of some kind because, of course, they see an advantage for them and they run their own school systems. For the rest of the Jewish community, both religious and secular, for those who are affiliated even with conservative or reform, and those who are non-affiliated and not really religious Jews, there is, again, a traditional fear on the church and state issue. Jews define their assimilation and integration and acceptances as Americans in terms of the model of complete separation of church and state—of the whole idea of religion being a very private matter. And historically, that’s been their position and one of the reasons why none of the major Jewish organizations support vouchers.

**Louis Giovino:** You see the irony that the same people who want to sanitize religion from the public square are the same people who are against school choice. Can you comment on that? Is there anti-Catholicism behind that?

**Sol Stern:** Yes. Again, this is a complicated question. I think there are people who have legitimate questions about vouchers and they are worthy of debate. So, you have to distinguish. On the other hand there are people...that are just hostile to the idea of religion absolutely. They see this as a way of strengthening what they regard as a kind of pernicious influence of religious institutions over the minds of kids. And so it’s hostility, and in some cases bigotry against religion and particularly Catholic religion. They don’t want kids under the influence of the local parish. They much prefer them under the influence of the local ACLU or the local gay

rights movement which clearly these institutions have a kind of entrée in the public schools and many of their values.

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## **NO CATHOLIC JUDGES NEED APPLY**

*By Kenneth D. Whitehead*

On July 31, 2003, the United States Senate voted 53 to 44 against closing off debate on the nomination of William H. Pryor, Jr., the Attorney General of Alabama, to be a federal judge on the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals based in Atlanta. 60 votes would have been required to close off debate so that an up or down vote could then be recorded on the Pryor nomination itself.

It was the third time in three days that the Senate had voted against closing off debate on one of President George W. Bush's nominations to the federal bench. The day before this cloture vote in the Pryor case, it had been the turn of Texas Supreme Court Justice Priscilla Owen, for whom it was the third time a failed cloture vote had prevented her nomination from coming to a vote; this could not be allowed, it was widely reported, because of her pro-life record as a judge. The day before that, a similar negative cloture vote—this one for the seventh time—barred former Justice Department official, Miguel Estrada, a strict constructionist and thus also feared as a possible pro-life judge, from being able to serve on the federal bench.

Something important was clearly at stake in these votes. There has been a consistent pattern of opposition to many of President Bush's nominees to federal judgeships. Knowledgeable observers of the Washington scene have identified the basic problem as fear on the part of the president's opponents in

the Senate that his nominees will change the character of the federal courts, and perhaps even eventually bring about a reversal of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion in the United States.

Thus a "litmus test" is definitely being applied: no pro-life judges need apply. This was certainly true in the case of the nomination of Alabama Attorney General William Pryor, who has, among other positions, strongly affirmed his pro-life views. But in his case there was more than just the matter of being pro-life, for William Pryor is a Catholic. At the hearing on his nomination held by the Senate Judiciary Committee in June, he was sharply questioned, notably by New York Democratic Senator Charles E. Schumer, about whether his "deeply held beliefs" would not prevent him from impartially upholding the laws. The word "Catholic" was never mentioned, just his "deeply held beliefs." But the implication in all this questioning was strong and clear that any Catholic who took seriously the teachings of the Catholic Church would necessarily have to be pro-life, against so-called "gay marriage," and so on; and thus in the opinion of these hostile senators would be unable to uphold the law as they expect to see it upheld, i.e., by affirming such court-imposed jurisprudence as legalized abortion.

Democratic Senator Richard J. Durbin of Illinois challenged Pryor by asking him point-blank whether he did not understand that a statement of his raised "concerns of those who don't happen to be Christian, that you are asserting...a religious belief of your own, inconsistent with the separation of church and state." Apparently to affirm any religious belief at all was to fail to separate church from state. Senator Durbin as much as accused Pryor of wishing to "condone by government action certain religious beliefs."

In the Pryor case, then, another "litmus test" for federal judges became evident: no Catholic judges need apply. Genuine Catholic beliefs firmly held evidently now constitute

practically an automatic disqualification. Pryor's sin was apparently that he declined to promise, as President Kennedy once famously did in Houston, that he would never allow his Catholic beliefs to affect his decisions in office. As a nominee he had never made any attempt to downplay or conceal his views in any way, in fact. On the contrary, at the hearing on his nomination he even created a sensation when he forthrightly defended an earlier statement of his that *Roe v. Wade* was "the worst abomination of constitutional law in our history." Among his reasons for this opinion he cited the fact that the decision had resulted in the deaths of millions of unborn children. Nevertheless, far from wishing to import his personal religious beliefs into the laws of the land, William Pryor had demonstrated by his actual record that he was willing to apply the law as written, regardless of his personal beliefs. Several examples of this were mentioned at his hearing, most notably, when he directed Alabama district attorneys not to enforce Alabama's partial-birth abortion ban because the law as written lay outside the boundaries of the most recent Supreme Court decision on the matter.

I attended the hearing on the nomination of William Pryor and can testify that he gave equally frank, cogent, and reasoned arguments, based on the law, for all of his positions. He consistently faced down and bested the hostile senators who were trying to paint him as an "extremist," unfit to be a federal judge. At no time did he soft-pedal his Catholic religious beliefs but rather proudly affirmed them. He showed himself to be highly knowledgeable and competent in the law, as well as a man of character and integrity—the kind of man America needs as a federal judge.

None of this appeased his opponents on the Senate Judiciary Committee, however. Democratic Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts declared that "Mr. Pryor is simply too ideological to serve as a federal court judge." One of the chief things that bothered the hostile senators, in fact,

seemed to be the realization that the nominee's "deeply held beliefs" actually do reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church; and what seemed to be resented was precisely his unwillingness to downplay or mute these views in order to secure confirmation.

But as Pennsylvania Republican Senator Rick Santorum said following the failed cloture vote on his nomination: "What we are seeing, *de facto*, from members of the other side, is a religious test." This has been pretty evident all along, even though, as everyone knows, the Constitution of the United States forbids any religious test for public office in this country. Those opposed to the Pryor nomination attempt to get around this inconvenient fact by refusing to admit that they are, in fact, engaged in applying a religious test. They even resorted to the claim that opposition to the nominee's religious beliefs could not possibly be the motive for their opposition since three of the hostile members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senators Durbin and Kennedy, as well as Vermont Democratic Senator Patrick J. Leahy of Vermont, were themselves Catholics: how could such Catholics possibly be styled "anti-Catholic"?

This approach, however, begged the real question. All of the Catholic senators in question—like so many others in Congress, unfortunately—have, in effect, jettisoned any recognizable Catholic teaching in compiling their consistent records of support for such things as legalized abortion, among other issues. They cannot have it both ways: both claiming to be "representative" Catholics, while at the same time being entirely unwilling, in voting on many of the political and moral questions of the day, to be influenced in any way by what everybody in the world knows is Catholic teaching. William Pryor is the one who is consistent here, and one of the things his opponents reproach him for in particular is his unwillingness to compromise his views in order to pander to the modern culture of death which too many of our public

servants have been only too willing to come to terms with. For his pains, though, Mr. Pryor instead got himself saddled with a new *de facto* religious test for public office.

There was really something quite cynical and shameless in the way the opponents of President Bush's nominations to the federal bench were prepared to apply their ill-concealed religious test in the Pryor case. They were the ones who raised the religious issue in the first place. Yet when those in favor of the nominee attempted to counter this, the anti-Pryor senators were the first to cry "foul"! Prior to the impending cloture vote, some private interest groups, notably the Committee for Justice and the Ave Maria List, sponsored some pro-Pryor print and television ads in some of the states where there were thought to be waverers among the senators needed for a favorable cloture vote. These ads depicted judicial chambers with signs reading "Catholics Need Not Apply." The ads thus correctly raised the question of how even a *de facto* religious test can or should be applied under our system.

The opponents of the Pryor nomination were furious. "Religious McCarthyism," cried Senator Leahy. "Shameful...disgusting...unacceptable," declared Senator Durbin. Many of those who follow this kind of thing in Washington, though, thought it was about time some of these senators got a taste of their own medicine; they are quick to dish it out; but it turns out they can't take it themselves.

Nevertheless, for the moment, they continue to prevail: William H. Pryor, Jr., the Attorney General of Alabama, and a Catholic, nominated to be an 11th Circuit federal judge, was unable to secure a vote on his nomination because his opponents still had the votes in the Senate to block it. As Republican Senator Orrin G. Hatch of Utah, the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and a Mormon, remarked following the vote: "It's getting so that a pro-life Catholic can't serve in the federal judiciary."

*Kenneth D. Whitehead, a member of the Board of Directors of the Catholic League, is a former Assistant Secretary of Education with considerable experience testifying before Congressional committees.*

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## **CBS: CATHOLIC BASHING SYSTEM**

It was one of the most incredible spin jobs the Catholic League has ever seen. CBS literally took the truth and stood it on its head. At the expense of the Catholic Church, of course.

On the CBS Evening News of August 6, it was reported that the Vatican issued a document in 1962 that “lays out a church policy that calls for absolute secrecy when it comes to sexual abuse by priests—anyone who speaks out could be thrown out of the church.”

That same day, on CBSNEWS.com, the report said, “For decades, priests in this country abused children in parish after parish while their supervisors covered it all up. Now it turns out the orders for this cover up were written in Rome at the highest levels of the Vatican.”

The problem with all this is that it is based on a lie. The 1962 document has nothing to do with any purported cover up. It deals specifically with solicitations that a priest might make in the confessional to a penitent. Indeed, it prescribed penalties for any priests who, “whether by words or signs or *nods of the head*” (our emphasis) might convey a sexual advance. The ultimate penalty—being tossed from the priesthood—was possible.



William Donohue appeared with Paula Zahn on CNN on August 7, the day after the story broke. He held up a copy of the document on TV and charged CBS with lying about the report. In a news release he wrote on the subject, Donohue discussed the following points:

“This is an issue fraught with deception all right—but it’s not the Vatican that’s guilty—it’s CBS. By ripping the document out of context, CBS led viewers to believe that the Vatican was engaged in a sexual abuse cover-up as early as 1962. Here’s what it didn’t say in its report.

“First, the document did not apply to sexual misconduct—it applied only to sexual solicitation. Second, the only venue the document addressed was the confessional. In other words, it was meant to deal only with cases of sexual solicitation by a priest of a penitent in the confessional. Third, because the policy was specifically aimed at protecting the secrecy of the confessional, it called for an ecclesiastical response: civil authorities were not to be notified because it involved a sacrament of the Catholic Church, not a crime of the state.

“Fourth, if a priest were found guilty, he could be thrown out of the priesthood. Fifth, if the penitent were to tell someone what happened (perhaps another priest), he or she had 30 days to report the incident to the bishop or face excommunication. If anything, this proves how utterly serious the Vatican was about such an offense—it threatened to punish the penitent *for not turning in the guilty priest*. Sixth, the 1962 document was superseded by the 1983 Code of Canon Law and the norms established in 2001 for dealing with serious crimes involving the sacraments.

“For CBS to leave all this out shows how hungry it is to malign the Catholic Church. If anyone is acting like the Mafia, it’s CBS.”

The next day, on August 8, Donohue had a letter delivered to

Jim Murphy, executive producer of the CBS Evening News. In his letter Donohue said that in the ten years he has been president of the Catholic League, "never have I been more outraged over a news story on television than the one CBS recently did on the 1962 Vatican document on priestly sexual misconduct."

Donohue specifically charged that two lawyers for alleged victims, Carmen Durso and Daniel J. Shea, had manipulated CBS into issuing this report. These lawyers got the confidential document translated into English so they could use it to pressure Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly to reopen his case against the Boston Archdiocese. In other words, two greedy lawyers exploited CBS for their own gain.

When the CBS report surfaced, Larry Drivon, another lawyer who represents those allegedly victimized by priests, charged that the Catholic Church was engaged in "Mafia-style behavior—racketeering." He added that the Vatican document is "an instruction manual on how to deceive and how to protect pedophiles."

Murphy replied to Donohue on August 11 saying that CBS stood by its report. Donohue then answered him by accusing CBS of perpetuating a lie against the Catholic Church. "Nothing in the document even comes close to demonstrating the validity of this scurrilous charge," Donohue said. He also told Murphy that if he had in his employ such irresponsible journalists, "I'd fire them."

Donohue closed his letter by asking Murphy the following: "Ever wonder why the *New York Times* and most of the other elite media outlets never wrote one word about this report? And did you ever figure out why the story that was printed in the *Boston Herald* shot holes through the CBS report?"

To register a complaint, write to Jim Murphy, Executive Producer, CBS Evening News, 524 W. 57 Street, New York, New

York 10019.

Ask him why he finds it necessary to defend such lies.

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## VATICAN ISSUES PRO-MARRIAGE STATEMENT

On July 31, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a statement that addresses the question of same-sex marriage. In one sense, what the Vatican did was nothing new. Yet no one would know this judging from the reaction of its critics.

For two thousand years, the Catholic Church has maintained that marriage is an institution reserved only for men and women. Indeed, there is no world religion—in either Eastern or Western civilization—that sanctions marriage between people of the same sex. So why did the Vatican feel impelled to act? Precisely because of an aggressive gay-rights movement that seeks to normalize homosexual unions. What the Vatican did, in essence, was to issue a reality check to Catholics.

The media were quick to spin this as “an anti-gay campaign.” So much so that Cardinal Francis George issued a strong statement ripping the *Chicago Sun-Times* for branding it that way. William Donohue followed through with a letter to the *Chicago Tribune* defending Cardinal George's statement. “No wonder Cardinal Francis George was upset that the recent Vatican statement on same-sex marriage was characterized as being ‘against gays.’ Not only is the document profoundly pro-marriage, it explicitly says homosexuals ‘must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity.’”

Donohue appeared on MSNBC on this subject as well. "If marriage is special the way we've traditionally understood it," he said, "then all alternative lifestyles must be resisted." Donohue was most angry at the way the media made the Vatican statement look negative.

“Moral conscience requires that, in every occasion,” the document says, “Christians give witness to the whole moral truth, which is contradicted both by approval of homosexual acts and unjust discrimination against homosexual persons.” In short, the Catholic Church opposes attempts to deprive heterosexual marriage of its privileged status, as well as gay bashing.

In our statement to the press, we said, "The Catholic League is particularly delighted that this strong statement in favor of marriage, as it has been traditionally understood all over the world and throughout all of time, comes in the wake of the sex abuse scandal in the Church. It sends an unmistakable message that just because a tiny few in the priesthood have embarrassed the Church by having sex—mostly with men!—this does not mean that the Church will silence its voice on matters sexual."

We concluded by saying, “The Vatican’s statement is particularly aimed at Catholic politicians. We hope they get the message.” But from the news story that appears below, it is obvious some did not.

# PATRICK KENNEDY SLAMS

# CATHOLIC CHURCH

An article in the August 6 edition of the *Providence Journal* quoted Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy as saying the following about the Vatican's recent statement on homosexual marriages: "I see the policy of opposing same-sex marriages or unions, whatever you call it, as bigotry or discrimination."

We did not hesitate issuing a strong reply. Here is a copy of what we said to the media:

"It is one thing to disagree with the Vatican's latest statement on marriage, quite another to brand it bigoted. Patrick Kennedy has some explaining to do.

"To begin with, the Catholic Church does not have a 'policy' on marriage—it has a teaching that is rooted in Scripture; it has policies on things like keeping soup kitchens clean. Two, why did it take him so long to label the Catholic Church's teaching on marriage 'bigoted'? After all, it has maintained the same teaching for 2,000 years. Three, why has he not slammed all world religions—in both Eastern and Western civilizations—as being 'bigoted'? After all, none bless the idea that two men should be allowed to marry.

"Four, why has he not come clean and told us exactly how 'tolerant' he is about qualifications for marriage? To be specific, does he find it 'bigoted' to oppose incestuous marriages? How about polygamy? Or the idea that three men can marry? Five, why would he want to maintain membership in an organization that is 'bigoted'? Does it not make him a bigot for supporting a 'bigoted' organization on Sundays?

"Patrick Kennedy's brutal honesty stands in stark contrast to the Kennedy clan's predilection for spinning the truth. For this he should be applauded. Now the cat's out of the bag: Patrick Kennedy thinks the Vatican's pro-marriage statement is 'bigoted'; thus does he align himself with those who think the

institution of marriage is nothing more than an alternative lifestyle.”

Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts was also quick to distance himself from the Vatican. But for sheer ignorance, no one beat Congressman Patrick Kennedy, son of Senator Edward Kennedy.

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## CATHOLICS RALLY TO SUPPORT BISHOP MURPHY

Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre has come under attack by Voice of the Faithful (VOTF), a lay Catholic reform group organized in the wake of the sex abuse scandal. On July 24, citing a report by Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly issued on July 23, VOTF said the time has come for Bishop Murphy to resign. On July 25, the Catholic League came to the defense of Bishop Murphy and organized a [petition drive](#) on his behalf.

“The decision by Voice of the Faithful demanding that Bishop Murphy resign,” William Donohue said, “has now ignited a battle with the Catholic League.” In announcing the petition drive, Donohue said, “this will settle the issue of who really speaks for Long Island Catholics.” The Catholic League has approximately 15,000 members in Nassau and Suffolk Counties, a number that represents half of Voice of the Faithful’s numbers nationwide.

The principal reason why the Catholic League is so strongly supporting Bishop Murphy is because there is *no evidence* of wrongdoing on his part when he was in Boston. And in the two years he has been bishop to Catholics on Long Island, he has made many important changes, including decisions to remove

molesters from the priesthood. Indeed, it took him exactly two months before the first two priests were thrown out.

The report issued by Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly was specific regarding the culpability of some bishops who worked in the Boston Archdiocese. Not included in that list was Bishop Murphy. Less than two pages of the report even mention him and the worst that can be said about him is that he "supervised" the infamous John Geoghan. What the report did not say is that Bishop Murphy supervised *his dismissal from ministry and ultimately from the priesthood*. Not to mention this, Donohue said, "smacks of corruption."

No one has ever charged Bishop Murphy with moving molesting priests from parish to parish or anything like that. That is why the report has nothing incriminating to say about him. If, in fact, he were guilty, the Catholic League would not defend him.

"It is tempting for activist organizations that are angry at the Church to steamroll their way to justice," Donohue said. "But justice demands that innocent people not be run over," he added. The *New York Times* quoted Donohue as saying, "What we have here is classic McCarthyism, guilt by association. Simply because Bishop Murphy served in Boston, he is presumed guilty."

The petition was mailed to every Catholic League member in Nassau and Suffolk (those who may not have received it can print one here and return it to us at 450 7th Ave., New York, NY 10123). It was also mailed to every pastor on Long Island asking him to get parishioners to sign it. But this was called off when Bishop Murphy thought it unwise to involve the pastors in a fight between two lay groups. For the record, Bishop Murphy called Donohue to extend his sincere thanks for the league's support. So did Cardinal William Baum.

Immediately joining the petition drive was the Long Island

councils of the Knights of Columbus. Denis Dillon, the Nassau County District Attorney, lent his support as well.

In a radio debate that Donohue had with Patricia Zirkel, co-director of the Long Island chapter of VOTF, he asked her to be specific regarding the evidence that Bishop Murphy was guilty of wrongdoing while in Boston. She could not provide a single instance. Her entire complaint is that because he served where there was corruption, he must resign. Donohue likened this to demanding that everyone in the *New York Times* who knew of the corruption surrounding rogue reporter Jayson Blair ought to resign.

More evidence that Bishop Murphy is innocent can be found by reading the book *Betrayal: The Crisis in the Catholic Church*. The book is the work of the Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reporters from the *Boston Globe*. In the book, many bishops who served in Boston are mentioned unfavorably. Not among them is Bishop Murphy.

There are precisely five pages in the 266-page volume on Monsignor William F. Murphy: the first three pages where he is mentioned the reference is to Bishop Murphy of Rockville Centre; the last two pages are in reference to another priest of the same name. Regarding the entries on Bishop Murphy, not only is there nothing incriminating, he is credited with removing serial molester John Geoghan!

VOTF published on its website a report trying to show Bishop Murphy's culpability. To show how utterly fallacious it is, read the response by Catholic League policy analyst Joseph De Feo; it is available [here](#).

It is important to note that throughout the scandal, the Catholic League has not involved itself in fights over whether a particular bishop should resign. Until now. And that is because the evidence is in—Bishop Murphy is innocent.



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# **“THE MAGDALENE SISTERS”: ANTI-CATHOLIC PROPAGANDA**

“The Magdalene Sisters,” a film about the alleged abuse of wayward girls by nuns in Ireland, opened at theaters over the summer. It is the creation of director Peter Mullan and it was distributed by Miramax, a company run by Harvey and Bob Weinstein.

Louis Giovino, director of communications for the Catholic League, saw the movie and provided Catholic League president William Donohue with a report on it. His report found its way into the following news release on the film:

“It was not coincidental that Peter Mullan and the Weinstein brothers should join forces by delivering ‘The Magdalene Sisters.’ It was destined to happen. Mullan has admitted that his movie ‘encapsulates everything that is bad about the Catholic Church’; so much so that he compares the Church to the murderous Taliban. His honesty is appreciated. Less candid are the Weinstein brothers: they still maintain they are not anti-Catholic even though they have given Catholics such gems as ‘Priest,’ ‘Butcher Boy,’ ‘Dogma’ and ‘40 Days and 40 Nights.’ Now they have given Catholics their new prize, ‘The Magdalene Sisters.’

“If someone were to do a movie called ‘The Weinstein Brothers,’ one that focused on their legacy of anti-Catholicism, and sold it as being representative of how Hollywood views Catholics, it would be dishonest. This is exactly what Mullan and the Weinsteins have done in ‘The Magdalene Sisters.’ They have focused on cruel nuns, who surely were atypical, and presented them as being

prototypical. That is the gravamen of the Catholic League's complaint. This is a game that can be played with any demographic group and with any institution. Just gather all the dirty laundry, pack it tightly, and present it as if it were reality.

"When the film was first released, two members of the board of directors of the Venice Film Festival called it anti-Catholic propaganda. They were right."

To demonstrate how deep anti-Catholic prejudice is today, consider that several movie reviewers of "The Magdalene Sisters" took the opportunity to make patently Catholic-bashing remarks. A critic for the New York *Daily News* even admitted that the movie was "an overloaded melodrama," but this didn't stop him from saying that the Catholic Church "deserves the scorn" anyway.

The reviews were so sensationalistic that we couldn't resist providing reporters with a useful thought experiment. Here is what we said:

"Imagine an anti-Semitic director who admits he packed into one movie every anti-Semitic theme he could draw on and then gets an anti-Semitic duo to distribute it. Next imagine film critics taking the anti-Semitic propaganda at face value and then offering anti-Semitic remarks in their reviews. Fat chance.

"For example, there will never be a movie about Jewish slumlords in Harlem or Jewish managers of black entertainers in the 20th century. If there were, and if it were to present a wholly one-sided portrait of the worst excesses of how some Jews exploited blacks, the ADL would be up in arms. And rightly so. But luckily for Jews, this is not likely to happen. Catholics are not so lucky—they have to endure Catholic-bashing directors like Peter Mullan shopping his anti-Catholic script to anti-Catholic distributors like Harvey

and Bob Weinstein, only to have it reviewed by anti-Catholic critics."