

BOMBSHELL REPORT ON SNAP; VICTIMS' LOBBY EXPOSED

For many years, the plight of alleged victims of priestly sexual abuse have had as their unofficial spokesperson a group called the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, more commonly known as SNAP. The Catholic League has had good reasons to question their motives, and now we have convincing evidence proving we were right all along.

At a recent SNAP conference in Washington, D.C., reliable friends of the Catholic League attended the event. What they heard and saw was a well-coordinated attack on the Catholic Church, led by SNAP leaders and others. The entire report is available online at catholicleague.org; an excerpt appears on pp. 8-9.

Joining SNAP were some high profile lawyers who have made a killing off of their lawsuits against the Church. Also in attendance was BishopAccountability, which proved to be much more than just a website that tallies cases of alleged abuse. Church-bashing authors and agenda-driven psychiatrists also spoke at the event.

What emerged from the conference was a picture of so-called victims' advocates that contrasts sharply with their innocent media image. They are activists—men and women fueled more by a vendetta against the Church than any alleged concern for victims. Some of the remarks were not only boilerplate, they were totally inexcusable and reprehensible.

When the Catholic Church is constantly referred to as the “evil institution,” and all accused priests are assumed guilty, something is seriously wrong. Similarly, when vile accusations are made against some bishops, and are never challenged by a single person at the conference, we are not

talking about aggrieved individuals trying to do right by the Church. No, we are talking about hatred and injustice.

We know there are many Catholic dissident organizations which harbor resentment against the Church, but they are generally known to the public as unhappy campers who have not gotten their way. Not so with SNAP and its allies: they are the darlings of the media, and are seen as motivated by compassion and the quest for reconciliation. Our findings prove otherwise.

Bill Donohue's report, which is based on information given to him by those at the conference, was sent to all the bishops, as well as to scores of other friendly sources; many in the media were also sent a copy. It is our hope that from now on, they will take with a grain of salt what the victims' lobby has to say about bishops and priests. We need to know who our real enemies are.

9/11 REMEMBERED

We went to press before the tenth anniversary of 9/11, but the contrast between the Catholic League and its foes was plain to see even before the commemorations began.

Bill Donohue taped a short, 30-second statement over the summer to be aired on Sunday, September 11. Ours, obviously, is a positive commentary. Just as predictable was the early salvo launched by American Atheists.

At the end of July, American Atheists protested the decision to move the World Trade Center cross from St. Peter's Catholic Church in lower Manhattan to its new site at the 9/11 Memorial Museum (two steel beams in the shape of a cross were found

when the Twin Towers were leveled).

David Silverman, who believes in nothing, was angry that there is nothing that represents nothing at the World Trade Center's 9/11 Memorial. "No other religions or philosophies will be honored," he noted. Very true, we said, and that is just as it should be. After all, that's just the way the towers crumbled—no symbol representing nothing was found.

To top things off, Silverman blamed Jesus for 9/11. He actually went so far as to say that the Christian God "couldn't be bothered to stop the Muslim terrorists or prevent 3,000 people from being killed in his name." Thus did he advertise his brilliance. Perhaps he did not notice, but when the killings took place, none of the terrorists proclaimed their fidelity to Jesus.

So extreme was the position of the American Athiests that even some of their friends blasted them.

WHY WE EXPOSED SNAP

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

William Donohue

Last spring, I read that the Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests (SNAP) was going to hold a national conference in the nation's Capitol the weekend after July 4th. It occurred to me how valuable it would be if we learned first-hand what they really think about the Catholic Church. But I am recognizable, and indeed have met some of the speakers before on TV. The event was open to the public, so I asked a few friends, who are as smart as they are trustworthy, to go and report back. They did just that.

We decided to expose SNAP for basically two reasons: (a) the media rely on them as a credible source of criticism, and (b) we have long suspected they were a dishonest group motivated by a deep-seated hatred of the Catholic Church. Looks like we were right.

To hate is not only un-Christian, it is debilitating. Surely all of us have had cause, from time to time, to loathe those who have hurt us. Now it may be that our anger was entirely justified, but to persist in that state is unhealthy. Anger and hatred are dysfunctional attributes: they poison our very being, leaving us unhappy, irrational and disfigured. That this has happened to Father Tom Doyle, who issued a report on clerical sexual abuse that was regrettably not taken seriously in the mid-1980s, is beyond dispute.

Having met some people like him over the years—about matters which have nothing to do with Catholicism—I am convinced that they actually like to wallow in a state of unhappiness. This is surely bizarre, and it may cry out for therapy, but it is not a public issue. It becomes such when the leaders of an advocacy organization allow their hatred of others, or entire institutions, to disfigure their vision. Irrationality cannot be cured by logic or persuasion.

This is exactly what has happened to SNAP, and to many others aligned with them. They may have started with benign motives, but over time they have let their passions get the best of them. Unfortunately, trying to convince these people that not all accused priests are guilty, and that even the seriously accused among them is entitled to due process, is a useless exercise. They've made up their minds, and nothing the Catholic Church can ever do will satisfy them.

Associated with blind hatred is the tendency to believe in conspiracies. For SNAP, the pope is an "evil" man who sits atop an "evil" institution. Yes, for them it is just that simple. They said so. These are the same people who would no

doubt have a hard time uttering the word “evil” to describe the 9/11 terrorists, but have no problem thinking that Rome is busy plotting to seduce young males. They even think that the bishops sit down with the Republicans to strategize on how to rig the legal system. This kind of talk makes us wonder if these people have only temporarily lost their senses, or whether they are habitually delusional

SNAP, as our report shows, is totally obsessed with the Catholic Church, though the recent John Jay College report on the causes of clerical abuse says it represents all victims. Nonsense. SNAP is so phony that its leaders vigorously defend their friends who dabble in child porn (see p. 4). How many times have we heard SNAP say it is wrong to allow an accused priest to stay in ministry, yet we now know that it sought to allow a confessed child porn devotee to practice psychiatry!

BishopAccountability is also a fraud. It pretends to do nothing but maintain an inventory of accused priests and their alleged victims. But it is hardly acting like a librarian when its founder and president, Terry McKiernan, lies about Archbishop Dolan harboring dozens of predatory priests.

Church-suing lawyers like Jeffrey Anderson are so obsessed with “getting the Church” that they live every day in a mad search for new victims. While their clients are in it for the money, what drives Anderson and his ilk is an insatiable appetite for punishment: they want to punish the “evil” institution.

Then there are the psychiatrists with their devil’s theories, and their delusional ideas about the “real” interests of the Catholic Church. They don’t make fair-minded criticism of specific bishops—they swing wildly at all of them. If any Catholic believed just half of what they believe about the Church, he or she may be tempted to blow it up, so palpably insane is their thinking.

And if all of this isn't enough to discredit the victims' lobby, read how they intentionally play on people's emotions, manipulating them with pictures of children—they can always get some “holy childhood photos” if none are available—using “feeling words” to make their political points. Remember, “Be sad and not mad.” Bring a few hankies, or better yet just use your sleeve.

The sad truth is that there are innocent persons who have been abused. They are worthy of our compassion, prayers and services. But those who love the Catholic Church also have a duty to know the truth about its most implacable foes, and not let sympathy substitute for reason.

THE TRUTH ABOUT SNAP: The Real Agenda of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests

The following is an excerpt from the “SNAP Exposed” report; the complete report on the July 8-10 conference in D.C. is available online at catholicleague.org.

There were approximately 110-130 people in attendance. All were white and approximately 60% were female (one male wore a Voice of the Faithful T-shirt). The ages ranged from about 40-75; the majority were 55-65.

The recurring theme of the conference was the evil nature of the Catholic Church. The word “evil” was used repeatedly to describe “the institution.” There was no presumption of

innocence: accused priests were spoken of as if they were guilty, and this was true of all the participants, including the attorneys.

William Spade, who was an Assistant District Attorney in the Philadelphia D.A.'s Office from 1995-2004, gave an overview of his work in that office. His relationship with Catholicism is eclectic. "I don't like the institution," he allows, "but I like the faith."

When Spade was in the D.A.'s office, the man he wanted to get more than anyone else was Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, the former Archbishop of Philadelphia (they always go after the top cleric). To Spade's chagrin, he noted that Bevilacqua was able to escape again and again. He did not say why he always failed. After striking pay dirt, Spade went into private practice. What he drew from his experience, he told the audience, was that the best way to prosecute the Catholic Church was at the federal level.

When it comes to attorneys who have made a career out of suing the Catholic Church, Jeffrey Anderson has no equal. The Minnesota lawyer was raised as a Lutheran. But that didn't work out so he became a Catholic. Then he became an atheist. Not just an ordinary one—he became a self-described "dedicated atheist." Then he had another conversion: last year he described himself as "deeply religious." His religious convictions, however, proved not to be too deep, which is why he is now touted as an "agnostic."

Anderson led a legal panel at the conference that included Church-suing lawyers Jeffrey Herman and Mitchell Garabedian. Virtually the entire session was devoted to discussing the legal impediments to suing the Church. The biggest problem, they said, was the way the statute of limitations differed from state to state. Never once was it even hinted at that these statutes were written to protect the constitutional rights of the accused. Without due process, civil liberties

are a sham. No matter, Anderson said he wants to see this happen globally, making it easier to sue the Catholic Church around the world.

When Anderson said that the lawsuits are not about the money, he was speaking honestly. To be sure, money is a major motivator for his clients. But greed is not what fires him. No, what inspires him, and those of his ilk, is something deeper, something money can't buy. Hatred. That's the only way to understand why Anderson continues to file suit after suit against the Vatican—nothing would make him happier than to bring down the pope. Even though Anderson continues to lose, the outside chance that he might get the pope is enough to get his juices going.

Garabedian, a Boston attorney, isn't interested in balancing the scales of justice: he wants to go for the kill. "This immoral entity, the Catholic Church, should be defeated. We must stand up and defeat this evil." That's exactly what he told the true believers. Candid statements like this give the lie to the argument that those who routinely bring suits against the Church are doing so out of fidelity to the law.

Richard Sipe, Tom Doyle and Marianne Benkert presented the most inflammatory address of them all. Indeed, it was so bad that the anger was described as "off-the-charts." Here is another description of what transpired: "Each presenter in this session exhibited a very high level of hatred and anger towards the Church. They exhibited a visceral, deep-seated hatred of the Church." The persons who offered this commentary, it should be noted, are not given to hyperbole, making their report all the more disturbing.

Sipe is a former Benedictine monk who has been ripping the Church for years. He bluntly told the crowd, "The Church is corrupt." Worse, he opined, "Abuse is only the tip of the iceberg." He did not allude to what was next.

Benkert, a psychiatrist, maintained there are many ways in which the Church manifests narcissism, the alleged cause of sexual abuse. Among them, she said, are the following: the Church refuses to acknowledge sin; it engages in scapegoating; it sacrifices others; it is a master of disguise and pretense; it fosters intellectual deviousness; it lies; it forces the faithful to submit their will to the Church; it is controlling; it causes "religious duress"; etc. She stressed that the narcissist is the personification of evil. "It can be evil in a person or in an institution," suggesting we are dealing either with evil priests or the evil Catholic Church. Finally, she told the gathering, "Sue the Church because they understand money; they are not empathetic."

It was sad to learn that the worst anti-Catholic rant of the day was delivered by Thomas Doyle, an ordained Dominican priest. The recovering alcoholic has butted heads with bishops before, and after one such confrontation he was removed from a military chaplain post. He also likes to blame Pope John Paul II for the abuse scandal. At the conference, Doyle spewed out every anti-Catholic canard possible. Here are a few examples:

- The Church was established by Constantine—not Jesus Christ.
- The Church = fear, power, and guilt.
- The Church is inauthentic and there is a "toxic religiosity" in this institution. The toxicity keeps people subjugated.
- There needs to be a radical restructuring of the priesthood.
- The Mass = magic words. People are compelled to sprinkle water on the forehead of babies (he snidely said) or they will go to minimum security Hell if they die.
- He referred to priestly vestments as "dresses."

One of the most revealing aspects of the conference occurred when Anderson shamelessly conducted a fundraising appeal on

the spot, matching dollar for dollar any donation made by an attendee. But even the multimillionaire has limits: he made it clear that he wouldn't match a \$10,000 donation made by fellow attorney, Jeffrey Herman. An appeal was also made to become "a sustaining member of SNAP for \$25 per month"; everyone was encouraged to sign up with a credit card right then and there.

[Note: A few weeks after the conference ended, attendees were provided with a summary of its highlights. The fundraising appeal was described as an "amazing event," so much so that it was touted as "an emotionally charged moment." The final tally: "The people in the room set a record for fundraising at the conference by contributing over \$30,000."

Let's do the math. If Herman gave \$10,000, and Anderson pledged to match all donations save for Herman's contribution, that means the attendees dished out \$10,000. In other words, two steeple-chasing attorneys accounted for two-thirds of all the money raised. Absent their input, SNAP folds. Not exactly the face of a grass roots movement.]

Author Jason Berry discussed "Human Rights Movements in the Church." He also spoke about his new book, *Render Unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church*, and his documentary, "Vows of Silence." According to Berry, the "face of corruption in the Catholic Church is Cardinal Angelo Sodano." It was Sodano's handling of the Father Marcial Maciel Degollado case that prompted the accusation. Berry also charged that the Church uses "property and money to blunt the force of justice," and asked attendees to write letters demanding that Cardinal Sodano be removed from office.

As it turns out, Berry is the one who has little interest in justice. For example, in *Render Unto Rome* he says that Father Maciel "cultivated powerful conservatives." He lists me as one of them. But I never met, corresponded with, or in any way had anything to do with, the disgraced priest. Nor did I ever defend him. Berry knows all of this because I've corrected him

before, putting forth the evidence. Yet he persists in lying.

BishopAccountability founder and president, Terry McKiernan, showed what he is made of when he boasted, "I hope we can find ways of sticking it to this man." The man he wants to "stick it to" is none other than the head of the New York Archdiocese, and the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Timothy Dolan.

McKiernan went on a rant against the New York Archbishop. Dolan was accused of being a "doctrinal enforcer" who "only cares about climbing the ladder." Without a shred of evidence, he said that Dolan is "keeping the lid on 55 names" of predator priests in his archdiocese. It must be a pretty tight lid: not a single person in the entire country has ever made such a scurrilous accusation. It's time to either put up or shut up.

David Clohessy, the executive director of SNAP, took the time to share some of the ways he manipulates the media. For example, attendees were instructed that to get media attention, it is best to hold press conferences outside a chancery or a police station. If it's held outside the chancery, it makes it easy for the media because they only have to go to one location. After you are interviewed as a SNAP representative (they evidently have lots of deputies), he said, reporters will go inside to interview the diocesan PR person.

Talk, however, is not sufficient. Here are more of their schemes:

- "Display holy childhood photos!" Attorneys should conduct an interview in front of the parish where the priest was assigned (on public property). Why? Because then you will get clients and you'll also have whistleblowers call you after they see the interview on TV.
- Use "feeling words" in interviews: "I was scared. I was

suicidal.” Be sad and not mad. The goal is to make an emotional connection with the audience. If you don’t have compelling holy childhood photos, we can provide you with photos of other kids that can be held up for the cameras.

- Use the word “kids” as often as possible when being interviewed.

It is not certain whether the media, which generally give a sympathetic hearing to SNAP, care how orchestrated these events are. But Catholics should care. After all, what is at stake is an attempt to manipulate public opinion, rallying Americans against the Catholic Church. Staging sadness is not only phony, it is unethical.

SNAP and its allies have long pulled the wool over the eyes of many in the media—it’s time we all looked under the mask.

ARCHBISHOP DOLAN LIBELED BY SNAP

In August a story broke about an elderly priest in New York who was arrested for a sexual infraction. In predictable fashion the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) reacted by libeling New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan.

When a 16-year-old girl began working in a Bronx parish on a recent Saturday, she claimed she was inappropriately touched by an 87-year-old priest. However, she returned to work on the following Monday, where she said she was touched the wrong way again. Then she decided to go back to work on Tuesday, and claimed that she was wrongly touched for a third time. On Wednesday, the cops showed up, with TV cameras rolling, and

handcuffed the elderly priest—who never had a single allegation made against him in over 60 years as a priest—treating him as if he were Jack the Ripper.

If this isn't surreal enough, consider that the phony victims' group, SNAP, accused Archbishop Dolan of covering up the alleged misconduct, even though Dolan knew nothing about it. Moreover, when Dolan learned of the arrest, he immediately informed the cleric that he cannot function as a priest and must leave the parish until the matter is settled. So to accuse the New York Archbishop of a cover-up was obscene.

SNAP also stated that Archbishop Dolan was guilty of “acting secretly” in a previous case involving Msgr. Wallace Harris. This was patently libelous: Dolan was the Archbishop of Milwaukee when Harris was suspended. When Cardinal Edward Egan, Dolan's predecessor, learned of the alleged misconduct by Harris—which supposedly happened 30 years earlier—he notified the D.A.'s office.

According to a SNAP press release, these cases also demonstrate the Church's tolerance of pedophilia. But neither of the two cases involved pedophilia: in both instances, the alleged victims were teenagers. The name of the game is to paint priests as child abusers, which is a bold-face lie. It's time the media turned its cameras on the liars at SNAP.

SNAP STANDS BY CHILD PORN BUDDY

We recently learned that despite what SNAP might say about priests accused of sexual crimes, the unscrupulous group has no problem standing by its friends who have been convicted on

child pornography charges.

In both the May and June editions of Catalyst, we featured articles on Dr. Steve Taylor a psychiatrist who has worked closely with SNAP and who pleaded guilty in April to 23 counts of attempted possession of child pornography.

We now know, thanks to the reporting of the Times-Picayune, that this child porn aficionado is so beloved by SNAP that its founder, Barbara Blaine, intervened on his behalf even before his conviction: she, along with her friend, noted Church-bashing author Jason Berry, wrote to the Louisiana State Board of Medical Examiners, asking them to give due consideration to Taylor's alleged humanitarian work before lifting his medical license.

Why should it matter if Taylor has done some good work in the past? After all, neither SNAP nor Berry has ever shown the slightest interest in weighing the totality of an accused priest's record before condemning him publicly. Indeed, SNAP advises on its website that when a priest is accused, parishioners who support him should do so "PRIVATELY." [Its emphasis.] To support him publicly would be "terribly hurtful to victims."

We called on Blaine and Berry to immediately apologize to all victims, stating how contrite they are for causing such terrible hurt; they should also withdraw their public support for Dr. Taylor.

To show how hypocritical these people are consider that SNAP recently issued a news release expressing its delight with the news that a North Carolina priest pleaded guilty to deleting child porn from his computer. His humanitarian record counted for nothing in their eyes.

BISHOPACCOUNTABILITY IS ANTI-PRIEST

Bill Donohue recently sent a letter to Dr. Mary Jane Doherty, head of the Archdiocese of Boston's Review Board. Donohue was responding to a letter that BishopAccountability had sent Doherty, asking her to disclose the names of priests accused in the archdiocese, all of whom were reportedly dead.

In his letter, Donohue noted that this issue has nothing to do with victims' "healing"; rather, it has to do with politics. He continued, "BishopAccountability is so thoroughly biased against the constitutional rights of priests that it has the audacity to point fingers at the Boston Review Board because it objects to the Board's finding that 45 percent of the cases that were initially reviewed were found wanting." Had the Review Board found 100 percent of the cases meritorious, surely they would have been congratulated.

Although it is described as such, BishopAccountability is not simply an archival group. Indeed, its letter to Doherty proves that it has an agenda. To have one standard for priests, and another for everyone else, is not only discriminatory, it is despicable.

Donohue concluded his letter saying, "Carry on your fine work, and rest assured that most Catholics believe in a uniform standard of justice."

GAY MARRIAGE AND RELIGIOUS RIGHTS

Before homosexuals were given the right to marry in New York, the religious rights of those who conscientiously objected were being threatened. The threats came from two New York officials, both of whom identify themselves as Catholic: Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice.

When Cuomo was asked about the right of clerks, invoking their religious rights, not to issue marriage licenses to gays, he said, "The law is the law. You enforce the law as is; you don't get to pick and choose those laws." (Ironically, this could be read as an indictment of President Obama: he is under oath to enforce federal legislation, yet he manifestly refuses to enforce the Defense of Marriage Act.)

Rice was even bolder. In a letter she wrote to municipal clerks, she warned that not complying "may constitute official misconduct, a Class A misdemeanor."

Cuomo and Rice are so committed to gay rights that they have little interest in religious liberty, even as defined by New York State law. Former Gov. Eliot Spitzer enthusiastically signed a law extending religious rights in the workplace, one that went beyond the "reasonable accommodation" provision of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Indeed, under New York State law, the onus is on the employer to show that it would cause "undue hardship" if an employee were to exercise his "sincerely held" religious beliefs.

It is fatuous to say that it would cause an "undue hardship" in the workplace if clerks who do not have an issue with giving marriage licenses to homosexuals handled these matters for those who do. It cannot be said too strongly: Bullying

those who have religious objections is despicable.

There is an obvious hole in the New York legislation: religious exemptions need to be extended to lay people, not just the clergy.

BISHOPS BLASTED OVER GAY MARRIAGE

The passage of the New York same-sex marriage bill, over the objections from the Catholic hierarchy, led to a storm of criticism of the state's bishops. The most extreme condemnation came from an editorial in the National Catholic Reporter (NCR).

The Catholic hierarchy, said NCR, "has lost most of its credibility with the wider culture on matters of sexuality and personal morality, just as it has lost its authority within the Catholic community on the same issues." It also said that the bishops are engaged in everything from "wholesale excommunications" to "open warfare" with dissidents.

The popular "out-of-touch" criticism of the bishops on gay marriage rested on two faulty assumptions: (a) there is a divide between the bishops and the faithful on this issue, and (b) the bishops should take their cues from the laity.

To begin with, there is a profound difference between the views of practicing Catholics and nominal ones. There is also a divide between what the public tells a pollster and the results in a ballot box. In the 31 states where the voters were given the opportunity to decide on gay marriage, many of the polls going into the election showed that the supporters

would carry the day. The final tally has been 31-0 against gay marriage.

More important, the bishops have a different charge: they are obliged to do what is morally right. But if NCR wants the bishops to follow the laity, is it prepared to have the hierarchy junk its rejection of the death penalty? After all, two-thirds of Catholics believe in it, so why not the bishops? Will NCR now campaign for the death penalty, lecturing the bishops to get in line with the laity? Its hypocrisy is stunning

ARCHBISHOP DOLAN RAISES KEY MARITAL ISSUES

In a recent blog entry, New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan noted that within days of the New York State legislature's decision to affirm homosexual marriage, some enthusiasts had upped the ante, asking us to consider "nonmonogamy." This was not a false alarm.

When the U.S. Supreme Court rejected precedent and decided to invent a right to sodomy (see *Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003), Justice Scalia wrote in dissent that everything from bigamy to bestiality could now be justified in light of this ruling. After all, if moral choice is the only operative principle, then on what basis can we tell a brother and sister, that they cannot marry? This is not a matter of idle speculation: in the wake of *Lawrence*, attempts to legalize polygamy and incest were made, and it is just a matter of time before some judge decides it's necessary to break new ground.

If anything, Archbishop Dolan understated the problem. Five

years ago, hundreds of prominent professors, lawyers, writers and activists signed a statement declaring war on marriage. For example, the statement said, "Queer couples and siblings who decide to jointly create and raise a child with another queer person or couple, in two households," should be afforded the same protections as marriage, traditionally understood. These zealots even went so far as to say that such arrangements should be given private [read: religious] recognition.

Archbishop Dolan did us a favor by issuing this wake-up call. Sadly, he does not exaggerate, not by one bit.