

# **CALIFORNIA BILL STALLS; CATHOLIC RESPONSE IS HUGE**

Over the summer, the Catholic League contacted well over 10,000 members in California alerting them to a vote on a bill in the Assembly Appropriations Committee that unfairly targets the Catholic Church. We also emailed over a thousand pastors throughout the state. It was worth the effort. On August 14, the bill failed 6-4; there were seven abstentions. At press time, the bill was eligible for reconsideration at the end of August, but the fact that it stalled in committee is a good sign.

As Catholic Californians know, the bill has been deceitfully promoted as a measure to combat the sexual abuse of minors. But it does nothing of the sort. It would suspend the statute of limitations for one year in cases where someone claims he was molested when he was a minor in a private institution; it would apply to those who were 26-years-old in 2002.

Amazingly, the bill does not apply to anyone who was violated by a public employee, such as a public school teacher, aide, counselor or coach. For them—and they account for the lion's share of abuse—it's just too bad.

The purpose of this outrageous bill, SB 131, is to sock it to the Catholic Church. In California, lawmakers already suspended the statute of limitations for private institutions; they did so in 2003. But public school teachers have never been subjected to this condition. In other words, the bill is nothing more than a vindictive effort to punish the Catholic Church.

Leading the fight against this bill are the California bishops, and the California Catholic Conference; we are particularly taken by the aggressive leadership of Los Angeles

Archbishop José Gomez. We are proud to play a support role, and we thank our California members for their participation in this effort. But this fight is not over.

If California lawmakers are truly serious about combating the sexual abuse of minors (most surely are), then they should a) not make exceptions for private or public institutions and b) concentrate on current cases of abuse. To do any less—to carve out a privileged position for some, or to focus on the past, not the present—is an exercise in grandstanding. That's not leadership.

This game has been played in other states as well. We've fought attempts to discriminate against the Catholic Church in Colorado and New York, and our side has prevailed. Rest assured knowing we are not walking away from this fight in California.

When it comes to protecting kids, we don't need one law for some, and another for others. And we sure don't need laws driven by an animus against the Catholic Church. It is astonishing to think that in 2013, Catholics still have to fight for basic human rights.

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## FACEBOOK'S DUPLICITY

The Catholic League has filed a complaint with Facebook about an entry that shows an edgy picture of the Virgin Mary with the inscription, "Virgin Mary Should've Aborted." Facebook said it did not constitute hate speech. When others continued to protest, the page was taken down, but then other pages, similar in content, appeared; they are still posted.

Alison Schumer, who works at Facebook, said in June that "hate

speech” is defined as “direct and serious attacks on any protected category of people,” but that “distasteful humor” does not qualify. That is an eminently defensible definition. But if that policy was violated when a cartoon of a naked Muhammad was posted— this happened last year when a French magazine took liberties with the prophet—then why does Facebook currently allow the Virgin Mary to be assaulted? It censored the French page.

The policy Schumer defended speaks to categories of people, not individuals. But if it was good enough to take down the anti-Muhammad post, why does it not apply to the Virgin Mary? Also, the cartoon was a depiction of Muhammad lying on his stomach, with his butt exposed. If the reason for taking down this page is nudity, then how does Facebook explain doctored photos of Sarah Palin sitting on a chair in a vulgar position? It’s still up.

We contacted Facebook seven times for an explanation, but to no avail. All we want is for Mary to be treated the way it treats Muhammad.

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## HELPING THE POOR

**William A. Donohue**

If there is one thing that Pope Francis and President Obama have in common, it is their professed interest in helping the poor. Both talk a great deal about this issue, and both occupy a very high status. Truth to tell, their commitment to the poor is hardly unique. While there are some who are indifferent, it’s hard to find anyone who’s anti-poor.

So at a rhetorical level, there’s not much difference between

the pope, the president, and the public. What matters are not platitudes— we're all in favor of clean air, too—what counts are the kinds of policies we adopt. Good intentions matter, but not much: great damage has been done in the name of helping people. Hitler said his policies would save Western civilization. Stalin and Mao said they would create a utopia. They were all genocidal maniacs.

If we want to help the poor, we should at least know who they are. Census data tell us that nearly all the poor in this country live in houses or apartments that are in good condition and aren't overcrowded. More than 80 percent of the poor own an air conditioner, two-thirds have cable TV, and half own a computer. Fully 96 percent of poor parents say their children were not hungry for even a single day in the past year.

By any historical measure, there are practically no poor people left in America. And when we compare our "poor" to the poor in other nations today, we learn why I chose quotation marks to describe ours.

It would be wrong to conclude that we should therefore do nothing to help those who are not affluent. As Catholics, we have a moral obligation to help those in need. At a minimum, our energy and dollars should be directed at those who can't help themselves. As for able-bodied persons who are not affluent, the most charitable thing we can do is to enable them to become self-reliant. That is why so-called champions of the poor who oppose school vouchers cannot be taken seriously; it is minority children in the inner city who suffer.

Fraud is rampant. When my oldest daughter was a 12-year-old, I brought her to the office on "Bring Your Daughter to Work Day" (this trendy idea didn't last long). On our way to work, a man was standing next to a table with a huge jug; UHO was inscribed on it (United Homeless Organization). He asked us to

give, but I refused. My daughter wanted to know why. When we got to my office, I explained my reasoning.

I downloaded stories on my computer showing what a fraud UHO was. Caryn learned that virtually all the money went to the operators and the street hustlers. Three years ago, New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo (now governor) said, "UHO exploits the good intentions of people who thought their charitable donations were helping to fund services for the homeless. Instead, their donations go directly to UHO's principals and workers, who abused the organization's tax-exempt status to line their own pockets."

Some things never change. Over the summer, it was reported that those who live in New York City's Caribbean neighborhoods are buying groceries with their Electronic Benefit Transfer cards (food stamps for those on welfare) and sending them overseas. There are literally hundreds of 45-to-55-gallon cardboard and plastic barrels that line the walls in virtually every Caribbean supermarket. The food is being shipped to relatives in Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. But not all of it: some is being resold by ripoff artists.

Dishonesty is also rampant.

Bread for the World is a prominent liberal organization that collects donations for the alleged purpose of helping the poor. Not a dime pays for bread: All proceeds go to lobbyists who pressure politicians to spend more money on poverty programs.

Back in the 1980s, celebrities organized a well-publicized campaign to help the poor. "Holding Hands Across America" garnered the support of legions of public figures (even the Reagans were roped into it). It raked in hundreds of millions. Unfortunately for the poor, two out of every three dollars raised was spent to pay for the bash.

More recently, when a donor sent great New York pastrami

sandwiches to the “Occupy Wall Street” gang, the pro-poor demonstrators told the homeless who asked for some to get lost. The soup was for the poor.

Helping the poor is a noble cause, but it can also become a fool’s errand. We need to ask who the intended beneficiaries are, and what, if anything, can be expected of them in return. We need to know how much of the money goes to administrative costs, and how much is spent on the target group. We need to know if there is a face-to-face relationship between donors and recipients, or just a money transfer. We need to know about fraud and dishonesty.

One of the great things about Mother Teresa is that she never sought the limelight. She simply went about her business helping the poor and comforting the sick and dying. It’s our good fortune that she was “discovered” and introduced to the world. She’s the proper role model, not those who stand on street corners asking for “spare change,” or white-collared professionals who manipulate public sentiment for self-serving reasons.

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## **POPULIST                      POPE                      PROVES IRRESISTIBLE**

Pope Francis is the perfect pontiff for our age, a truly populist pope. He can do something few others can: espouse the Church’s traditional moral teachings—which are profoundly countercultural—while speaking with a relevancy almost impossible to duplicate. Style doesn’t change substance, but it can facilitate the transmission of substantive teachings.

It’s not just his simplicity of manner—living in modest

quarters, driving in compact sedans, carrying his own belongings— it's his simplicity of thought. Pope Francis is hardly anti-intellectual, but he's rightly wary of intellectual appeals that never reach the people. He knows there is a place for administrative oversight and data collection, but he warns against a "functionalism" distancing the hierarchy from the faithful. Surely he celebrates the role of bishops as apostles of Christ, but he is careful to warn of the dangers of clericalism.

This is what a populist pope is all about. Pope Francis wants to touch the people and wants them to participate in the makings of Christianity. But he isn't prepared to lower the bar. He welcomes everyone, yet counsels that inclusivity cannot be achieved at the price of compromising basic moral truths. He may not appeal to die-hard secularists, or to cynics, but to those who are prepared to allow the Church, and themselves, a chance to reboot, he's indispensable.

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## **POPE ON GAYS DRIVES MEDIA WILD**

During Pope Francis' trip to Brazil for World Youth Day, he spoke about materialism for one straight week before millions, and his formal comments garnered 74 news stories on Lexis-Nexis. He spoke off-the-cuff about homosexual priests before a handful of reporters on the airplane going back to Rome and his remarks triggered 220 news stories. One might logically conclude that the pope broke some new ground with his comments on gay priests. But he didn't.

When asked about homosexual priests, Pope Francis said, "If a

person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge him?" He added, "The problem is not having this orientation. We must be brothers. The problem is lobbying by this orientation...."

Pope Benedict XVI, responding to the homosexual scandal in the Catholic Church (one more time—less than 5 percent of the cases of priestly sexual abuse involved pedophilia), did not make it impossible for gays to enter the priesthood; he made it more difficult for practicing gays to enter. Pope Francis said nothing to contradict his predecessor. By addressing the gay lobby, he clearly spoke out against what the late Father Andrew Greeley called the "lavender mafia."

Several years ago, Bill Donohue was interviewed by David France for his book, *Our Fathers*, about gays in the Catholic Church. Donohue said: "I don't think most Catholics would care if their priest is gay or straight, to tell the truth. I think the issue for them is whether he can live up to his vow of celibacy. I'd take a chaste gay priest any day over a promiscuous straight one."

France was ecstatic, much as reporters were with the pope. In both instances, their eudemonia is a reflection of the way they stereotype orthodox Catholics.

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## POPE CRACKS DOWN ON SEX ABUSE

Pope Francis has no stomach for any type of sexual abuse. His decision to revise the norms affecting these crimes, with more stringent penalties, is a welcome tonic. However, he does not need to be congratulated for this—he needs to be supported by those in a position to do so.



Child sexual abuse affects every organization where there's sustained interaction between adults and children. In the West, it's heightened by a sick culture eroticizing youth. From advertisements to TV—to say nothing of music videos and movies—we are inundated with hyper-sexualized portrayals and images, resulting in a morally debased milieu.

On racial tensions, many note the “root causes” of poverty and injustice. But the same persons show little or no interest in addressing the “root causes” of child sexual exploitation. As seen in the debate over gun control, those screaming loudest for stricter gun laws were typically silent on Hollywood's role fostering violence. The same is true about sexual exploitation—there's a reluctance to get Hollywood to address its role in furthering this problem.

The Church had a problem with sexual abuse in the 1960s and 1970s, but today it has the cleanest record of any institution. Today child sexual abuse is a problem in Hollywood, on Indian reservations, in the Orthodox Jewish communities, public schools, and the home (boyfriends and stepfathers are the worst offenders). Wherever it exists, it must be stamped out. Thank God Pope Francis is leading the way.

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## HOLLYWOOD AND HITLER

According to Ben Urwand's new book, *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact with Hitler*, not only did the Hollywood studios obediently bow to Hitler's masters by killing scenes deemed objectionable, they even hired Nazis at Paramount. The head of MGM in Germany actually acceded to a request by Hitler's henchmen to divorce his Jewish wife; she wound up in

a concentration camp.

Standing against the Hollywood moguls, Urwand says, was Joseph Breen, the Irish Catholic who worked for, and eventually succeeded, Will Hays of the so-called Hays Office; the private association monitored Hollywood movies for objectionable fare. Looks like Breen's commitment to decency trumped Hollywood's commitment to cash.

Breen, no fan of how Hollywood conducted itself, didn't balk when asked by the two authors of the Hays Code, Martin Quigley and Jesuit priest Daniel Lord, to make a public statement condemning anti-Semitism in 1939. Meanwhile, those running the movie industry cut and spliced films to meet Nazi approval.

Today Hollywood is in bed with China's Communist censors, inviting them onto its sets to offer advice on what's acceptable and what isn't. If they don't cooperate with the slave masters, they risk having their films spiked: the violent film "Django Unchained" was pulled from Chinese theaters on opening day in April.

When the Catholic League merely criticizes a movie, we are tagged a censor. When Hollywood studio chiefs cooperate with Chinese government agents by altering their films, they find ways to congratulate themselves. For example, Steven Soderbergh welcomes the input of Communist censors: "It's fascinating to listen to people's interpretation of your story." He must have learned his obsequiousness from those who collaborated with Hitler.

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# CBS' MOONVES AND CHILD PORN

CBS CEO Les Moonves refused to fire Spencer Clawson from the reality show, "Big Brother 15," yet two other contestants were terminated (from their day jobs) for making racial slurs.

On the live feed of a recent episode, Clawson joked how he likes to masturbate to child pornography. "I love it when they're around 3 or 4 years old," he said. "My favorite ones are when you can tell they're in a basement." He added that it "is my favorite thing there is."

Moonves' wife Julie Chen hosts this show. He called it a "social experiment," claiming his wife "would kill me if I didn't" watch every show. "What you see there unfortunately is a reflection of how certain people feel in America."

In 2007, when radio shock jock Don Imus made a racial joke, Moonves had no qualms about firing him. He said Imus "flourished in a culture that permits a certain level of objectionable expression that hurts and demeans a wide range of people. In taking him off the air, I believe we take an important and necessary step not just in solving a unique problem, but in changing that culture, which extends far beyond the walls of our Company."

Bottom line: CBS has infinitely more tolerance for those joking about child porn than it does for those who tell racist jokes. Our culture cannot put up with the latter, but it must accommodate those who delight in 3 and 4-year-olds being sexually abused.

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# STATE DEPT. FAITH CHIEF IS GOOD FIT

Recently religion professor Shaun Casey was named to head the State Department's new Office of Faith-Based Community Initiative. The recently deceased sociologist of religion Robert Bellah once described civil religion as "a set of beliefs, symbols and rituals" that date to the Founding; they represent "the obligation, both collective and individual, to carry out God's will on earth."

Casey has said, "I, frankly, am glad American civil religion is dying." He did not say what he will do to hasten the death of our civil religion, nor did he speak to what exactly he would like to put in its place. Perhaps he will unveil a secular agenda, or a statist substitute, in the name of advancing religion, of course.

The White House Faith-Based director, Melissa Rogers, predictably gushed over Casey. She congratulated Mara Vanderslice Kelly as well for her yeoman work on faith-based issues.

In 2004, Bill Donohue exposed Vanderslice, then working for John Kerry, as a left-wing activist who spoke at rallies for ACT-UP, the gay group responsible for busting into St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1989 and desecrating the Eucharist. She was immediately subjected to a gag rule. Donohue was blamed for Kerry's decision to silence her.

In 2006, Mara Vanderslice was named one of the 12 most important religious voices in the Democratic Party. Shaun Casey was also on that list. Looks like Kerry has chosen another religious superstar to join his team. Just think of it—if these are Kerry's religion-friendly sources, imagine what his atheist friends at Martha's Vineyard must be like!

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# ROGUE LAWYER LOSES

In August, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed a federal lawsuit against the Holy See. Earlier on April 3, 2002, Jeffrey Anderson filed suit against the Holy See claiming that it was responsible for the conduct of a priest who had allegedly molested a young man in Oregon in 1965. Anderson contended that the priest worked for the Vatican and that officials there knew about his sexual exploits. On April 4, 2002, the Catholic League had issued a news release stating the following: "Anderson's crusade is malicious. He knows he will lose in court."

We were right. On Monday, Anderson told the Ninth Circuit that he was withdrawing his appeal of a federal district court ruling that said the Holy See did not employ the priest and was not liable for damages.

Anderson knew from day one that he would lose. While his knowledge of the way the Catholic Church works is deficient, he had to know—unless he is truly a conspiratorial maniac—that his stunt would go nowhere. Moreover, his actions were exploitative: 2002 was the year the sex scandal hit the newspapers, so he thought he could cash in on it.

Maybe Anderson is a conspiratorial maniac. He was quoted as saying, "all roads lead to Rome." That's what he said before when he lost.