

THIESSEN'S MISTAKE

The following letter to the editor by Bill Donohue was published March 10 in the Washington Post:

Marc A. Thiessen's call for Catholics to stop making donations to the bishops' Lenten appeals was badly flawed ["Boycott the bishops," op-ed, March 6]. Once Pope Francis asked the bishops to pitch matters such as the case of former cardinal Theodore McCarrick to Rome, it made any vote on this issue moot. It was unfair to suggest that Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, acted irresponsibly by deciding not to answer every victim's letter: Those at the local level are best suited for this job.

Mr. Thiessen said "we are still learning new information from grand juries" about sexual abuse. He failed to note that what we are learning includes unsubstantiated cases from the past century. Many abusing priests are dead or out of the ministry. Moreover, the bishops have made great progress since U.S. bishops adopted reforms in 2002. For Mr. Thiessen not to acknowledge this verity seriously undermined his plea to boycott the bishops.

The dust-up between Donohue and Thiessen was picked up by Catholic News Service. Both men stuck to their guns.

Thiessen said "the only way to get through to them [the bishops] is to withhold our money." If the poor get hurt, he said, "there are other sources of funds they can tap into."

Donohue said Thiessen "gives the reader no idea that the crisis in this country has been licked." Furthermore, he said, "The damage was done to the church during the sexual revolution. The way his article is written...suggests that we are stuck in a time warp."

In closing, Donohue noted that "A lot of the priests who were

delinquent...they're either dead or out of ministry....If we give off the idea that we have not made any progress, that is simply wrong."