

UNSOLICITED ADVICE SURGES



Bill Donohue comments on reaction to the pope's resignation:

The decision of Pope Benedict XVI to retire has elicited a surge of unsolicited advice on how the Catholic Church must change. Paradoxically, most of it is coming from those who are not exactly connected to the Church: we are hearing from ex-Catholics, those with one foot out the door, and non-Catholics. Much of their advice has to do with sex, proving once again that it is not the Church that is obsessed with sex—it is the Church's critics.

Can the Church change? On some teachings, of course. As Judge John T. Noonan Jr. has demonstrated, the Church has evolved on slavery, usury, religious freedom, and divorce. Moreover, it has modified its teachings on subjects ranging from celibacy to the role of Jews in the crucifixion. While capital punishment is not an intrinsic evil, Pope John Paul II narrowed its legitimate exercise. So if these changes, and many others, have been made, why can't there be more? There can be, at least on some teachings. The question is whether there should be.

The Catholic League is positively agnostic on these issues. We are not an advisory group, nor are we a theological debating society. We are a civil rights organization. Our job is to defend the right of the Church to proclaim the Gospel as it sees fit. Moreover, we adamantly reject the notion that there can be parallel teaching bodies: the Magisterium, which is the

pope in communion with the bishops, is the sole teaching body of the Catholic Church. It is their rights we defend. All we ask for is a respectful hearing.

Everyone, of course, is entitled to offer advice. But those who are no longer practicing Catholics, or who never were, cannot expect a serious hearing. This has to be said now because over the next several months we are likely to witness an explosion in voyeurism, as well as downright meddling, in the internal affairs of the Catholic Church.