

VATICAN GOES ON THE OFFENSIVE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a statement made by Cardinal William Levada, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

Cardinal Levada directly takes on the *New York Times* for its coverage of the Fr. Murphy abuse case in Wisconsin. Commenting on the news story by Laurie Goodstein, Levada writes, "The point of Goodstein's article, however, is to attribute the failure to accomplish this dismissal [of Fr. Murphy] to Pope Benedict, instead of to diocesan decisions at the time."

Cardinal Levada has it just right. The wrongdoing in this case rests in Wisconsin. Why did the victims' families wait as long as 15 years to report the abuse? Why were the civil authorities unconvinced by what they uncovered? Why did Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert Weakland wait almost two decades before he contacted the Vatican?

Weakland's record in handling sex abuse cases is a matter of record. In 1984, he branded as "libelous" those who reported cases of priestly sexual abuse (he was rebuked by the courts for doing so). Ten years later he accused those who reported such cases of "squealing." And, of course, he had to resign when his lover, a 53 year-old man, revealed that Weakland paid him \$450,000 to settle a sexual assault lawsuit (Weakland took the money from archdiocesan funds). It's a sure bet that if Weakland were a theological conservative—and not a champion of liberal causes—the media (including the *National Catholic Reporter* and *Commonweal*) would be all over him.

We also need to learn from Laurie Goodstein why she waited until Wednesday, March 30, to interview Fr. Thomas Brundage, the priest who presided over the Murphy trial. Brundage has said that the pope, then Cardinal Ratzinger, had absolutely nothing to do with the Murphy case. And we need to know why

Weakland never gave Brundage a letter he wrote asking him to call off the trial.

There's dirt in the Murphy case, but it sits in the U.S.A.—not Rome.