

# WOMEN'S ORDINATION AND THE NEW YORK TIMES

On Saturday, the Catholic Church was the subject of a critical editorial in the *New York Times*, and yesterday, columnist Maureen Dowd joined the attack. At issue is a recent set of Vatican norms. Catholic League president Bill Donohue addressed their concerns today:

On July 15, the Vatican released new norms that were divided into 31 articles. The *New York Times* editorial found unacceptable those governing the sexual abuse of minors, and the stricture against women's ordination. Maureen Dowd focused on the same issues, though her style was the usual boilerplate.

They need to get a few things straight: the issue of women's ordination in the Catholic Church should be treated the way the *Times* treats the Orthodox Jewish strictures against eating pork and the Muslim practice of barring sex during the day while Ramadan is being observed—with thundering silence. Moreover, the *Times* never criticizes Orthodox Jews and Muslims for segregating the sexes in many settings. Nor should it: it's no one's business. Would that it do the same for Catholicism's proscription of women's ordination.

By contrast, it is perfectly acceptable to take issue with any religion's positions on public policy matters, e.g., abortion, school vouchers, embryonic stem cell research and gay marriage. But the house rules of *all* religions need to be respected (save for those few instances where innocent life may be threatened). Not to do so is to show contempt for diversity. And that is exactly what the *Times* is doing: it is using its secular yardstick to measure the doctrinal prerogatives of Catholicism.

Regarding the Vatican's norms on the sexual abuse of minors—a legitimate source of criticism—we would still like to know why the *Times* has yet to criticize the public schools in the United States for not modeling their norms on the ones adopted by the Catholic Church at home, and in Rome. It is the former that have “rubber rooms”—not the latter.

*Contact Arthur S. Brisbane, the new public editor of the newspaper: [public@nytimes.com](mailto:public@nytimes.com)*