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Donohue Defends the Indefensible

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Bill Donohue of the Catholic League for Civil Rights has issued a broadside attack against those of us in the media - he mentions NCR by name - who dare to report accurately on the crimes committed against young people by members of the clergy. If only he was as upset about the crimes as he was about the reporting!

But, Donohue discerns a liberal agenda behind the reporting, and claims we at NCR and elsewhere want the Church to adopt our liberal views on sexual matters and are using the sex abuse crisis to that end. He writes: "We know what's going on: get Catholics so riled up that they will demand the Church adopt the liberal agenda on sexuality. They just don't get it: it was the detour from orthodoxy that allowed the abuse scandal to take hold in the first place."

I cannot speak for others, but I have no such agenda. But, I do believe that the origin of the scandal was an abuse of power, not any straying from orthodoxy. From all that I have read, the priests who abused children came in all ideological stripes. Some were, as we called them in seminary, "daughters of Trent." Others were devoted to a more liberal interpretation of the "spirit of Vatican II" than I would allow. But, what revolts the average person in the pew is not only the crime itself, but the cover-up of the crime and continued exposing of children to further abuse by bishops more concerned with maintaining their own reputation than in protecting children. This concern merits not a drop of ink from Donohue's otherwise ever-busy pen. Who has the agenda?

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