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Cardinal confirms new aggressive strategy against abuse victims

by Kristine Ward

Examining the Crisis

Commentary

In a none too subtle posting on his Archdiocese of New York blog, Cardinal Timothy Dolan -- the newly minted and over the top feted eminence -- confirmed the bishops' new strategy: playing hardball against victims and the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) in particular. Here's the link.

This approach was first revealed by Catholic League president William Donohue in the March 12 *New York Times* story "Catholic Church Puts Legal Pressure on Abuse victims Group."

The story played out in a good cop/bad cop routine with Mr. Donohue being quoted as bluntly declaring the "bishops have come together collectively" in this approach while Sr. Mary Ann Walsh, spokeswoman for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops demurred that Mr. Donohue was incorrect and no such new strategy was in place.

Enter the Cardinal's column. Tie broken. Winner declared: take no prisoners, new aggressive strategy it is.

Any reader of a diocesan newspaper knows that bishops are experts at the coy, the obfuscating, the lovely sounding but non-relevant tinkling brass and clanging symbol approach to communication.

When they do otherwise it pays to take heed.

In this Dolan tip of the blog hat to the Catholic League, Catholics and all men and women of goodwill should hear a beaver thumping of danger in the woods.

When the bishops circle their wagons around a jovial, back slapping, have a few beers with you wagon master prepared to pour as much and as many high powered attorneys' fees plus muscle and venom as it takes in pursuit of a bare knuckle, wide net, fear inducing campaign against an ever-growing and effective band of victims the Gospel is not in them thar' hills: self preservation is.

Cardinal Dolan, with his blog posting, it seems to us, is taking the same approach political candidates take to their Super PACs: not running them, don't really know what they are doing on my behalf (wink, wink), can't help they are saying exactly what I want to, and boy do I love the dough they are socking into it.

If you agree with this approach, please do nothing, Cardinal Dolan and Mr. Donohue have it well in hand.

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If you don't, please put your money where your conscience is: send SNAP a check. Then next Sunday, put a message in your collection envelope that your money is going to support the least, the last, the vulnerable, the innocent ? those who were left along the side of the road, abandoned, stepped over and never expected to rise up and seek justice for themselves.

[Kristine Ward is chair of the National Survivor Advocates Coalition.]

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