

SNAP IN THE CROSSHAIRS II

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As soon as the media announced that the two leaders of SNAP had resigned and that a former employee had filed a lawsuit, the usual suspects came out of the woodwork to hammer SNAP, Barbara Blaine, David Clohessy and several others who have been connected with SNAP in one way or another. The information they broadcast about SNAP and its problems all came from the complaint that initiated the lawsuit. No one has any inside information.

The complaint is exactly that. It is a list of things about SNAP and its central leadership that the plaintiff took issue with. The purpose of the legal process is to determine whether these are true or not. The complaint gives the impression that the entire organization is somehow corrupt and working against sex abuse victims and nothing could be further from reality. The national leadership is not the totality of SNAP and vice versa. Although the lawsuit names SNAP the fact is that it's really about less than a handful of members.

Most of the news stories triggered by the lawsuit have not vilified SNAP or its leaders. The exceptions have come from the expected sources: David Pierre and Bill Donohue. Pierre operates a web site called the Media Report. He has consistently attacked the clergy sex abuse victims as well as anyone associated with them. I have read less than a handful of his blog entries mainly because they are a joke. He never lets facts get in the way of his

destructive drivel. He has also written a couple of books, which I actually paid money for and read. The corker is titled “The Sins of the Press” which purports to tell the “untold story of the Boston Globe’s reporting on sex abuse in Boston.” The book isn’t very long and it reminded me of the writings of paranoid people whose lives are filled with fear and conspiracy theories. Like his other two books it has an academic and intellectual depth equal to a layer of shellac. I reviewed the book for Amazon and gave it one star but I went that far only because I liked the typeface. Pierre’s rant against SNAP, Barbara and David isn’t worth commenting upon because, like his other rants, it is inconsequential and irrelevant.

Bill Donohue and David Pierre both keep bringing up their theory that SNAP’s real purpose is to promote anti-Catholicism or as Donohue puts it, on a “pathological hatred of the Catholic Church.” It’s really a silly and meaningless accusation that conjures up memories of the late Senator Joe McCarthy and his House Un-American Activities Committee. According to Senator Joe just about everybody and his brother was a commie sympathizer. That was paranoid exaggeration on a cosmic scale. What we have now is a very, very miniature version of the same kind of mindless raving. Neither of these guys have the vaguest idea of the real theological meaning of the phrase “Catholic Church.”

It’s a fact that a lot of sex abuse survivors and those who support them are highly critical of the institutional church and bishops in particular. Many have a lot of justified animosity. If that’s being anti-Catholic, then they have every right to bash the institution. Whether Donohue and his ilk like it or not, sexual

molestation of innumerable minor boys and girls by Catholic clerics is a reality and no amount of spin or bombastic raving can make it go away. The other reality is that the number of false accusation is miniscule. The prime cause of scandal, anger and “Catholic bashing” has not been the sex abuse itself but the behavior of the bishops worldwide. The lying, cover up, demonization and manipulation of victims by their trusted shepherds is the ultimate anti-Catholic behavior.

Being highly critical of bishops who have secretly transferred sex abusers from parish to parish, protected them and then lied about it justifies not only severe criticism but according to the Church’s own law, enacted last May by Pope Francis, dismissal from office. Why? Because tolerating, protecting and enabling the molestation of children is probably the highest form of anti-Catholic behavior because it violates teachings that come from the core of the Church’s belief system, the Gospels of Jesus Christ.

So why do some people mindlessly vilify the victims of the Church’s own ministers and accuse them of perpetrating some kind of massive fraud? Why is heaping scorn on the victims and those who support them considered to be “good Catholic behavior? Donohue has done nothing but vilify clergy abuse victims, SNAP, and those of us who support victims, for years. I do not recall him ever saying anything in support of or in defense of victims. No doubt his wealthy supporters who enable him to pull a 400k annual salary all see the victims of sex abuse as a threat to their twisted version of the Church. My guess is that Donohue really doesn’t care one way or another about the victims, the institutional church, orthodoxy or heresy. He puts his show on because it satisfies his

miniscule core of financial supporters. The problem is that he uses the word “Catholic” in the title of his outfit and THAT is anti-Catholic because it leads some people to believe that Donohue’s wild ranting and raving and his habit of twisting facts is “Catholic” behavior. He makes the Church look not only ridiculous but also hypocritical and dishonest.

However, Bill’s use of clergy victims and SNAP as a target for his venom is small potatoes compared to his recent target, the discovery of the bodies of babies near Catholic-run homes for unwed mothers in Tuam, Ireland. I read as much of his diatribes as I could stomach. This time he has reached a new low as if he could get any lower. This dive into the bog is not surprising though. A couple years ago, using his intentional misreading of the McAleese Report as a base, he called the survivors of the notorious Magdalene laundries liars. Trying to somehow sanitize the worst moments of the Catholic Church’s history in Ireland is not lunacy as some have said, but downright malicious cruelty.

A final thought about the lawsuit. A number of people who have read the complaint all seem to agree that there’s something really fishy about it. Like some of the other lawsuits aimed at SNAP, one wonders if the real purpose has nothing to do with justice or whistleblowing but a lot to do with using the legal process to force SNAP out of business.

Victims of clergy abuse are still coming forward. In numerous other countries the victims are organizing and standing up to the institutional Church just like they did in the U.S. The reason it is all still going on is because the essential problem is still

with us. Victims of the maltreatment by clerics of all ranks are no longer going to cower in the shadows. That era ended almost forty years ago. The anti-SNAP lawsuits and the constant drivel of Donohue and his ilk are having zero impact if their game plan is to shut down the forces that demand honesty, accountability and transparency in the institutional Church. All the anti-Church behavior is really the hacking away at the False-Church façade so that the real thing, the “People of God” can emerge to its rightful place.