



Changes...and an Unholy Alliance

In this week's edition of the Long Island Catholic, Bishop Murphy writes about the need to defeat the Markey/Duane Bill, which would extend the statute of limitations for reporting child sexual abuse and provide a one-year "window" for civil suits against abusers and their enablers, which he describes as "aimed at the Church" (more about that later). He states that the bishops of New York State support a similar bill, the Lopez bill, which does not have a "window" and in his opinion, "provides all victims with an even field of recourse against perpetrators."

Here's what Bishop Murphy did NOT tell you:

-In a press release dated June 4, Assemblywoman Markey announced the following changes in the bill:

- "A vigorous discussion about the bill has taken place over the past few months and there has been intensive lobbying of legislators. While the original bill equally applied to both the public and private sectors, many of my colleagues were concerned that its practical impact might unfairly limit access for public sector claims. Accordingly, I have agreed to an amendment that will explicitly suspend the "notice of claim" requirement for public sector claims in order to ensure that victims of abuse, wherever it occurred, will have recourse for the wrongs done against them.
- Another amendment to the bill relates to the proposal to create a one-year "window" suspending the statute of limitations for older child sexual abuse claims. I am pleased that the greatest number of my colleagues agree with the principle of justice that is embodied in the "window," but they are concerned about its potential impact. To address those concerns, the bill has been amended to apply the "window" to those who are 53 years of age or younger at the time of the enactment of the law. While I am absolutely committed to the right of every victim to have full access to justice for their claims, the adoption of this bill this year is a critical first step that we must take."

-The New York State Catholic Conference (NYSCC), a group that calls itself "The Official Public Policy Voice of the Catholic Church in the Empire State" and which represents the bishops of New York State in matters of public policy according to its website, hired two new lobbyists to step up its efforts to block SOL reform. They are Hank Sheinkopf and Patricia Lynch. Mr. Sheinkopf is perhaps best known as a political lobbyist. Ms. Lynch, however, is a Jane of all trades.

According to Crain's New York and the New York Daily News, Ms. Lynch was also hired by the Empire State Pride Agenda, a gay and lesbian advocacy organization, to help promote same-sex marriage in New York State. Yet, the editorial in the May 27, 2009 edition of the Long Island Catholic expresses the NYSCC's opposition to same-sex marriage and says that "Catholics can and should express their opposition to this legislation through the NYSCC."

Are you wondering why the bishops of New York State, through the NYSCC, are withholding information from the laity about legislation that would protect children and provide justice to all abused in the past, and are you wondering about who they are paying with YOUR money to block this legislation?

So are we.

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“I Threaten Everybody...”

In the New York Post on May 31, it was reported that during a legislative breakfast at his residence, “Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio threatened state lawmakers by vowing to close churches in their districts - and blame them for the closures - if they dared support a bill [Markey/Duane] making it easier for people who were sexually assaulted as kids to sue, legislators told the Post.”

According to the article, *“They said the dark warning came during a “legislative breakfast” at DiMarzio’s Brooklyn residence, as he told the gathering of about 20 state and city politicians that he would retaliate against Albany lawmakers if they backed the Child Victims Act. Two lawmakers said the bishop brazenly bullied them during the coffee-and-doughnuts gathering at his stately brick residence in Clinton Hill on Oct. 21.*

“He said, ‘If it passes, we will close a parish in each of your districts and we will tell your constituents that it was your fault,’ ” said one Assembly member who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

“I was shocked,” he said. “I’ve never seen a threat like that made at any lobby meeting.”

A senator who asked not to be identified said: “The hair on the back of my head stood up. In my years of Catholic schooling, we were never taught to be so vindictive, and here’s my bishop saying, ‘I’ll close a church in your district.’ ”

A City Council member said: “He brought up this bill, and he went on a tirade about it, saying, ‘We’ll have to close churches, and you’ll be the ones responsible for it. It will be your fault.’ ”

“He basically threatened the room. I was appalled.”

On June 1, the New York Post again questioned Bishop DiMarzio about his statement. He said he’d gladly “preach the same sermon again.”

He also said that he would not apologize for his position or his style. *“I threaten everybody,”* the bishop said, laughing. *“I can’t help it. It’s the position.”*

Is it acceptable for a bishop to “threaten everybody?”

How far should the Church go in its opposition to justice for the abused?

Yes, we’re wondering, too.