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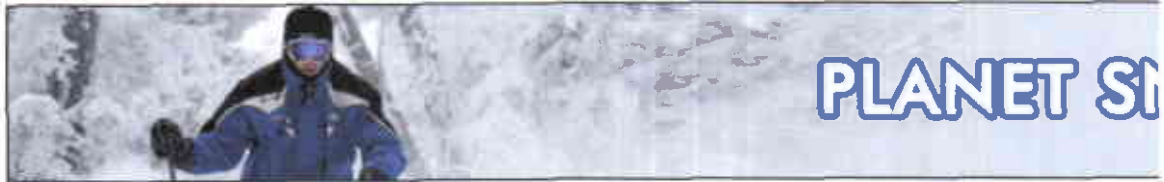
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UNION-TRIBUNE EDITORIAL

Still more bad faith

Diocese's asset giveaway is shabby at best

April 7, 2007

Given that today is the day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, we regret having to discomfit the San Diego area's nearly 1 million Catholics with a fresh rebuke of their wayward diocese. But the San Diego diocese's actions leave us no choice. Yesterday's Union-Tribune story – documenting how the diocese gave away more than \$1.5 million in assets in the months before filing for bankruptcy in February – appears to be a jarring act of bad faith.

We say “appears to be” because the diocese won't explain itself, and it is possible to conceive of a benign explanation for the asset transfers. Still, the logical assumption is that the diocese was following a standard strategy of organizations that have filed for bankruptcy: reducing assets to lessen what's available to pay creditors. But there are limits to this approach – reducing assets by simply giving them away to avoid paying debts could qualify as fraud under bankruptcy laws.

Unfortunately, no one should be surprised that the diocese would go this route in its response to the 150 lawsuits it faces over alleged sexual abuse by diocese priests. The diocese has played hardball at every turn with clergy victims, using legal trickery to try to keep damning internal documents from prosecutors and police, and seeking to endlessly delay trials that would spotlight its own perfidy.

San Diego Bishop Robert Brom even suggested the Catholic Church is being punished unfairly for the actions of a few miscreants, ignoring the fact that the church's hierarchy – thanks to its practice of transferring known abusers and molesters instead of turning them over to police – was responsible for thousands of new assaults.

As we have observed before, the diocese is undeserving of sympathy. This view is confirmed anew by its latest tactic.

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