

His whole nature fails to persuade. That is because he has never remained silent about any of his good deeds. -- F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 1882
The unsinkable Cardinal Mahony continues to amaze and confound us with yet another escape from self-created calamity. The latest episode concerns

Mahony's claim (made during an address to Archdiocesan priests in October) that he had been assaulted in mid-summer by attackers who, he said, were upset over the sex abuse scandal.

Mahony's account, like a Dr. Seuss illustration, stacks one teetering improbability on top of another. He claims to have been attacked while walking to drop off letters at a mailbox near his cathedral. The notion of the Cardinal's trotting off to the postbox himself is as plausible as his taking it into his head to get a mop and bucket and scrub the sacristy floor after hours. If he did, he'd have a photographer present.

One priest who attended the conference says Mahony further claims he was hospitalized as a consequence of the assault and took several weeks to recover. Are we to imagine that Mahony's assailants recognized him but that the doctors and staff at the hospital didn't? Or is it that everyone at the hospital forgot to mention they'd had a battered cardinal to tend to? Or that in the weeks that followed no one happened to notice the Archbishop of Los Angeles wasn't as sprightly as usual?

Mahony did not report the incident to the police. According to the priest-informant, the Cardinal declined to do so "because he felt he could offer it up in reparation for the sins of others." A noble gesture. Odd though, that his notion of "offering it up" included suffering in silence with respect to the police but not with respect to his fellow clergy. It's probably not a coincidence that the police could check up on the claim and the clergy couldn't. In any case, it's hard to see how suffering in tactically-selective silence accomplishes much in the way of reparation.

The commander of the LAPD's central region says the police are unable to investigate the incident unless the putative victim makes a crime report. An editorial in the Stockton (CA) Record adds the detail that "Los Angeles police have contacted Mahony's office but still are waiting to hear from him." In response to media inquiries, we're told that "The Los Angeles Catholic Archdiocese has declined to comment"

"The annual meeting of archdiocesan priests is a private meeting. Any conversation that took place during that meeting was between the priests and their bishop," spokeswoman Carolina Guevara said in an e-mail. And there we have it. Lacking even the name of the hospital at which the Cardinal was treated, the news media can't get to the bottom of the story, and what looked at first like an embarrassment will, somewhat mistily, remain as an edifying act of reparation and timely instance of solidarity with the wounded clergy of the Archdiocese. Unsinkable.