

# A Response from the Jewish Action Alliance

OPINION/LETTERS "Catholic Church Progress More Notable Than History"

*The Courier-News* (October 25, 1994)

The Jewish people have suffered a great deal from stereotyping, and we've been the victims of many such slurs. It is for that reason that we must denounce religious slander when it is done against another faith.

Today's article (C-N. Oct. 21) by an individual who is well known to our organization unfairly portrays the Catholic Church in a skewed, unfair light. It highlights the church's anti-Semitic actions of half a century ago while ignoring its commendable work and progress. Most unfortunately, the writer is apparently motivated by purposes that have nothing to do with Catholicism; he has sought – and found – a means of flinging mud at Jewish organizations with which he has had prior disagreements. Our organization has also had policy arguments with the Anti-Defamation League. but we cannot condone this type of religious slander, no matter what the purpose.

Obviously, we disagree with the Pope's decision to honor Kurt Waldheim, despite his Nazi past, and other interactions with anti-Semitic individuals. Jews have had many disagreements with the Vatican; so have Protestants, Muslims. and occasionally, Catholics. This is no reason to libel the Pontiff or slander an entire group of believers.

We remember the ground-breaking work against anti-Semitism done by Msgr. Oesterreicher and carried on by Sister Rose Thering. Our organization has worked towards goals of mutual concern and understanding with Dr. William A. Donohue of the

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. who is characterized by his thoughtful and tolerant leadership. We are thankful for a gifted religious leader such as Cardinal O'Connor, who has made religious tolerance a driving force in his work. We recall the Righteous Gentiles, many of them Catholic. who sheltered Jews during the years of Nazi horrors and we have seen. day after day, countless acts of mutual respect and tolerance by Catholic clergy and lay people. This is the actual Catholic Church. not the dark vision seen by the deeply troubling mind of Mr. Shelton.

In closing, we'd like to ask Catholics to examine Mr. Shelton's accusations closely to determine the real target of his frustration. It isn't the Bishop of Rome or his followers; it's his fellow Jews. Mr. Shelton harps again and again at Jewish organizations that have shunned his accusatory philosophy, and makes vile characterizations, such as "the mass gratitude of Jewish leaders desperate for any approval from gentiles, anti-Semites included." Mr. Shelton is aiming at his fellow Jews. and Catholics are the innocent bystanders who got in his way.

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