

APOLOGY ACCEPTED

On the blog site of a recent edition of the *Orange County Register* was a series of questions and answers on the subject of sexual abuse. At the top, under the headline question, "Think you can spot the sex offender in the crowd?", was a silhouette of a priest: faceless, the silhouette was clearly a male wearing a priest's collar and black jacket. None of the questions or answers mentioned anything about a priest, or about religion in general.

As we said in a news release, "The newspaper is a disgrace. By slandering tens of thousands of Catholic priests all across the nation, the *Orange County Register* has carved out a special place for itself in the annals of journalism."

When the Danish cartoon controversy exploded in 2006, the *Orange County Register* refused to offend Muslims by printing the depictions of Muhammad. Ken Brusic, the editor, explained the decision by saying that to publish the cartoons the newspaper "would needlessly offend many in our community and would add little to the debate." But offending Catholics, especially Catholic priests, is perfectly legitimate.

We made it clear that nothing short of an immediate apology would suffice. By posting the e-mail address of Terry Horne, the president and publisher of the Santa Ana newspaper, we felt confident that he would get the message. He did.

Horne quickly released a statement saying, "Singling out one group, especially in such a recognizable way, was unfair and inappropriate." He ended his apology by offering, "We hope you will forgive the lapse in judgment. And I hope you will accept my personal apology."

As always, we accepted the apology. Interestingly, critics of Horne's apology emerged both inside and outside the newspaper.