

LIBERTY THWARTED

As the Fourth of July approached, there were ominous signs that religious liberty is in deep trouble in America.

On June 21, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) ruled that California can continue to force all health care plans—including those of religious institutions—to cover elective abortions. HHS simply disregarded the Weldon Amendment, enacted by Congress in 2005. It specifically prohibits states from forcing any health care entity to provide abortions. Among the affected entities that sought to invoke the Weldon Amendment are two Catholic universities, Santa Clara and Loyola Marymount.

On June 27, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Texas law that would have simply subjected abortion clinics to the same health and safety standards as other health care facilities—common sense requirements like adequate staffing, sanitary conditions, hallways accessible for emergency equipment, and doctors having admitting privileges at nearby hospitals. The high court's 5-3 ruling makes it more difficult for states to restrict abortions, though this will not be the last word on this issue.

The next day, the high court refused to hear an appeal from pro-life pharmacists in Washington state objecting to a law forcing them to dispense abortion-inducing drugs.

"If this is a sign of how religious liberty claims will be treated in the years ahead," wrote dissenting justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas and Chief Justice John Roberts, "those who value religious freedom have cause for great concern."

True, but it is all the more reason why we can't give up.

ABUSE LOBBY UPENDED; AGENDA EXPOSED

The sexual abuse lobby, comprised of professional victims' advocates, descended on Albany, the New York capital, on May 3-4. But we beat them to the punch on May 2 with a full-page ad in the *Albany Times-Union*, exposing their agenda.

They came from several states, all seeking to convince lawmakers that they need to lift the statute of limitations on crimes involving the sexual abuse of minors. Their real goal, as any honest person will tell you, is to stick it to the Catholic Church.

Bill Donohue wrote the ad (see pp. 4-5), and it sure had an effect: he was attacked by those whom he targeted, as well as their surrogates. Most important, it set them back on their heels, taking away their offensive strategy. It was fun watching them play defense, something they are unaccustomed to doing.

The ad drew attention to the real problem that exists today, namely public school employees who molest students with impunity. It also provided evidence that this ceased to be a problem for the Catholic Church a long time ago, yet the drumbeat of propaganda continues.

It should be noted that the New York State bishops are not opposed to revisions in the law that are fair. But if proposals do not apply equally to both the private and the public sectors, that is unfair.

They also oppose revisions that would allow for a "look back" period, where claims of wrongdoing extending back decades can

be given a hearing. We know what that is all about—there is no army of lawyers ready to jump on any institution other than the Catholic Church.

We didn't settle for an ad: we continued for the next two days with news releases demanding that the public schools not get a pass from any proposed legislation. Lawmakers such as Margaret Markey are out to get the Church, which is why they don't target the public schools. It is so obvious what their agenda is.

We also took on Bishop-Accountability, SNAP, Call to Action, and Catholic Whistle-blowers, a motley crew of embittered ex-Catholics, some of whom have been formally excommunicated from the Catholic Church.

We titled our statement, "Catholic Bashers Storm Albany," thus alerting lawmakers not to give them a nanosecond to espouse their hateful agenda. If the public knew more about these rogues, more would be on our side. That is what we try to do: we seek to educate, offering data, not mere opinion.

Fortunately, we are well positioned to get the word out. We will continue to use the microphone to our advantage, anywhere in the nation.

TENNESSEE TRIUMPH

Tennessee lawmakers recently voted to defund the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Tennessee. Last December, we asked them to commence an investigation of this office.

On December 4, Bill Donohue wrote to all members of the

Tennessee legislature who oversee education at state institutions. He asked that they establish a committee that would critically assess policies initiated by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Tennessee. His plea was prompted by an outburst of anti-Christian policies.

Donohue objected to policies that sought to censor Christmas celebrations on the campus. Students were explicitly warned to make sure that “your holiday party is not a Christmas party in disguise.” Moreover, students were told not to “play games with religious and cultural themes, such as ‘Dreidel’ or ‘Secret Santa.’”

Since that time, this same office sponsored “Sex Week,” a celebration of debauchery. It also issued a vocabulary list of acceptable gender-neutral pronouns. The Orwellian directors obviously pushed the envelope too far: The lawmakers voted to strip this office of \$337,000 in state funds, using the money instead to fund minority scholarships.

Donohue pointed out in his letter that if the University of Tennessee can sponsor cultural events such as Black History Month, it should be allowed to sponsor cultural events such as Christmas parties and the like. Not to do so would violate religious liberty and freedom of speech.

We commend the Tennessee lawmakers for their decision.

CAMPAIGN TO CRUSH “O’NEALS”; SPONSORS CONTACTED

In April, we launched a new campaign against the ABC show, “The Real O’Neals.” Our goal is to kill the show.

Thus far, we have (a) published a *New York Times* op-ed page ad against the show (b) implored our members to email Disney-ABC executive Ben Sherwood (c) issued news releases on each episode, and (d) granted several interviews. But given a new development, we need to do more.

Those who have been following our objections to the show know that it is not the content of the show that we find most offensive, it is the fact that it is based on the life of one of its executive producers, Dan Savage. The man is an unrepentant, foul-mouthed, anti-Catholic bigot. Now we have learned that Martha Plimpton, who plays the mother in the show, is also an unabashed anti-Catholic.

"The character I play is a homophobe," Plimpton told the *Los Angeles Times*, "but she's a homophobe because she's based her entire value system on her faith." She then maintained that Catholicism "tells you that anyone who is gay is going to burn in hell." She is badly educated.

The Catholic Church's teachings on homosexuality are no more "homophobic" than are the teachings of Judaism, from which our beliefs on sexuality are drawn. Moreover, the Church teaches that *all* human beings are equal in the eyes of God. Furthermore, the Church has never proclaimed that any person, or group of persons, is destined to hell.

We knew that Plimpton is pro-abortion, and likes to brag about the two that she had. But we did not know about her bigotry. When coupled with Savage's bigotry, this demands that we take our response to a new level.

In the April edition of *Catalyst*, we asked members to write to Sherwood at his New York office. On April 4, we mapped out the rest of the campaign.

Those who are on our email list were asked to contact Robert A. Iger, President and CEO of the Disney board of directors; we wrote to the other members of the board. Then we started

with the show's sponsors, providing email contact information. We are listing one sponsor per weekday, until the list is exhausted. Please go to our website to find the email addresses.

"The Real O'Neals" is crude and offensive, and its ratings are poor. ABC made a big mistake by launching this show. We hope that the pressure we are exerting will convince them that all the bad publicity they are getting just isn't worth it. It's time to drop the show.

MOTHER ANGELICA R.I.P.

Mother Angelica died on Easter Sunday at the age of 92.

She was, without a doubt, the most influential Catholic television personality of our time. While Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen was the first clergyman to put his imprint on television, Mother Angelica succeeded in a way no one else did: She created the first Catholic media empire, the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), and she did it against all odds.

Mother Angelica carried many crosses. She came from a dysfunctional family, suffered a myriad of physical ailments, was shot at for ministering to African Americans in the South during the 1960s, fought with elites inside and outside the Catholic Church, and was ridiculed by those who objected to her orthodoxy. But she not only persevered, she triumphed.

Courage was her quintessential gift, refusing to buckle in the face of adversity. That she did so without ever losing her grand sense of humor made her all the more special. Her laughter, her smile, her radiant personality—these are

qualities that touched millions, including those who only knew her through television.

To read about her remarkable life, see Raymond Arroyo's classic, *Mother Angelica: The Remarkable Story of a Nun, Her Nerve, and a Network of Miracles*. His love for her shines through.

Look for Raymond's new book, *Mother Angelica, Her Grand Silence: The Last Years and Living Legacy*; it will be available this month.

“THE REAL O’NEALS” FALTERS; DAN SAVAGE GOES MUTE

ABC is in a jam and they know it. “The Real O’Neals” is not only stupid and offensive, it is in deep trouble trying to find an audience. The numbers don’t lie: its ratings always trail the competition on CBS and NBC.

A story posted by E! Online in mid-March said that the jury is out on whether “The Real O’Neals” will be renewed next season: no decision has been made. But things don’t look good. The other family shows on ABC, “The Goldbergs,” “Modern Family,” “Black-ish,” and “Fresh Off the Boat” have already been renewed; the latter made its debut this year. More important, “The Voice” on NBC is killing “The Real O’Neals,” and CBS has announced that “NCIS” has been renewed for two more seasons.

The biggest problem facing ABC is the hit that Disney-ABC is taking to its reputation for airing a show based on the life of a bigot, Dan Savage. The man is an unrepentant anti-Catholic, which is why the Catholic League blasted Disney-ABC

in the *New York Times* for embracing him (to see the ad that was printed, click [here](#), and for the original one that was rejected, click [here](#)).

It is obvious that Savage has been told by the corporate boys that when it comes to the Catholic League's criticisms, he had better shut his mouth. We say this because it is not as though he is keeping quiet about all matters.

For example, he recently lashed out at Hillary Clinton for citing Nancy Reagan's effort to bring the AIDS crisis to the attention of the American people. As usual, he resorted to an obscenity. But when it comes to the Catholic League, he goes mute. This takes on greater currency when we consider that Savage and Bill Donohue have no use for each other.

Savage is not the only person associated with the show who has a troubled past. Martha Plimpton, who plays the mother, is now touting her two real-life abortions. Indeed, she is bragging how her abortions "made it possible for me to live out my dream and do what I really wanted to do with my life." Too bad her babies weren't given the same chance.

If ABC has any brains, they will can this show. One thing is for sure: we aren't going away—we will hound them until they ax it. It should never have been made in the first place.

We encourage all members to write to the top official who oversees this show. Write to Ben Sherwood, President, Disney-ABC TV, 47 W. 66th St., NY NY 10023. Ask him how Disney-ABC can justify basing a show on an anti-Catholic bigot. You might want to tell him that the time has come to dump it.

LOUISIANA VICTORY

In 2014, the Catholic League signed an amicus brief in support of a Louisiana priest who refused to disclose to the authorities a conversation he had in the confessional. After losing in the State Supreme Court, the State District Court declared that Louisiana law could not force a priest to violate the seal of confession. Kudos to Catholic Action for Faith and Family, lead counsel in the case, for doing such a great job.

The case began in 2008 when a 14-year-old girl alleged that she told her parish priest that she was abused by a now-deceased lay member of the parish. She said the disclosure came during the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Her parents sued the priest, Fr. Jeff Bayhi, and the Diocese of Baton Rouge, for failing to report the alleged abuse.

Louisiana law requires the clergy to report sexual abuse, but it is inconsistent with regards to the confessional. On the one hand, it grants an exception to what is learned in the confessional, but other parts of the state code contradict this provision.

At issue is a critical First Amendment right: if priests violate the seal of confession, they face excommunication. Fr. Bayhi said he would not testify and would take the risk of going to prison. The diocese stood by him. "We're just always happy when the court upholds religious liberty," Fr. Bayhi said.

We hope courts throughout the nation take note of this important ruling.

DISNEY-ABC INSULT CATHOLICS; WE RESPOND WITH VIGOR

Last spring, Bill Donohue was contacted by Brent Bozell's Media Research Center to sign a petition protesting a new ABC sitcom, "The Real O'Neals." Though the show was not slated to air until this year, from what we could learn, it was clear that Catholics would be treated unfairly. After all, it was loosely based on the life of an Irish ex-Catholic gay activist who hates Catholicism, Dan Savage. Donohue signed the petition asking ABC, which is owned by Disney, to cancel the show.

ABC refused to give in: The show debuts March 8. We, too, refused to give in—we submitted an ad in the *New York Times*, written by Donohue, to alert the public and register our outrage. The first full-page ad was rejected because of its controversial nature, so we settled for an op-ed page ad instead.

Dan Savage is no ordinary bigot: he is one of the most hateful, mean-spirited persons in public life. We printed some of his most choice obscenities—aimed at Catholic leaders and priests—in the initial ad. But we had to abide by the house rules of the *New York Times*: the newspaper found that even with asterisks substituted for letters, the ad was still too racy. So we ran an ad that described what Savage has said and directed readers to our website to read the original version.

Savage is also one of the executive producers of this show. We know, as does Disney and ABC, what he thinks about the Catholic Church. That they would even consider basing a show on his life is mindboggling enough, never mind giving him a hand in its production.

ABC has won awards from the gay community for its show "Modern Family." It has won awards from the African-American community

for “Black-ish.” It has gone out of its way to invite Asian American elites to offer their advice on how to stage “Fresh Off the Boat,” a show about Asian families. But when it comes to Catholics, ABC gives us Dan Savage.

We cannot alter the plans to go ahead with “The Real O’Neals.” But we can act as a deterrent to future shows that disparage Catholics, whether they be on ABC or some other network. Unless there is some real pushback from the Catholic League, it is likely that Hollywood will continue to mock us. Though it is hard to shame the Tinseltown crowd, they still don’t like getting bad PR.

We’ll provide updates to this story as it unfolds, and we will reprint the ad in the next edition of *Catalyst*.

DORITOS AD UPSETS NARAL

The Doritos Super Bowl ad that showed an ultrasound picture of a baby carried by the baby’s mother was condemned by the pro-abortion group, NARAL, for “humanizing the fetus.” It did just that. What else could it have done?

As Scottish professor Malcolm Nicolson has said, ultrasound has a “humanizing effect” that is so powerful that some women report not feeling pregnant until they’ve seen the pictures. He is co-author of an important book on the subject.

Anti-women feminists such as Allison Benedikt also acknowledge the effects of this technology. In a Salon article in 2012, she lashed out at pregnant women who were sharing pictures of their unborn babies on Facebook. She exclaimed that the more women share these pictures, “the harder it will be to deny that they are people.” She is exactly right: When photos of

humans are shared, their humanity is confirmed.

Similarly, in 2007, author Melody Rose published a pro-abortion book wherein she decried the way “recent developments in imaging technique certainly have facilitated a reliance on powerful pictures that humanize the fetus in a way not possible two decades ago.” Imagine how human these humans will look two decades from now!

In 1994, the great English historian Paul Johnson, author of *Modern Times*, compared abortion to slavery. He noted that advances in medical technology have had a dramatic effect. “The fetus is being humanized,” he said, “just as the slave was humanized.” That’s what worries NARAL.

POLITICIZING CHRISTMAS; REVOLT AGAINST INTOLERANCE

No religious holiday sparks as much controversy as Christmas. It’s not because most Americans are anti-Christmas—they are not. It’s because so many activists, public officials, and educators are working against them. Quite frankly, they have unnecessarily politicized Christmas.

Some of them are bigots; some are ignorant of what the courts have ruled; and some are simply cowards. No matter, the result is an annual mess. But the good news is that our side continues to push back.

We played a role in beating back the Christmas foes in several instances, but none was more satisfying than our input in the University of Tennessee (UT) case.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion at UT issued guidelines indicating which kinds of “holiday” celebrations would be tolerated, and which would not be. All parties, the multicultural gurus said, should be absent any “emphasis on religion or culture.” They did not say how it was possible to celebrate a holiday without also celebrating that part of the culture from which it springs.

Best of all was their admonition not to hold “a Christmas party in disguise.” They can hold gay pride celebrations all year long, but they cannot tolerate Christmas parties, even if held in a speak-easy.

Bill Donohue pulled the Catholic League staff to work overtime on this issue. We contacted every Tennessee lawmaker who has anything to do with education, as well as other public officials, calling for an investigation into the workings of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. We also notified all the other legislators—those who do not deal with education. We blanketed the Tennessee media.

We were pleased to hear of the support we received from some of the lawmakers. We also were happy that the Tennessee media picked up on our work, including newspapers on the UT campus. Most of all we were delighted that our protest led to the guidelines being withdrawn; we were gratified that the person most to blame for this decision was removed from making such rulings again.

Last month we reported in *Catalyst* that we contacted town officials in Wadena, Minnesota, advising them that they could display a nativity scene in a “public forum,” such as a park. We are pleased to say that a local resident picked up on this idea and successfully erected a crèche in a park. It was also great to learn that residents of Wadena responded by displaying a record number of manger scenes on private property.

The Supreme Court needs to offer more clarity on what is constitutional and what is not. Until then, the controversy will rage.