

OBAMACARE RULING

The United States Supreme Court will rule in June on the constitutionality of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, popularly known as ObamaCare. How it rules may have grave consequences for religious liberty.

If the Supreme Court knocks out the entire legislation, then the issue of forcing Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their insurance coverage is eliminated. If it knocks out the individual mandate, but keeps the rest of the legislation, then we are still stuck with the religious liberty problem. Why? Because the high court agreed to accept this case before the Health and Human Services mandate forcing Catholic entities to violate Church teachings was issued. Of course, if the entire legislation is upheld, we are also stuck with this problem.

No matter what happens, we are still faced with a federal government that has decided to define religious institutions as those that hire and serve people of their own faith. This interpretation essentially deprives Catholic social service agencies, hospitals and colleges of a religious exemption from burdensome federal laws: one of the great things about Catholic institutions is that they do not discriminate. And now we are being punished for not doing so!

All we are asking for is to be left alone. For over 200 years, the federal government has never tried to redefine what constitutes a religious entity. Until now. How the high court rules will affect the nature of the bishop's response and what we can expect next.

HOLOCAUST EVENTS POLITICIZED; REBUTTAL PROVIDED

From April 12-19, the University of Minnesota Duluth hosted a series of events commemorating the Holocaust. There were so many early signals that at least some of these events would be patently unfair to the Catholic Church that both the Diocese of Duluth and the Catholic League raised many public concerns. Bill Donohue wrote a lengthy rebuttal to the events [[click here](#)].

What got our attention initially was the graphic on the front of a postcard that was sent to the Duluth community advertising the series. It was a representation of an invidious portrayal of a Catholic prelate and a Nazi standing on top of a Jewish person. The drawing, which depicts the 1933 Concordat signed between Pope Pius XI and Hitler, has been used by enemies of the Church to paint the pope as an accomplice of the Nazis. As Donohue pointed out, this is pure rubbish. Another disturbing sign was a scheduled production of the 1963 anti-Catholic play, "The Deputy."

The Diocese of Duluth said, "We object to what appears to be a thoroughly biased, and, worse, false presentation of the efforts of Pope Pius XII and other Catholic leaders during the Nazi Holocaust." It also dismissed the academic freedom argument as presented by the University as "hollow."

Fr. Richard Kunst, a Duluth priest, was particularly poignant in his remarks: "Not only am I a Catholic priest and student of papal history, I am of Jewish heritage. My mother is Jewish. In 'The Deputy,' Pius is a victim of hate speech."

Donohue's five-page rebuttal was sent to the President of the University of Minnesota; the Chancellor at the University of Minnesota Duluth; the panelists involved in the events; select

professors on campus; the student newspaper; student groups; the media; and leaders in the Catholic and Jewish communities. We also distributed copies of the Catholic League reader, *Pius XII and the Holocaust* to students.

Professor Deborah Petersen-Perlman, who played a major role in planning these events, said, "We are intending to raise awareness." It could also be said that stunt men do the same. This is the kind of lame response we expected, and it is one we've experienced with academics many times before.

By blanketing the Duluth community with our response, we put everyone on notice that we were on to the University's propaganda exercise. If those associated with this veiled attack on the Catholic Church had any intellectual fortitude, they would have reached out to area Catholics. No matter, they expected a cakewalk and instead had to scurry.

BISHOPS STAND TALL

On April 12, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops announced the start of a religious freedom campaign.

It is the most comprehensive and cogent defense of religious liberty ever drafted by the bishops in the United States. Erudite and wide-ranging, it is clarion call to the Catholic community, and beyond, to get serious about religious rights, both at home and abroad.

While the Obama administration's decision to try to force Catholic non-profits to pay for services it deems immoral was the final straw, the statement drew attention to many other current threats to religious liberty. The bishops addressed not only specific issues, but their source.

It also registered disapproval of attempts to dumb-down religious liberty. Freedom of worship, they rightly said, was not the same as religious liberty; nor will we settle for it. Freedom of worship implies an insular exercise, such as praying in a church; religious liberty has a broader focus, one that speaks to the public expression of religion. We are not about to let those in government box us in, confining our religious rights to merely private matters.

Threats to religious liberty extend beyond government. For example, when Christian clubs on campus are told they cannot restrict leadership positions to Christians, that is a direct assault on religious liberty.

The bishops are serious about this campaign, and they have the unreserved support of the Catholic League.

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS DEMANDED; BISHOPS REFUSE TO BUDGE

On March 14, the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops released a statement, "United for Religious Freedom," that is the clearest exposition of contemporary Catholic thought on religious liberty in America. It is also the definitive response to attempts by the Obama administration to force Catholic institutions to violate their beliefs.

The statement yielded nothing to Church critics. The product of a two-day meeting in Washington that was attended by over 40 bishops, it speaks directly to the Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate that seeks to force Catholic non-profits to cover services it deems objectionable in its

insurance plans. Mincing no words, the document declares the HHS edict to be “unjust and illegal.”

The bishops debunked many myths about this issue: it is not about contraception; it is not just about Catholic religious rights; it is not about the Catholic Church trying to impose its will on others—it is about the federal government trying to impose its agenda on us; it is not about opposition to universal health care (the Church has long championed this right); and it is not about choosing political sides. It is about religious liberty.

Most important, the statement argues that the HHS mandate seeks to create a three-tiered class of citizens’ rights: by defining religious rights as applying only to those who work for religious institutions that hire and serve mostly people of their own faith, the Obama administration has relegated those who work in religious institutions that serve everyone to a second-class status; those who are not a religious employer but nonetheless object on religious grounds to funding immoral insurance plans constitute a third-class of citizens.

Bill Donohue issued the following statement as soon as the statement was released: “The good news is that the bishops aren’t flinching: there is no room for compromise when the subject is our constitutional rights—rights that come from God, as the Declaration affirmed, not government. It warms the heart to read that the ‘unprecedented magnitude of this latest threat has only strengthened our resolve’ to do what is right. The bishops have the unqualified support of the Catholic League.”

In the run-up to the meeting, Catholic critics of the bishops were telling the media how important it was for the bishops—not the Obama administration—to budge. They even predicted that the bishops would have to expand their notions of religious liberty to encompass other issues. As it turned

out, their side walked away with absolutely nothing. The bishops stood fast on principle.

SNAP UNDONE

On March 13, we released a report by Bill Donohue, *SNAP UNRAVELS*; it was a critical analysis of the statements made by SNAP director David Clohessy at his January 2 court-ordered appearance in Missouri. On the same day, the *New York Times* ran a front-page story on Clohessy's deposition. Donohue was quoted in the story, and his comments set off a firestorm.

The next day, there was an editorial in the *Times* critical of the Catholic Church for allowing "aggressive" lawyers to press Clohessy. We responded by summarizing Clohessy's statement and by calling out the newspaper.

We know from the deposition that Clohessy has been (a) lying to the media about his work (b) falsely advertising his group as a rape crisis center (c) working with unseemly lawyers (d) exploiting his clients by providing unauthorized "counseling" services (e) ripping off those who are truly in need of help by failing to contribute even a dime for licensed counselors, and (f) pursuing priests on the basis of legal criteria he admits he cannot explain.

We also asked, "When the *Times* is sued, does it hire wimpy lawyers? Does it allow itself to be a punching bag?" Not on your life: they hire the most aggressive attorneys they can buy. So should the Catholic Church. After all, SNAP's tactics are unethical at best, and illegal at worst. Moreover, SNAP is motivated by revenge, not justice.

CATHOLIC RIGHTS UNDER FIRE; OBAMA PLOY REJECTED

For the first time in American history, the federal government has waged war on the First Amendment rights of Roman Catholics. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were harsh attacks on the rights of Catholics, but they always emanated from the states and municipalities. In other words, never before has the executive branch in Washington attacked Catholics the way the Obama administration is doing right now.

In many respects, what the Obama administration is trying to accomplish is nothing new. In 2007, presidential candidate Barack Obama promised Planned Parenthood that on his first day in office he would sign the Freedom of Choice Act; it would have mandated that Catholic hospitals perform abortions. But the bill never got to his desk. That's because of the protest it engendered from groups like the Catholic League.

When the healthcare bill was being considered, the Obama administration said it would respect conscience rights and would not mandate abortion coverage. The bishops were encouraged, but very quickly it became apparent that Obama's pledge was empty: the bishops refused to support any legislation that might jeopardize conscience rights or mandate abortion coverage.

The bill passed, over the objection of the bishops, and then came the directive of the Secretary of Health and Human Services ordering religious institutions like hospitals and universities to provide coverage for contraception, abortifacients and sterilization.

On Friday, January 20, Obama said that only churches would qualify for an exemption from paying for these services (even then they had to apply for an exemption); all other religious institutions, like hospitals and universities, would have to comply. The latter would be punished because they do not discriminate—they hire and serve non-Catholics!

This led to an uproar, and exactly three weeks later, on February 10, Obama announced his “accommodation”: employers did not have to pay for these services, just their insurance companies. But everyone knew this was a shell game—the insurance premium is paid by Catholic workers and employers. Hence, the call on the part of the bishops, the Catholic League, and others, to stand fast and call for legislation that would secure our First Amendment right to religious liberty.

On a positive note, we could fill this entire issue of *Catalyst* with all the “In the News” media hits we have garnered. So we are getting the word out.

IS MINAJ POSSESSED?

Nicki Minaj [pronounced Min-aah-juh] fresh off looking like a fool with Madonna at the Super Bowl, showed up at the Grammys on February 12 walking on the red carpet with a guy dressed like the pope. This was just a prelude of what was to come.

Minaj’s performance began on stage with a mock confessional skit. This was followed by a taped video depicting a mock exorcism. With stained glass in the background, she appeared on stage again with choir boys and monks dancing.

The most vulgar part was the sexual statement that showed a

scantily clad female stretching backwards while an altar boy knelt between her legs in prayer. Finally, “Come All Ye Faithful” was sung while a man posing as a bishop walked on stage; Minaj was shown levitating.

None of this was by accident, and all of it was approved by The Recording Academy, which puts on the Grammys. Whether Minaj is possessed is surely an open question, but what is not in doubt is the irresponsibility of The Recording Academy. Never would they allow an artist to insult Judaism or Islam.

It’s bad enough that Catholics have to fight for their rights vis-à-vis a hostile administration in Washington without also having to fend off attacks in the entertainment industry. The net effect, however, will only embolden Catholics.

Our protest of this obscene assault was picked up by media outlets from the *New York Times* to *The Times of India*.

CHRISTMAS FOES CONFRONTED; STRUGGLE CONTINUES

For the past few years, it has become increasingly evident that the foes of Christmas are on the run. Not that the War on Christmas is over—it is not—but it is clear that our side is pushing back with vigor.

When Wisconsin decided to revert back to calling the Christmas tree in the Capitol Rotunda a Christmas tree, no one complained. But when Rhode Island Gov. Lincoln Chafee stood fast in branding it a “Holiday” tree, he was met with a strong protest (pushed by us).

Freedom From Religion Foundation sought to counter the display of a nativity scene in Athens, Texas with one of its mocking statements, and the result was that 5,000 people took to the streets in support of the crèche on the grounds of the Henderson County Courthouse. Similarly, hundreds of residents in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania turned out to rally in support of their crèche.

The bottom line was unmistakable. In every instance when the people got mobilized, they did so in support of Christmas. There was not a single example to the contrary: the anti-Christmas folks amount to nothing more than a few atheist organizations and their lawyers.

After learning that David Silverman of American Atheists said that he believes there are many Christians who are really atheists, Bill Donohue answered by saying that he has it backwards: many atheists are really Christians, though they don't know it. To that end, he instituted an "Adopt An Atheist" campaign. The goal of this initiative was to put Christians in contact with the chapters of American Atheists, hoping to win them over. Our campaign was met with predictable mean-spiritedness.

Some of the antics used to smash Christmas bordered on insanity. In a school in California, they literally banned poinsettias, Santa and Christmas trees. Though all are secular symbols, school officials said they were too closely associated with Christianity. In their wisdom, they allowed snowmen and snowflakes. And these people are educators.

In a South Carolina health center, they even gave a volunteer Santa the heave-ho.

We also had some light-hearted fun. When we found out that some diversity experts were advising companies to designate managers to police the behavior of employees at Christmas parties, we answered by calling for an open bar and designated

managers to monitor the teetotalers.

If there is one personality quality that organized atheists share, it is their humorlessness. They not only miss out on the meaning and joy of Christmas, they sulk all day long. It's who they are.

DISBAR THEM BOTH

In December, the Catholic League filed two complaints against two attorneys for their incredibly anti-Catholic remarks. While we've learned of anti-Catholic comments made in court before, never have we witnessed anything like this.

On November 25, in a legal memorandum filed in the Bankruptcy Court in Minnesota, lawyer Rebekah Nett called U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Nancy Dreher "a Catholic Knight Witch Hunter." Nett's client, Naomi Isaacson, wrote the memo. The judge is not Catholic.

The memo also spoke of the "ignoramus bigoted Catholic beasts that carry the sword of the church," and the "dirty Catholics" who have engaged in a "bloody and murderous" history. We filed a complaint in both Minnesota and Wisconsin against Nett.

Isaacson is president of Yehud-Monosson USA, named after a joint municipality in Israel; her company used to own gas stations and convenience stores in Minnesota.

While Judge Dreher was weighing a fine against both women for \$10,000 each, Isaacson used more utterly bigoted language again. When we learned that she is also an attorney, we filed a complaint against her with the Minnesota Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility.

See page 6 for a more thorough rendering of the explicit anti-Catholic remarks made by Nett and Isaacson. In early January we learned that the Minnesota lawyers' office had already begun an investigation when they received our complaint.

ATTACK ON BISHOP FINN; PROTEST OF KC STAR-SNAP TIE

Beginning late October, we rallied behind Kansas City-St. Joseph Bishop Robert Finn with vigor: we saturated the community with an ad that the *Kansas City Star* rejected for political reasons. Indeed, we hit virtually every Catholic church, school and lay organization in the area, along with other religious organizations, public and private schools and colleges, government officials, businesses and civic associations. We even contacted local bars, barber shops and beauty parlors. Here's what happened.

Last December, a police officer and an attorney were contacted by diocesan officials after a technician found photos of young girls on Rev. Shawn Ratigan's computer. While none of the pictures were pornographic, they were nonetheless disturbing.

Following the discovery of his fetish, Ratigan attempted suicide. He was then sent for psychiatric analysis: he was said to be suffering from depression, but was not diagnosed as a pedophile. After he violated strictures regarding his movement last May, the diocese contacted the authorities, *even though it had no legal mandate to do so*. It was then that even more disturbing photos were found.

In other words, Bishop Finn did what no other leader of any religious, or secular, organization has done: he put all the

cards on the table and brought in the police *in a case where there was no complainant*. More than that, he asked for an independent investigation by a former U.S. attorney, Todd P. Graves.

Graves and a team of attorneys, former prosecutors and FBI officials issued a report concluding that while some matters may have been handled better, Bishop Finn was guilty of no criminal wrongdoing (he had almost no role in this case). But that was not enough for the likes of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and their lawyers. They drove public opinion on this issue, resulting in an unprecedented indictment of a bishop—on a misdemeanor, no less. Subsequently, they have been on a rampage finding new “victims” to sue.

At the end of October, Bill Donohue submitted a full-page ad (costing \$25,000) to be placed in the *Kansas City Star* exposing the shenanigans: it was turned down *without explanation*, even though the newspaper is in financial straits! The *Star*-SNAP alliance was indisputably cemented.

On November 15, Bishop Finn agreed to meet on a monthly basis with the Clay County prosecutor about any suspicious behavior of those in his employ; in return, charges have been dropped. Still to be settled are similar charges made by the Jackson County prosecutor.