

# NO TREE TAX

On November 9, we learned that the Obama administration had decided to promote the sale of fresh Christmas trees by imposing a 15-cent tax on them (the tax was being levied to pay for a PR campaign). We immediately put out a sarcastic news release “supporting” the idea. Later that day, the tax plan was revoked.

We maintained that President Barack Obama’s Agriculture Department got it right when it started to explore new ways to prop up the dying fresh Christmas tree industry. “Taxation, of course, is always the hands-down favorite way for the federal government to do business,” said Bill Donohue, “and no president in American history has shown a greater fondness for taxation than Obama.”

Donohue continued, “The Catholic League heartily endorses this tax: the Christmas tree is a secular symbol, and by taxing them, we will have less of them. But our support is qualified. Obama would be wise to support a tax subsidy for nativity scenes. That would spur sales, thus endearing him to Christians who distrust him, while driving secularists over the cliff. Sounds like a win-win.” Donohue closed by saying, “Just think of it as a stimulus for keeping ‘Christ in Christmas.’”

The Obama administration scrapped its Christmas tree tax after it was reported that many critics had “derided” the idea. Count the Catholic League among them. But since the administration said it was only “delaying” the tax, look for it to be back next year.

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# **BIGOTED MINISTER REBUKED; GOV. PERRY BREAKS TIES**

On October 8, Republican presidential candidate Gov. Rick Perry spoke at the Values Voter Summit, a conference sponsored by Tony Perkins' Family Research Council; there was an array of mostly evangelical speakers. Introducing him was Rev. Robert Jeffress, a Dallas pastor. Following the event, Jeffress made anti-Mormon comments. Then it was revealed that he had previously made anti-Catholic remarks. That's when we got involved.

Jeffress first got into trouble, tainting Perry in the process, when he spoke derisively about the Mormon faith of Mitt Romney; he said "Mormonism is a cult." Two days later, he chided Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism as "false religions." His remarks about Catholicism, however, were the most offensive.

In 2010, Jeffress said the Catholic Church was the outgrowth of a "corruption" called the "Babylonian mystery." He continued, "Much of what you see in the Catholic Church today doesn't come from God's word. It comes from that cult-like pagan religion. Isn't that the genius of Satan?"

Bill Donohue replied, "Where did they find this guy? When theological differences are demonized by the faithful of any religion—never mind by a clergyman—it makes a mockery of their own religion. Rev. Jeffress is a poster boy for hatred, not Christianity."

Veteran reporter Wayne Barrett subsequently called Donohue. By this time, Perry had distanced himself from Jeffress for his anti-Mormon remarks, so Barrett asked Donohue if he should do so again. Donohue said it would be wise for Perry to break all ties with him.

Donohue then went on "Hardball" with Chris Matthews to discuss

this issue on Oct. 13. Donohue made it clear that his beef was with Jeffress, and that he has good relations with many evangelicals.

That night, following the intervention of Catholic activist Deal Hudson, Perry called Donohue at home. They spoke candidly about the Jeffress incident, and related matters. Perry was sincere: nothing that the pastor said about Catholicism represents his views.

The next day, Donohue released a statement saying, "I very much appreciate Gov. Perry's interest in getting this issue behind him in a responsible manner. He succeeded. Case closed."

Just a few days before Jeffress started the controversy, Donohue was in Washington, D.C. meeting with prominent evangelicals like Perkins, Tim Wildmon, Dr. Richard Land and others. The goodwill generated there paid dividends for everyone a week later.

It seems not a presidential campaign goes by without a role for the Catholic League. And we still have a year to go. Stay tuned.

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## **SUPER BOWL FIASCO?**

When we learned that the NFL was weighing a decision to invite pop singer Madonna to perform at the 2012 Super Bowl, Bill Donohue pressed officials to drop the idea.

In 2004, the NFL invited 'N Sync's JC Chasez to sing during halftime of the Pro Bowl game. When Chasez said he was going to sing his latest single, "Some Girls (Dance with Women),"

the NFL objected, citing the sexual lyrics that may offend viewers (at the time, the NFL was still receiving flak over the Justin Timberlake-Janet Jackson Super Bowl controversy).

The NFL then asked Chazez to sing "Blowin' Me Up (With Her Love)" instead. Chazez agreed to do so. Then the NFL decided that the singer had to drop the lyrics "horny" and "naughty" from the song. Again, Chazez acceded to the request.

The NFL then reconsidered the propriety of having Chazez sing altogether, and decided to withdraw the invitation (he was offered to sing the national anthem, but declined).

Donohue also wrote to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell explaining why the NFL cannot expect Catholics to be treated any different. For decades, Madonna has blatantly offended Christians, especially Catholics. The offensive lyrics, lewd behavior and misappropriation of sacred symbols are reason enough not to have her perform. Worse, she has repeatedly mocked the heart and soul of Christianity: Jesus, Our Blessed Mother, the Eucharist and the Crucifixion.

No decision had been made when we went to press.

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## **CLERGY 9/11 GAG RULE; BLOOMBERG INSULTS FAITHFUL**

Last month, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg banned the clergy from speaking at the 9/11 ceremony that commemorated the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attack. In doing so, he angered people of all religions, and not just in New York. The Catholic League was proud to play a key role in leading the opposition.

Bloomberg first tried to say that the focus should be on the families who lost their loved ones. According to this logic, we pointed out, when the clergy are invited to speak at public events, or to open ceremonies with an invocation, they are detracting—not adding—to the overall theme. There is little doubt that if the families had been asked about the propriety of allowing the clergy to speak, most would have said yes.

Bloomberg then sounded foolish when he tried to argue that his censorial decision was made on separation of church and state grounds. This was pure bunk: never has the presence of the clergy at any public event been a problem.

Bloomberg is the same mayor who strongly promoted the building of a mosque near Ground Zero. He is also the same mayor who was entirely understanding of the move by American Atheists to sue New York City over the two steel beams shaped like a cross that were found in the debris of the Twin Towers disaster; the atheists objected when the cross was moved from St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church to its new home at the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

Almost everyone was critical of this mean-spirited gambit by American Atheists. Among those who could not summon the courage to condemn it was Mayor Bloomberg; without criticizing these activists on moral grounds, he simply affirmed their constitutional right to sue. But he showed nothing but contempt for the constitutional rights of the clergy to speak at the 9/11 ceremony.

Our position was clear. We said that a priest, minister, rabbi and imam should be allowed to make a short statement. This nation was founded on Judeo-Christian principles, thus the rationale for the presence of the first three clergymen; the inclusion of an imam—to the exclusion of the clergy of other religions—could be justified, we said, on the basis of a goodwill gesture to the Muslim community.

Bill Donohue joined New York City Councilman Fernando Cabrera and others in a press conference protesting Bloomberg's gag rule. While the mayor got his way in the end, his reputation was damaged, and that's not something even this billionaire can control.

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## **SNAP AIMS AT POPE**

SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, assisted by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), has petitioned the International Criminal Court (ICC) to prosecute Pope Benedict XVI for allegedly covering up "crimes against humanity of rape and other sexual violence committed around the world." CCR attorney Pam Spees claims that "Crimes against tens of thousands of victims, most of them children, are being covered up by officials at the highest level of the Vatican."

As the Catholic League recently documented, SNAP does not exist to protect children; rather, its goal is to smear the Catholic Church. That it would team up with the most radical left-wing legal organization in the nation, CCR, is hardly surprising. After all, never once has CCR bothered to protest the incredible assault on the due process rights of priests over the last decade. Indeed, it is mostly known for its attempts to undermine our national security.

It is a lie to say that sexual abuse is being covered up at the highest levels of the Vatican. The homosexual scandal took place during the sexual revolution, and most of the offenses ended a quarter-century ago. To charge otherwise is scurrilous. This proves, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that SNAP has become the professed enemy of the Catholic Church.

The Holy See is not a member of the ICC, making it difficult

to prosecute. No matter, Bill Donohue fired off a letter, with documentation, to the ICC telling the truth about this matter. See p. 7 for an excerpt.

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## **BOMBSHELL REPORT ON SNAP; VICTIMS' LOBBY EXPOSED**

For many years, the plight of alleged victims of priestly sexual abuse have had as their unofficial spokesperson a group called the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, more commonly known as SNAP. The Catholic League has had good reasons to question their motives, and now we have convincing evidence proving we were right all along.

At a recent SNAP conference in Washington, D.C., reliable friends of the Catholic League attended the event. What they heard and saw was a well-coordinated attack on the Catholic Church, led by SNAP leaders and others. The entire report is available online at [catholicleague.org](http://catholicleague.org); an excerpt appears on pp. 8-9.

Joining SNAP were some high profile lawyers who have made a killing off of their lawsuits against the Church. Also in attendance was BishopAccountability, which proved to be much more than just a website that tallies cases of alleged abuse. Church-bashing authors and agenda-driven psychiatrists also spoke at the event.

What emerged from the conference was a picture of so-called victims' advocates that contrasts sharply with their innocent media image. They are activists—men and women fueled more by a vendetta against the Church than any alleged concern for victims. Some of the remarks were not only boilerplate, they

were totally inexcusable and reprehensible.

When the Catholic Church is constantly referred to as the “evil institution,” and all accused priests are assumed guilty, something is seriously wrong. Similarly, when vile accusations are made against some bishops, and are never challenged by a single person at the conference, we are not talking about aggrieved individuals trying to do right by the Church. No, we are talking about hatred and injustice.

We know there are many Catholic dissident organizations which harbor resentment against the Church, but they are generally known to the public as unhappy campers who have not gotten their way. Not so with SNAP and its allies: they are the darlings of the media, and are seen as motivated by compassion and the quest for reconciliation. Our findings prove otherwise.

Bill Donohue’s report, which is based on information given to him by those at the conference, was sent to all the bishops, as well as to scores of other friendly sources; many in the media were also sent a copy. It is our hope that from now on, they will take with a grain of salt what the victims’ lobby has to say about bishops and priests. We need to know who our real enemies are.

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## 9/11 REMEMBERED

We went to press before the tenth anniversary of 9/11, but the contrast between the Catholic League and its foes was plain to see even before the commemorations began.

Bill Donohue taped a short, 30-second statement over the summer to be aired on Sunday, September 11. Ours, obviously,



is a positive commentary. Just as predictable was the early salvo launched by American Atheists.

At the end of July, American Atheists protested the decision to move the World Trade Center cross from St. Peter's Catholic Church in lower Manhattan to its new site at the 9/11 Memorial Museum (two steel beams in the shape of a cross were found when the Twin Towers were leveled).

David Silverman, who believes in nothing, was angry that there is nothing that represents nothing at the World Trade Center's 9/11 Memorial. "No other religions or philosophies will be honored," he noted. Very true, we said, and that is just as it should be. After all, that's just the way the towers crumbled—no symbol representing nothing was found.

To top things off, Silverman blamed Jesus for 9/11. He actually went so far as to say that the Christian God "couldn't be bothered to stop the Muslim terrorists or prevent 3,000 people from being killed in his name." Thus did he advertise his brilliance. Perhaps he did not notice, but when the killings took place, none of the terrorists proclaimed their fidelity to Jesus.

So extreme was the position of the American Atheists that even some of their friends blasted them.

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## **BISHOPS UNDER FIRE; MULTI-LEVEL ATTACK UNDERWAY**

It started in the spring, and it just got hotter as we got into the summer: the bishops have been the subject of relentless attacks, much of it having to do with the issue of

sexuality. The John Jay report on clergy abuse, along with a new wave of lawsuits and gay rights legislation—gave way to vicious condemnations, ranging from columnists to commentators.

In some cases, individual bishops were singled out for denunciation, and in this regard no one was the butt of more unfair remarks than Archbishop Timothy Dolan. He is an easy target: he is the head of the New York Archdiocese and the president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He is also outspoken, much to the chagrin of those who would like to silence him.

Some of the most vocal critics are the so-called victims' groups. Nothing the bishops will ever do will please them, so out-of-control is their anger. Even though sexual molestation has long since ceased to be an issue among the clergy, these groups, assisted by lawyers on the hunt for new victims—it does not matter how long ago the alleged incident occurred—are doing everything in their power to keep this issue alive.

Besides the bishops, priests have been the object of many suspect lawsuits. For example, a man who claims he was abused in 1984 has sued the Fort Worth Diocese and the entire Pallottine religious order. The accuser, who has been in prison for over a decade, says he cannot remember the priest's name. If this isn't bizarre enough, the accuser is in the slammer for sexual abuse. Unfortunately, there are too many suspect cases like this to think it's all coincidental.

When the John Jay study came out, the narrative was quickly set by the New York Times: it was miffed that the social scientists who did the report didn't attack the bishops. The Church's critics were doubly incensed when the report mentioned the social and cultural context of the 1960s and 1970s, the decades where most of the damage was done.

Left-wing Catholics gave cover to those with an anti-Catholic

agenda. In June, they assembled in Detroit, though even the organizers admitted that few young people, or non-whites, were drawn to the event. That they are stuck in a time warp—they can't spring away from the 1960s—is an understatement.

Bill Donohue's 24-page analysis of the John Jay study (an excerpt is on pp. 8-9) was sent to hundreds of bishops, lawyers, activist groups and members of the media. We are pleased to note its warm welcome in many circles.

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## HILLARY GOES GAGA

On June 11, Lady Gaga performed at the Euro Pride concert in Rome. The big news wasn't her appearance, it was how she wound up there: it was all due to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

A few weeks after the concert, Clinton admitted that the State Department was "instrumental in sealing the deal" for Lady Gaga to be there. She explained that "Lady Gaga is Italian-American and a strong supporter of LGBT rights."

Bill Donohue responded by saying, "The Obama administration has U.S. troops fighting in four wars—Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen—and yet the Secretary of State has time to lobby Lady Gaga to attend a homosexual extravaganza in Rome. The fact that the Queen Monster performed near the Vatican was clearly not a problem for Secretary Clinton."

Donohue also pointed out that Lady Gaga is known in Catholic circles for strutting like a tramp while dressed as a nun, swallowing rosaries, taking liberties with the Cross, and parading around in glossy-red habits. None of this, obviously, is seen as problematic by the Secretary of State. However, one

would think that a feminist might object to a video that features a simulated rape of Lady Gaga by her S&M boyfriends.

Lady Gaga did not disappoint the homosexuals in Rome. She stepped on stage with a flowing patterned skirt while singing, "Born This Way."

The fact that Lady Gaga is being courted by the White House provides a window into the mindset of this administration

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## **ABUSE REPORT CONTROVERSIAL; GAY ROLE DENIED**

The John Jay College of Criminal Justice released its long-awaited report on the "Causes and Context" of priestly sexual abuse on May 18. Bill Donohue will offer an extended analysis of the report in the next edition of *Catalyst*, and he will distribute his assessment to the bishops before they meet in Seattle on June 15 for their next session.

There is much useful information in the report. It makes it clear that the Catholic Church is the only institution in society which has systematically dealt with the issue of sexual abuse. Moreover, it shows that this problem is largely behind us; there are very few incidents of recent vintage being reported these days. It also maintains that celibacy is not the issue, and that almost none of the cases involved pedophilia.

Unfortunately, unlike the first report that was done on the "Nature and Scope" of the problem, which was released in 2004, this one has some serious flaws. The most serious being the failure of the authors to identify the unmistakable role which homosexuality has played in creating the scandal.

The study readily admits that most of the victims have been postpubescent males, yet it seeks to exculpate homosexual priests. It tries to get around this by saying that not all

homosexuals identify themselves as such. This may be true, but it hardly settles the issue.

The data show that "bisexual or confused" priests were significantly more likely to abuse minors, yet the authors of the study refuse to conclude the obvious: if the acts were of a homosexual nature, and we know they were, it does not matter what the self-perception of the victimizers was.

Another flaw is the unwillingness of the authors to criticize their own profession, and the role it played in abetting this problem. To be specific, the therapists misled the bishops by overselling their competence. No wonder so many abusers were reinstated: in most instances, the bishops were repeatedly told they were successfully treated.

Also, the report does not give sufficient attention to the moral collapse of many seminaries during the period when the abuse spiked, namely from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. This is a serious omission. If the causes are to be identified, then what happened in the seminaries deserves close scrutiny.

In other words, the report contains useful information, but it also demonstrates an ideological reluctance that mars its overall contribution. The only way to correct a problem is to have an accurate diagnosis of it. This the authors failed to do.