

PELOSI FLIPS

On May 11, Rep. Nancy Pelosi indicated she may vote against the nomination of the new House Chaplain. We immediately criticized her reasoning. On May 12, she said she had changed her mind. Here's what happened.

When Rev. Patrick Conroy was selected by House Speaker John Boehner to be the new House Chaplain, the Jesuit priest won the plaudits of many Catholics, including Rep. Pelosi. But then Pelosi said she was having second thoughts, citing Conroy's association with the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus. Her objection? Claims of sexual abuse had been made against these Jesuits.

Importantly, there were no accusations made against Father Conroy. Moreover, all of the claims extended back decades. Most significantly, Father Conroy's only involvement in this issue was heroic: he was a whistleblower who reported at least one case of an abusive priest.

We not only criticized Pelosi for the obvious—her embrace of the principle of “guilt by association”—we nailed her for her hypocrisy. When the San Francisco Board of Supervisors viciously condemned the Vatican for its position on gay adoptions, Pelosi was silent.

We also pointed out that Pelosi has never once criticized homosexuals in her district who go naked in the streets, sell Catholic symbols as sex toys, mock Jesus, ridicule nuns and disrespect the Eucharist. So for “Pelosi the Puritan” to now present herself, we said, was a little too late.

We are delighted that we played a role in getting Pelosi to pivot.

CONFRONTING OUR FOES; TIDE IS TURNING

The attacks on the Catholic Church are running at a fever pitch this spring, but so is our resolve: we are confronting the foes of Catholicism head-on, scoring impressive results.

Our full-page ad in the *New York Times* on April 11, which also ran in the April 17 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, elicited a tremendous response. While we are not here to defend wrongdoing by those on our side, we are ready, willing and able to defend our side when they are unfairly maligned. And they have been—in spades.

The survey on clergy abuse for 2010 turned up a total of seven credible (but not proven) allegations against over 40,000 priests. There were a whole lot more allegations, but they dated back decades. We know something is fishy when there is a 42 percent increase in allegations found to be unsubstantiated, or false, in one year.

Many in the media continue to put the worst possible face on this issue, while underplaying the good news. Most important, they never seem interested in doing a story on all the priests who have been found innocent, many of whom have had to suffer the indignity of having their good name dragged through the mud.

There is no lawyer more out-of-control than Minnesota zealot Jeffrey Anderson. In the matter of a week, he managed to sue the Philadelphia Archdiocese and the Vatican: he brought a “wrongful death” suit in a case where a man killed himself a year after his accusations were found wanting; and Anderson tried to hold the pope culpable for an alleged incident dating back to 1960 in Wisconsin!

Then there is the utter hypocrisy. Almost all of the media outlets in this country do not have a “zero tolerance” policy of their own regarding sexual misconduct in the workplace, some have editorialized against these policies when applied to the schools. The fundamental problem with “zero tolerance” is

the tendency to lump minor infractions with serious violations.

We were also happy to expose SNAP, the professional victims' group: it turns out that the same group that is constantly condemning the Church for not doing enough about sexual abuse was working with a psychiatrist who was knee-deep into child pornography. He is now in prison.

We will continue to fight this issue of unfairly smearing the clergy. The cherry-picking over old cases has got to end. While the foes of the Church may intimidate others, they only embolden us. The tide is turning, and they know it.

LADY GAGA FLOPS

To demonstrate that it is not just the United States that is celebrity-crazy, consider that a quick telephone interview with Bill Donohue by a reporter for Hollywood Life resulted in his comments being posted all over the world. The subject? Lady Gaga.

Lady Gaga, a pop-star with a strange following, released her "Judas" video in April where she plays Mary Magdalene. "This is a stunt," said Donohue, "people have real talent, and then there is Lady Gaga."

Donohue had other things to say: "Lady Gaga tries to continue to shock Catholics and Christians in general. She dresses as a nun, she gets raped, she swallows the rosary. She has now morphed into a caricature of herself."

As the Catholic League chief pointed out, "Gaga is increasingly irrelevant." Like Madonna, whom Gaga mimics, she is an ex-Catholic. He wondered, "Is this the only way to jet up her performance?" When asked if he was upset with her latest act, Donohue said, "Maybe if she had more talent we'd be more offended. She has gone to the well too many times."

It is a sign of the times that people like Lady Gaga garner so much attention. Their goal of pushing the envelope is so juvenile, so thoroughly immature, that it fails to excite anymore.

While we would rather address serious issues, such as those found in this edition, we will not ignore the pop culture when asked to respond. After all, it is not as though the pop culture is without influence.

NEW WAVE OF ACCUSATIONS; POLITICS EVIDENT

We're calling it Scandal II. Scandal I was the Church-driven one that resulted in the explosion of priestly sexual abuse cases that came to light in 2002. Scandal II is driven by lawyers, activist groups, pundits and the media: it is responsible for the second wave of accusations.

Scandal II deals exclusively with old cases, and that's because there are hardly any new ones. Moreover, those leading the charge have expressed no interest in the subject of sexual abuse, per se: they simply want to get the Catholic Church.

In other words, the politics of "gotcha" is in play: grand juries are reconvened after the first is found wanting; new subpoenas are issued about cases dating back several decades; new laws are proposed that exempt the public schools; and selective reporting about abuse cases in the Church are routine. In other words, the real scandal this time around stems from outside the Church.

This issue of *Catalyst* offers several stories on Scandal II. The Milwaukee and Philadelphia archdioceses have come under heavy scrutiny, and things are heating up again in Los Angeles and Boston. Consistent with our policy, we never defend the guilty. But we are resolute in our defense of the accused: priests, no less than any other segment of the population, are

assumed innocent until proven guilty. That this even needs to be said is proof positive of the anti-priest environment that has taken root.

Some of those who have been leading the charge against the Catholic Church are vindictive, irrational and utterly without ethics. No reform will ever satisfy them. Make no mistake about it: they don't want reconciliation, they want revenge.

Bill Donohue sent an op-ed article he had submitted to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to the more than 200 pastors in the Philly archdiocese. While his article was not printed (they do not allow op-ed replies to editorials), the newspaper printed a summary letter of his on the subject. Donohue also wrote a half-page ad which was printed in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* blasting steeple-chasing attorney Jeffrey Anderson.

New York Archbishop Dolan, speaking about the situation in his previous archdiocese, Milwaukee, sums it up well when he reminds us that some of the Church's enemies are on record saying they won't stop until an "out of business" sign is posted in front of every parish, school and church charitable center.

This is what we're up against. This is what Scandal II is all about. Not to worry—the Catholic League will not back down and allow these vengeful activists to prevail.

PETITION FILED

The Thomas More Law Center has filed a petition with the U.S. Supreme Court asking it to reverse a Ninth Circuit ruling which upheld San Francisco's hate-filled attack on the Catholic Church. The Ann Arbor-based law firm is representing the Catholic League.

This case began when a resolution was passed by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors that laced into the Catholic Church on March 21, 2006. Simply because the Catholic Church is opposed to homosexual adoption, government officials went on a tear.

They branded the Vatican a “foreign country” that was “meddling” in the affairs of San Francisco. They called the Catholic Church’s teachings on homosexuality “insulting to all San Franciscans,” “hateful,” “insulting and callous,” “defamatory,” “absolutely unacceptable” and “insensitive and ignorant.”

The Thomas More Law Center argues that the anti-Catholic resolution violated the First Amendment, which forbids “an official purpose to disapprove of a particular religion, religious beliefs, or of religion in general.” The government officials even went so far as to urge the Archbishop of San Francisco and Catholic Charities to defy Church directives.

Richard Thompson, who heads the Law Center, notes that the same Ninth Circuit which ruled against us barred a government display of the passive symbol of the war memorial cross on Mt. Soledad! The double standard could not be more plain.

CONFSSIONAL AID INTRODUCED; MOCKERY AND INSULTS FLY

A novel Confessional aid was introduced in February that immediately became the source of commentary, some of which drew a sharp rebuke from the Catholic League.

The aid, “Confession: A Roman Catholic App,” was developed to prepare Catholics for Confession [an app is a computer

application, or program, that can be accessed via a cell phone and other devices to acquire specific information about a variety of subjects].

Specifically, this application guides Catholics through an examination of conscience, tapping into issues addressed by the Ten Commandments. It received an imprimatur from Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

The app was never designed as a substitute for Confession: on the contrary, it makes it clear that only absolution by a priest in the confessional constitutes the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Even though most Internet stories mentioned this, many of the headlines were misleading. Here are just a few of them:

“Catholic Church Approves Confession by iPhone”; “US Bishop Sanctions Cell Phone in Confession”; “Forgiveness via iPhone: Church Approves Confession App”; “New, Church-Approved iPhone Offers Confession On the Go”; “Catholics Can Now Confess Using iPhone App”; “Confess Your Sins to a Phone in Catholic Church Endorsed App”; “Catholic Church Approves Online Confession.”

Even worse was what Jay Leno said in his February 9 monologue: “Well, the Catholic Church has come out with a new app for the iPhone. This is real. You can confess right on the phone. How perfect is that? You can now cheat and atone for your sins all on the same device. Perfect for Brett Favre. Fantastic. You know what the name of the app is? I’m not making it up. It’s called ‘Priest in Your Pocket.’ Really. Is that the best name they could come up with?”

The worst part of Leno’s commentary was not that he deliberately misled the public—there is no such thing as Confession on the phone (the app is a preparatory aid)—it was his ugly shot at priests: The name of the app is called, “Confession: A Roman Catholic app.” It is not called “Priest in Your Pocket.”

Leno has an obsession with portraying priests as sexual predators; we have tallied over 30 such assaults.

Contact the executive producer, Debbie Vickers, Tonight Show with Jay Leno, 3000 W. Alameda Ave., Burbank, CA, 91523; Debbie.vickers@nbc.com

“THE RITE” STUFF

From the perspective of the Catholic League, the most interesting aspect of the hit movie, “The Rite,” was how the media treated a film on exorcism.

Unfailingly, whenever there is a television show or movie that touches on subjects like Transubstantiation—the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus—the Virgin birth, apparitions, the stigmata, even confession, it is the subject of ridicule and insulting commentary. But not when it comes to the phenomenon of exorcism.

Several Catholic League staffers reviewed over 600 movie reviews of “The Rite” that appeared in mainline media outlets. Aside from a few snotty remarks, the subject of exorcism was given a respectful hearing: none was derisive.

The cast of “The Rite” was also respectful: none lambasted the idea that demons could be purged by a trained Roman Catholic priest. This was especially true of the lead actor who played the priest who performed the exorcisms, British actor Anthony Hopkins. Raymond Arroyo, a member the Catholic League’s board of directors, had a particularly insightful interview with Hopkins on his EWTN show, “The World Over.”

This is good news. Evil exists, and everyone save for a fringe minority, admits it. More important, the belief that the devil can be conquered also exists. That the Catholic Church has a mechanism to deal with it is hardly surprising. After all, it was founded by Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

SMITHSONIAN PULLS VIDEO; WILD

UPROAR ENSUES

On November 30, following a complaint registered by the Catholic League, the Smithsonian Institution pulled a video showing ants crawling all over Jesus on the Cross. The ensuing uproar was worldwide: the artistic community exploded in anger at both the Smithsonian and the Catholic League. Forums were held in many American cities, as well as in London, denouncing what we did.

The story began with an article on the Smithsonian exhibition, "Hide/Seek," by Penny Starr, a writer for CNSNews.com; it is a media outlet run by Catholic League advisor Brent Bozell. Bill Donohue received a call at home the night before from a reporter for the New York Post asking his opinion of the video. He branded it "hate speech" and his comments appeared the next day in the paper; he was able to see the video online.

When he got to work on November 30, Donohue issued a news release saying he was contacting the House and Senate Appropriations Committees asking them to "reconsider federal financing" of the Smithsonian; the exhibition was privately funded. Donohue took this approach because the museum receives 70 percent of its financing from the federal government, and 80 percent of Americans are Christian.

Donohue outlined one very simple principle: if it is wrong for the government to pick the pocket of the taxpayers to promote religion, it should be equally wrong to pick their pockets to insult religion. No one he debated—and there were many—could offer a cogent reply. Most simply refused to comment.

Joining with the Catholic League in protesting the vile video were Rep. John Boehner and Rep. Eric Cantor. They, too, questioned the propriety of a government-funded institution hosting anti-Christian art. Within hours of these complaints,

the Smithsonian released a statement saying they pulled the video.

The video was part of a larger gay and lesbian exhibition; it featured totally nude men kissing, men masturbating, sado-masochistic depictions, etc. All in a venue funded by the taxpayers at Christmastime.

Despite stories to the contrary, the Catholic League did not ask for the exhibition to be shut down. It did not ask for the video to be pulled. It did not ask for federal funding to be cut off. It simply asked for government officials to reconsider federal funding.

For this, we were subjected to an onslaught of the most outrageously abusive speech, receiving threatening letters from across the Atlantic, all through December. But we won, and they know it.

CHRISTMAS SHOWDOWNS

The big battle this past Christmas season was the showdown between American Atheists and the Catholic League; we effectively checkmated their anti-Christmas message. When news reports surfaced about the American Atheist billboard campaign—they put an anti-Christmas billboard on the New Jersey side of the Lincoln Tunnel—we were contacted by an 80-year old gentleman from New York City who wanted to team with us in providing a rejoinder. We did, and the result was a news story that was picked up worldwide.

The man who approached us wanted to remain anonymous: his intent was to pay for a billboard response. Donohue and the donor met in our office and agreed on a strategy. Click [here](#) for our billboard and [here](#) for the atheist billboard; ours was posted on the New York side of the Lincoln Tunnel.

There were also confrontations between the Catholic League and the Mayor of Boca Raton, Florida. She refused to allow a nativity scene in the same spot that she approved a menorah. Catholic League board member William Lindner pressed the issue with the mayor's office, garnering a coalition of Protestants. The refusal to meet with the protesting Christians means next year there may be a lawsuit.

We are happy to report that *Advertising Age*, the trade sheet for Madison Avenue, credited the Catholic League and the American Family Association for the return of "Merry Christmas" in the major department stores; "Happy Holidays" took a back seat

CHRISTMAS WARS INGNITE; NEW BATTLE WITH ATHEISTS

The atheists are out in force this year trying to neuter Christmas. But they are being met with stiff opposition from the Catholic League.

The battle lines were drawn early. On November 10, news reports stated that several atheist organizations were seeking to use the Christmas season to garner new recruits. Their weapons of choice: billboards placed on highways and bus shelters, and TV advertisements.

The billboard campaigns run the gamut from the benign to the malicious. Some merely ask those who don't believe in God to join them, but others are a direct assault on Christianity. American Atheists, for example, is currently featuring a billboard with a picture of a nativity scene which reads, "You Know it's a Myth. This Season Celebrate Reason"; it is prominently displayed in New Jersey near the entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel that connects to New York City.

As soon as news stories surfaced about the American Atheists' billboard near the Lincoln Tunnel, we were contacted by an anonymous donor who wanted to do something about it. We suggested placing a graphic of a nativity scene on a billboard

on the New York side of the tunnel, one that read, "You Know it's Real. This Season Celebrate Jesus." He liked our idea immensely, so we made the arrangements, and he paid for it. This was a very Catholic League kind of rejoinder.

Knowing how aggressive these activists have become in recent years, we were more than ready with a strong response. So on the same day of the news stories about the atheist campaigns, we pulled our trigger: we announced that we had just mailed a Holy Family Nativity Scene to the nation's 50 governors. We quickly heard from Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen, Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell and Alabama Gov. Bob Riley thanking us for the gift.

In his letter to the governors, Bill Donohue explained that it was our "sincere hope that it [the crèche] will be displayed in the Capitol Rotunda alongside secular symbols (e.g., a Christmas tree) this coming Christmas season." It is up to Catholic League members to follow through by contacting the chief of staff serving their respective governors; the manger scenes were mailed to them.

The atheists are not happy about our counter-campaign. But we are proud that we led the Christian community nationwide with an immediate response. Moreover, unlike their negative campaign, ours is entirely positive. And that is exactly how it should be.