

HOT ELECTION ISSUES IGNITE; BIGOTRY FLARES

Hot button issues on the November ballot triggered passions in many parts of the country. In some cases, things got ugly. Nowhere was the situation worse than in California, Washington and Michigan.

Some of the proponents of gay marriage, abortion and euthanasia engaged in a bigoted protest against people of faith, including Roman Catholics. Not content to simply register their convictions in the polling booth, they resorted to confrontation politics. And in many cases, they violated the law, with impunity.

In California, an initiative that affirmed the traditional understanding of marriage as being between one man and one woman passed by a thin majority. Unhappy with the democratic process, radical gays tied up traffic by blocking intersections in many cities. They also bashed Catholics and Mormons for strongly supporting the pro-marriage resolution. A bigoted video attacking Mormons for supporting traditional marriage was aired on television.

In Palm Springs, California, an elderly lady carrying a cross showed up at a pro-gay marriage rally. The angry crowd knocked it from her hands and then stomped it on the ground. A local CBS anchor incredibly said that this incident showed, "There is a lot of anger and a lot of hate, quite honestly, on both sides."

Californians also voted on an initiative requiring parental notification in cases of a minor contemplating an abortion; it narrowly lost. Prior to the election, opponents of parental rights took to the streets outside a Catholic church in Coronado seeking to intimidate those going to Mass.

The state of Washington held a referendum on legalizing physician-assisted suicide. Some of those unhappy with the Catholic Church's opposition to the death initiative trotted out the old canard about the Church seeking to "impose" its views on others. No one repeated this mantra more than Ann Martens, spokeswoman for the resolution.

Gay fascists stormed an evangelical church in Lansing, Michigan after the election was over. Ironically, these extremists, from a nationwide group called Bash Back!, are opposed to gay marriage; they fear marriage would make homosexuals more like heterosexuals. No matter, their tactics were branded Nazi-like by Bill Donohue. Indeed, it was the Catholic League that was responsible for getting the media to pick up on this startling story.

This kind of hate speech by the anti-marriage, anti-family, anti-child fanatics was underreported by the mainstream media, many of whose members are sympathetic to their cause.

CHRISTMAS STIRRINGS

This year the Christmas stirrings started early. The anti-Christmas folks wasted no time protesting the holiday.

In November, the American Humanist Association launched its "Godless Holiday Campaign." It placed ads in newspapers that read, "Why believe in god? Just be good for goodness' sake." The same ad is now posted on Metro buses in Washington, D.C.

Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the group, remarkably said that "Morality doesn't come from religion"; he said it comes from individuals. As we pointed out, codes of morality have always been grounded in religion. Furthermore, there is

nothing that cannot be justified if the only moral benchmark is what men and women posit to be right and wrong.

On November 15, a press conference was called by New York City Councilman Tony Avella on the matter of allowing the display of a crèche in the public schools. Avella is introducing a measure that would demand all councilmen to vote up or down on this issue; currently, Jewish and Muslim religious symbols are allowed in the schools, but only Christian secular symbols are permitted. Bill Donohue spoke at this event.

Also, Long Island chapter president Jim Krug supported a decision reached by Grucci, the internationally known fireworks company, to pull out of an annual Christmas event after it was announced that the Christmas Boat Parade was renamed the Holiday Boat Parade.

The anti-Christmas fever never stops.

ELECTION WATCH

By the time you read this article, the election may have already been decided. Here is a quick look at the most important issues of critical importance to Catholics.

Voters in Arizona, California, and Florida will decide whether to support the traditional idea of marriage as a union between a man and a woman. An enormous amount of money and lobbying has been done in these states by both sides, and this is especially true of California.

South Dakota will decide whether abortion should be limited to rape, incest and the life of the mother, voters in Michigan are grappling with allowing public funding of embryonic stem

cell research and the state of Washington has an initiative permitting assisted suicide on the ballot. Coloradans will decide whether to amend the state constitution to say that personhood begins at conception.

Catholic bishops in all these states are standing fast on Catholic principles, and this certainly includes Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver: for wholly prudential reasons, Chaput, along with the National Right to Life, are not endorsing the personhood measure. They see it as a bad tactical move (at this time) that could easily secure the ruling in *Roe v. Wade* even further.

The situation in Washington has triggered an anti-Catholic backlash against Catholics fighting for a culture of life. A group called Death with Dignity has been the most offensive, drawing fire from the Catholic League. The results in all these states will have dramatic effects.

EUCCHARIST DEFILED ON VIDEOS; YouTube REACTS TO PROTEST

In what has become a disturbing pattern this year, over 40 videos depicting the desecration of the Eucharist were posted on the Internet site, *YouTube*. After a Catholic League protest, some restrictive measures were taken. Other steps are being weighed.

A young man, Dominique (who goes by “fsmdude”), made the videos and posted them on *YouTube*. This is a popular Internet site that is available to anyone who wants to post a video; it is also used to show clips from TV shows, etc. What he did was to flush the Eucharist down the toilet, put it in a

blender, feed it to an animal, drive a nail through it, etc.

On September 29, Bill Donohue wrote to *YouTube* CEO Chad Hurley in San Bruno, California, asking him to take down these offensive videos. When he didn't hear back, he called Hurley on October 3. After no reply, a video of Donohue registering his protest was posted on *YouTube* on October 6; a news release on this subject was issued the next day.

After being pummeled by angry Catholics responding to our news release, as well as our *YouTube* video, an official called Donohue on October 15. The conversation was productive; she listened attentively while Donohue explained in some detail the basis of the league's outrage. She responded by saying that a decision had been made to "age-gate" the videos, meaning that they are not available to the general public—age confirmation is required. Moreover, the viewer is informed that the material may not be appropriate.

The *YouTube* official stressed that this was a "preliminary step," part of an ongoing review process. In other words, they are taking the complaints made by the Catholic League seriously, and may yet decide to implement stronger strictures.

In the course of the conversation, Donohue told the official that we do not object to making fun of Catholics, if it is done in good taste. What we object to are situations where it is obvious that the whole purpose of the communication is to deliberately insult Catholics. It is one thing for an avowed atheist to lecture Catholics about their beliefs, quite another for someone to intentionally desecrate the Eucharist. The latter represents malice, having nothing to do with discourse.

On October 16, we issued a press release on our partial victory; we also posted a video on *YouTube* wherein Donohue discussed the outcome. While we appreciate the seriousness

that *YouTube* has shown to our concerns, we hope they conclude that these videos violate their guidelines on matters like these.

PELOSI & BIDEN ROIL USCCB; ABORTION ISSUE IGNITES

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and vice presidential candidate Joseph Biden recently misrepresented the Church's teaching on abortion, drawing fire from more than two dozen bishops. Their obstinacy in the face of criticism only emboldened more bishops to take issue with them.

Tom Brokaw asked Pelosi on "Meet the Press" to comment on when life begins. Here is what she said: "I would say as an ardent, practicing Catholic, this is an issue that I have studied for a long time. And what I know is, over the centuries, the doctors of the Church have not been able to make that definition."

A stunned Brokaw, who is not Catholic, told Pelosi that the Catholic Church "feels very strongly" that life begins at conception. Pelosi answered, "I understand. And this is like maybe 50 years or something like that. So again, over the history of the Church, this is an issue of controversy."

Pelosi's obtuse answer merited a gift from the Catholic League. We tried to educate the House Speaker by sending her a copy of *Catholicism for Dummies* (by the way, it is an excellent book, written by two great priests, Rev. John Trigilio and Rev. Kenneth Brighenti—both are friends of Bill Donohue). Her response also triggered news releases from two sources: Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput and the Catholic

League. Plenty more bishops, priests and lay persons quickly followed.

Pelosi dug herself in deeper a few days later when her office issued a statement acknowledging that while the Church is against abortion, St. Augustine said that ensoulment doesn't occur until 46 days after conception (she failed to mention that St. Augustine was opposed to abortion). The controversy continued right up to the point where her bishop, San Francisco Archbishop George H. Niederauer, requested a meeting with her.

A few weeks later, Biden appeared on "Meet the Press" announcing that abortion was a religious issue that was looked upon differently by different religions. He said that while he accepts the Church's teaching on when life begins, he did not want to impose it on others. Complicating matters, he said that St. Thomas Aquinas did not believe that life began "until quickening, 40 days after conception." He, too, failed to note that Aquinas was opposed to abortion. Many bishops, and the Catholic League, jumped on his remarks as misleading and counterproductive.

What Pelosi and Biden have done is reprehensible.

PALIN'S RELIGION

Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin's religion has come under severe scrutiny. Unfortunately, some of the coverage has been downright unfair.

Baptized Catholic, Palin was raised in a Pentecostal church; since 2002, she has been a member of a non-denominational

Christian church. She garnered the attention of the secular media when she urged the faithful to “pray for our military” and for “our national leaders” who are “sending them out on a task that is from God.”

MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow interpreted this comment as saying that “the commander-in-chief for our side in the Iraq war is a mighty general whose initials are GOD.” Most Christians, obviously, would not agree with that spin.

Maddow also wondered why Palin didn’t “get up and walk out” when a guest speaker from Jews for Jesus spoke at her church (a talk the ADL found non-problematic). Barack Obama, we know, did not “get up and walk out” on his own disgraced pastor for 20 years, yet MSNBC never got too worked up about that.

MSNBC’s Keith Olbermann was worse, speaking in the most sarcastic of terms about her religious beliefs. He even took the time to alert viewers to the news that in Palin’s church “they speak in tongues.” For the record, Palin’s pastor said he “never saw” her speak in tongues.

Palin may not be a Catholic anymore. But she certainly is the victim of a vicious smear campaign conducted by the secular left. The secularists neither understand, nor respect, Christianity.

EUCHARIST DESECRATED; NO PENALTY FOR PROFESSOR

In July, Paul Zachary Myers, a biology professor at the Morris campus of the University of Minnesota (UMN), made good on his pledge to desecrate the Eucharist. The atheist professor

suffered no penalty despite a strong protest led by the Catholic League.

Myers was responding to an event that had recently taken place at the University of Central Florida (UCF) when a student walked out of Mass with the Host, holding it hostage for several days. Myers was angry at the Catholic League for criticizing the student; the religion-hating professor voiced his objections on his own personal Internet site, i.e., his blog. There was a link from the faculty page on the university's website to his blog.

Here is an excerpt of his July 8 post, "It's a Frackin' Cracker!":

"Can anyone out there score me some consecrated communion wafers?" Myers continued by saying, "If any of you would be willing to do what it takes to get me some, or even one, and mail it to me, I'll show you sacrilege, gladly, and with much fanfare. I won't be tempted to hold it hostage (no, not even if I have a choice between returning the Eucharist and watching Bill Donohue kick the pope in the b****, which would apparently be a more humane act than desecrating a g**d***ed cracker), but will instead treat it with profound disrespect and heinous cracker abuse, all photographed and presented here on the web."

Anyone who tapped into UMN's website was able to access Myers' hate speech from the university's website, despite the fact that the school has restrictions on matters like these. The president of UMN, Robert Bruininks, quickly wrote to Donohue informing him that UMN had severed the link between the university's website and Myers' blog. But that was the extent of his response.

There were several other things that UMN, and Minnesota's elected officials, could have done, but didn't. For our part, we contacted UMN's Board of Regents, the liaison group that

works with this group, UMN's alumni, Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty and both houses of the Minnesota legislature. See *"Chronology of a Desecration"* for more information.

"It is hard to think of anything more vile than to intentionally desecrate the Body of Christ," we said to the press. On July 24, Myers made good on his pledge to desecrate the Eucharist, driving a rusty nail through a consecrated Host; he posted a picture of it on his blog. The atheist professor, who was raised Lutheran, suffered no penalty for his behavior.

BUSH CHIDES CHINA

Before leaving for Beijing, President George W. Bush gave a speech in Bangkok, Thailand that cited the lack of religious liberties, as well as other human rights, that exist in China. And while in China, Bush commented on the deprivation of religious liberties there on several occasions.

Bush made it clear that "America stands in firm opposition to China's detention of political dissidents, human rights advocates and religious activists." Moreover, Bush said, "I have spoken clearly, candidly and consistently with China's leaders about our deep concerns over religious freedom and human rights."

The plight of the Catholic Church is particularly distressing. There is an officially sanctioned "Catholic Church" in China, but there is also an underground Church, one that authentically represents the teachings of Catholicism. The members of the underground Church are in constant danger of being persecuted.

We were quick to applaud what President Bush did, but we also cited Pope Benedict XVI's remark: He pleaded with Chinese leaders "to open [China] to the Gospel."

By contrast, Sen. McCain and Sen. Obama looked weak. For example, McCain was on record imploring the president not to be "confrontational" with Chinese officials about the issue of human rights. When Bill Donohue appeared on "Fox and Friends" to discuss this, he asked, "Should he be obsequious?" Donohue also criticized Obama for saying nothing about the massive abuse of religious liberties in China.

OBAMA'S ADVISORY FALTERS; CRITICISM ERUPTS

Matters have gone from bad to worse for Sen. Barack Obama's Catholic National Advisory Council.

In the last issue of *Catalyst*, we detailed our objections to this advisory group; most of the Catholic politicians advising Obama are pro-abortion. When the group responded with a spirited defense, we hit them with an equally spirited rejoinder. Now there's a real question as to whether they even exist anymore.

We know one thing for sure: The Obama website has deleted any mention of the Catholic National Advisory Council. More than that, the Obama headquarters will not return phone calls or e-mails on the subject; this includes journalists who have contacted the campaign about this issue.

In a startling move, a group called Catholic Democrats tried to tell us that the Advisory Council still exists. We decided

to call them on it: Where is the evidence? They had none.

Obama's Catholic Advisory ran into trouble with more than the Catholic League. One of the advisory members, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius, was informed by Kansas City Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann not to go to Communion. He acted only after exhausting many avenues of dialogue with her; she refuses to budge on her pro-abortion stance.

Adding to Obama's Catholic problem was Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput. He took "Roman Catholics for Obama '08" to task for misrepresenting his writings on whether Catholics can vote in good conscience for a pro-abortion politician. Archbishop Chaput also nailed Catholic Democrats for errors in their reporting on a Denver conference where allegedly Republican candidates spoke. Nothing of the sort happened.

And, of course, Obama was dogged for months for his close relationship with Rev. Jeremiah Wright. After first defending him, Obama had to break loose altogether and quit Wright's church after the public caught wind of the fiery preacher's polarizing message. The Catholic League publicly criticized Obama for his association.

Then Obama linked up with his friend, Rev. Michael Pfleger, a radical Catholic priest from Chicago. After Pfleger publicly mocked Sen. Hillary Clinton, Obama had to drop him as well. We said that "Father Pfleger's tirade would be inexcusable anywhere, but it is even more offensive when it happens in a church."

Meanwhile, Sen. John McCain and Pastor John Hagee had a falling out; both men issued statements pulling support for one another on the same day. McCain also dropped his relationship with Rev. Rod Parsley when stories surfaced that Parsley was anti-Muslim.

VATICAN NIXES FILM SHOOT

A movie adaptation of Dan Brown's book, *Angels and Demons*, is now in production; it is the prequel to the film, "The Da Vinci Code." But the shooting won't be taking place in Catholic churches in Rome or in the Vatican itself. The Vatican has seen to that.

"Angels and Demons" stars Tom Hanks in his role as Robert Langdon, the symbologist. This time he is trying to unravel a plot by a secret society, the Illuminati, to blow up the Vatican during a papal conclave.

The Catholic League immediately defended the Vatican. Bill Donohue appeared on "Fox and Friends" to state his case.

Naturally, we were delighted that Ron Howard and his Hollywood minions were denied the opportunity to exploit the Catholic Church again. Any movie about Catholicism which draws on the specious work of Dan Brown is bound to offend Catholic sensibilities, so it was only fitting that Howard was shown the gate.

According to Brown, his latest effort reveals "a lot of inside information about the Vatican" that is "unflattering." Now how would he have access to such information? He doesn't even have access to shoot his film at the Vatican. And it goes without saying that his take would be unflattering.

Once again, Brown is merging fact with fiction. He is a master of deceit, and he never tires of smearing the Catholic Church. But this time his gambit didn't work. We're delighted the Vatican told him to take a hike.