

# PASTOR HAGEE APOLOGIZES; DONOHUE-HAGEE MEET

In a letter to Bill Donohue dated May 12 ([click here](#)), Pastor John Hagee apologized for offending Catholics. "I want to express my deep regret," he said, "for any comments that Catholics have found hurtful." Donohue was quick to accept the apology. On May 15, the two men met at Catholic League headquarters for the first time.

Hagee's letter effectively ends the dispute the two men have had. The controversy started after Pastor Hagee endorsed Sen. John McCain for president. The Catholic League has long objected to some of Hagee's comments about the Catholic Church, especially in relation to its dealings with Jews. That is why the league was critical of McCain's embrace of Hagee. McCain subsequently distanced himself from Hagee's objectionable remarks about Catholicism.

"After weeks of meeting with various Catholic leaders, and accessing scholarly literature on Catholic-Jewish relations," Donohue told the media, "Pastor John Hagee has demonstrated an improved understanding of the Catholic Church and its history." We were particularly pleased to see Hagee pledge "to provide a more complete and balanced portrayal going forward that will not reinforce mischaracterizations of the Catholic Church."

Hagee made it clear that his invocation of terms like "apostate church" and the "great whore" were never meant by him to describe the Catholic Church. However, he acknowledges that anti-Catholics have long employed such language.

Donohue praised Hagee's for his candor: "The tone of Hagee's letter is sincere. He wants reconciliation and he has achieved it. Indeed, the Catholic League welcomes his apology. What

Hagee has done takes courage and quite frankly I never expected him to demonstrate such sensitivity to our concerns. But he has done just that.”

It is a tribute to Catholics such as Deal Hudson of InsideCatholic.com that they succeeded in sitting down with Pastor Hagee over a period of weeks trying to bring about reconciliation. Hagee was able to access books he never read before, e.g., works by Martin Gilbert and Rabbi David Dalin that detail the heroic role of Pope Pius XII in rescuing Jews during the Holocaust. These were the kinds of things that moved Hagee to write his letter to Donohue.

It is now hoped that traditional Catholics and evangelical Protestants will be able to work together more effectively on those moral issues where they find common ground: abortion, embryonic stem cell research and doctor-assisted suicide. It is a sure bet that this alliance will continue to gel.

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## **OBAMA CONTROVERSY**

When Sen. Barack Obama recently announced the formation of his Catholic National Advisory Council, he said he was “deeply honored to have the support and counsel of these committed Catholic leaders, scholars and advocates.” We quickly urged him “to dissolve it immediately.”

Of the 26 Catholic former or current public office holders listed as either National Co-Chairs (5), or as members of the National Leadership Committee (21), not one of them agrees with the Catholic Church on all three of the following public policy issues: abortion, embryonic stem cell research and school vouchers.

Indeed, on the issue of abortion, their record is disgraceful. Consider the scorecard as issued by the most radical pro-abortion organization in the nation—NARAL. Of the two National Co-Chairs who have a NARAL tally, one agrees with the extremist group 65 percent of the time and the other agrees 100 percent of the time. Similarly, of the 20 National Leadership Committee members with a NARAL score, 17 have earned a 100 percent rating. Of those who have less than a perfect score, not one is in favor of school vouchers.

“Practicing Catholics have every right to be insulted by Obama’s advisory group,” we said. We continued, “What is the purpose of having an advisory group about matters Catholic when most of its members reject the Catholic position?” Indeed, we said, “to choose Catholic dissidents to advise him about Catholic concerns is mind-boggling.”

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## **USAFA VICTORY**

Like so many Catholic League victories, this one happened quickly, but it was never clear from the start what the outcome would be. Once again, our relentlessness paid off, and once again we couldn’t have done it without the legions of supporters who bombarded the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) with their ballistic e-mails.

We learned the week of April 7 that some faculty and cadets had to attend a seminar on war and terrorism on April 9. Included in this event was the showing of footage from a movie, “Constantine’s Sword,” that is based on book by that name. This is what ignited our protest.

James Carroll is the author of this book, and he is one of the most angry and unfair critics of the Catholic Church in the

nation. An embittered ex-priest, Carroll is a journalist who has no credentials in the area of church history. His book is nothing less than an all-out assault on the Catholic Church, holding it responsible for anti-Semitism throughout the ages, leading up to the Holocaust.

Clips of the new movie were to be shown in the name of fighting religious prejudice, yet the clips were taken from a film that smacked of religious prejudice towards Catholics!

We issued our first news release on April 8. We struck again on April 9, and declared victory on April 10. As it turned out, footage from the movie was never shown on April 9.

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## **MOST TREAT POPE FAIRLY; SOME CROSS THE LINE**

Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the United States was a huge success. He brought joy to millions of Catholics, as well as non-Catholics, and he won over some of his biggest skeptics.

For the most part, he was treated fairly by the media, especially those covering his many events. But some of the commentators got downright ugly. Comedian Bill Maher got the ball rolling even before the pope arrived, calling him a Nazi. He apologized after we hit him hard.

There were any number of columnists who vented their anger at the Catholic Church, and we responded to many of them. An ex-priest, Robert McClory, wrote one of most inane columns in the *Chicago Tribune*; he said the pope should take this occasion to change the Church's teachings on such things as "homosexual acts."

The professional victims' advocates, led by SNAP and Voice of the Faithful, proved once again that they refuse to recognize the progress that has been made in dealing with sex abuse. As we said many times during the pope's visit, in the year 2007 there was a grand total of five accusations made against over 40,000 priests. Not to acknowledge this as progress undercuts the credibility of these finger-pointing groups.

ABC's "Nightline" did a hatchet job on Francis Cardinal George, triggering a strong response from us. In a slickly packaged piece, the program essentially challenged the right of accused Catholic priests to have the same constitutional rights as others. We were only too happy to point out that in New York City and Miami, ABC kept on the job reporters accused of sexual harassment and gun toting on school grounds.

Perhaps the biggest surprise came from CNN's Lou Dobbs. We've been tracking his boilerplate remarks about the right of the Catholic clergy to address the issue of illegal immigration, but we didn't expect him to blow his stack over the pope's discussion of the social context in which the scandal took place. Bill Donohue publicly challenged him to either apologize or agree to debate him. He did neither.

Naturally, no papal visit would be complete without those silly surveys the media like to run. We especially got a kick out of those surveys that included ex-Catholics, as if their voice matters. The larger point is this: we live in a pluralistic society where people are free to join or quit any religion they want. Or found one of their own!

All in all, however, the pope was welcomed in a manner befitting his status as the greatest religious leader in the world.

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# McCain REJECTS BIGOTRY; CITES HAGEE'S ROLE

After being pummeled by the Catholic League, Senator John McCain made a straight-forward denunciation of anti-Catholicism on March 7, explicitly citing Rev. John Hagee's role. He thus put an end to this issue.

The issue blew up on February 27 when the Republican nominee for president solicited and accepted the endorsement of Rev. John Hagee. Hagee, who is pastor of Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, has a long record of Catholic bashing. We posted a video of him on our website where he calls Catholicism "The Great Whore," a "false cult system," the "anti-Christ" and an "apostate church."

Hagee is a Christian Zionist who has given millions of dollars to Israel and to Jews seeking to return to Israel. He has also made a living out of demonizing Catholicism, wildly distorting the Catholic Church's relations with Jews. He does this intentionally so as to contrast himself favorably with the Jewish community. Hagee tried to say he wasn't anti-Catholic, but few believed him.

We hit McCain with ten critical news releases before issuing our eleventh one commending him for doing the right thing. Prior to our last news release, McCain had simply said that he doesn't necessarily agree with the views of everyone who endorses him. We labeled this response "pedestrian" and implored him to specifically cite Hagee in repudiating anti-Catholicism. He did just that, but not after some rumbling within his campaign on what to do about this matter.

The McCain campaign sought to arrange an "on-the-record" conference call between McCain, his advisors and Bill Donohue. Donohue said no. He said he would only agree to such a call

after he found satisfactory a statement by McCain denouncing anti-Catholic bigotry, citing Hagee's role.

Donohue did several radio and TV interviews, appearing on "CBS Evening News," CNN and "The Colbert Report." We kept hammering away, as it is our style, until we got what we wanted. McCain wrapped the issue up when he said, "I repudiate any comments that are made, including Pastor Hagee's, if they are anti-Catholic or offensive to Catholics." Donohue then said, "Sen. McCain has done the right thing and we salute him for doing so. As far as the Catholic League is concerned, this case is closed."

We never doubted that McCain was a good friend to Catholics. What we wanted was for his campaign to come together in distancing themselves from Hagee

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## **POPE PRAISES GLENDON**

Pope Benedict XVI recently welcomed Mary Ann Glendon as the new U.S. ambassador to the Vatican. Glendon is a Harvard law professor and member of the Catholic League's board of advisors; she had to suspend her association with the league, along with all other organizations she is affiliated with, before assuming her new position.

Glendon has a long record of service to the Catholic Church. She has been a member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences since 1994, serving as president of the group for four years. She has also played leading roles in some very important international conferences, especially on women's issues.

The pope praised her by saying, "I am confident that the

knowledge and experience born of your distinguished association with the work of the Holy See will prove beneficial in the fulfillment of your duties.”

Glendon returned the favor by telling the pope that he “will be among friends” when he visits the U.S. in mid-April. “On your first visit to the U.S. as pontiff, you will find a warm welcome from a nation that understands the important contribution offered by people of faith in our society.”

Bill Donohue says that Glendon is one of the most brilliant Catholic scholars in the nation, noting that her work on the family and abortion is unparalleled. Her writings on civil liberties has also gained her much deserved admiration.

The Catholic League salutes Mary Ann Glendon.

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## **ESPN      ANCHOR      SUSPENDED; APOLOGY   ACCEPTED**

On January 22, the Catholic League launched a protest of ESPN anchorwoman Dana Jacobson’s foul and bigoted comments that were made at a January 11 “roast” in Atlantic City. The next day we issued another news release, putting pressure on ESPN to respond. It took one more day before we were satisfied with the outcome.

We learned from news and sports websites that Jacobson graphically attacked Jesus Christ at the event; she was totally intoxicated. She roared from the podium, “F\*\*\* Notre Dame,” “F\*\*\* Touchdown Jesus,” and “F\*\*\* Jesus.” Initially, there were conflicting reports regarding her last remark (it turned out that all three invectives were voiced).



ESPN's response was to issue a rather lame statement of apology by Jacobson. We wanted more. Indeed, we said, "This response fails on several counts." We emphasized that "there is no evidence that ESPN is taking this matter seriously." This forced us to ask, "Are we to believe that her hate speech is of no consequence? Her comments were not made at a private function, rather they were made at a public event where she represented ESPN."

What bothered us most was the fact that the most offensive thing she said, "F\*\*\* Jesus," wasn't even addressed. Our conclusion: "It is obvious, then, that neither Jacobson nor ESPN is dealing with this matter in a professional way. To put this issue behind them, ESPN must deal with this issue quickly, publicly and fairly, something it has yet to do."

After several news stories, and TV appearances by Bill Donohue, two ESPN officials called Donohue on January 24. They maintained that in the 6-7 years that they had worked with Jacobson, they had never heard her say anything bad about any religion. It was her, they stressed, that "fell on the sword" and called them the next day after her drunken rant.

ESPN suspended Jacobson and, at Donohue's request, issued another apology. Donohue then said, "I am happy to say that after speaking to two ESPN officials today, and having learned more about exactly what happened, that they are in fact taking this matter seriously. Indeed, I am convinced that what occurred at the roast will not happen again."

After weighing the context of Jacobson's remarks, and considering the change in ESPN's approach to this problem, we decided to drop the issue. On Jacobson's first day back, she started by issuing another apology: "I want to say how truly sorry I am for my poor choices and bad judgment."

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# HOAX RESURRECTED

Last year, “Titanic” director James Cameron and others said that the Jesus family tomb had been found. The archaeological community was not persuaded, but that didn’t stop the controversy. But now, thanks to Princeton’s James Charlesworth, the hoax looks more real than ever before.

Charlesworth recently completed a Jerusalem conference that brought together over 50 scientists to discuss this issue. He raised serious questions that undercut the spectacular claims that have been made.

Charlesworth asked why, if this really were Jesus’ ossuary, would the followers of the person they believed was the Son of God leave an inscription of Jesus’ name that was merely “graffiti, just scratching”? Why was there “no ornamentation”? And why would the followers of the Son of God choose such a “lousy” looking tomb?

At the conference, Ruth Gat, widow of archaeologist Yosef Gat, claimed that her husband believed that he had found Jesus’ tomb, but because he was a Holocaust survivor, he didn’t want to stir up anti-Semitism.

Gat died soon after the excavation, producing no evidence to sustain his alleged belief. Moreover, Jews who worked with him, like his boss, Amos Kloner, and Dr. Shimon Gibson, maintain today that it is “absolutely not the case” that Gat believed they had found Jesus’ tomb; they also say that Gat never told him the story now being floated by his wife. Surely telling them didn’t risk promoting anti-Semitism. Hence, the hoax continues.

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# HENRY HYDE, R.I.P.

Congressman Henry Hyde died on November 29 at the age of 83. Asked to comment on his death, Bill Donohue said, "The pro-life community has lost a giant of a man with a giant of a heart—Rep. Henry Hyde. His courageous defense of the least among us inspired millions of Americans to stand up for the rights of the unborn. We have lost a national treasure."

Hyde served in the House from 1975 to 2006 and served as chairman of the House Judiciary Committee from 1995 to 2001. In 1976, just three years after the infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion, the Illinois congressman attached an amendment to a spending bill that banned federal funding for abortions. It soon became known as the "Hyde Amendment," and to this day it has bound every Republican presidential candidate to honor it.

According to former Vatican diplomat John Klink, the Hyde Amendment is thus far responsible for saving the lives of over 1,000,000 babies. While there are other legislators who have done yeoman work protecting the lives of the least among us, no one did more to save the lives of the unborn than Hyde.

Hyde was also well liked, even by his ideological adversaries. Always the gentleman, he will be affectionately remembered by all who knew him.

We expect that his death will lead to the institution of many "Hyde Awards" for those who follow in his footsteps.

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# **“GOLDEN COMPASS” FLOPS; BOYCOTT WORKS**

The goal of the Catholic League was to stop “The Golden Compass” from meeting box office expectations, thus making it unlikely that there would be a movie based on the second and third volumes of Philip Pullman’s trilogy, *His Dark Materials*. Looks like we won on both counts.

Even our adversaries begrudgingly concede we were victorious. The movie did so poorly that after two weeks out, it took in \$4 million less than “Alvin and the Chipmunks” did in one weekend!

Film critic Roger Ebert, who loved the film, said “the box office was wounded by attacks of religious groups.” He added that “The criticism was led by the Catholic League and its talkative president William Donohue.” He concluded that “Any bad buzz on a family film can be mortal, and that seems to have been the case this time.” The buzz was so bad that Hollywood reporters are now saying there won’t be a film version of Pullman’s second and third books.

The Catholic League sold 25,000 copies of its booklet, *The Golden Compass: Agenda Unmasked*, before running out. We made sure that every bishop, Catholic schools superintendents and directors of religious education received a copy. As we said from the beginning, our concern was less the film—the most anti-Catholic elements were being watered down—than the trilogy of books from which it was based.

Those who unwittingly validated our interpretation of Philip Pullman’s work included American Atheists and the National Secular Society in the U.K. Both were angry, as were Pullman’s fans, that the film didn’t deliver the red meat of anti-Catholic bigotry that they craved. Donohue congratulated the

leaders of both groups on TV for their honesty, if not for their bigotry.

Regrettably, the review by Harry Forbes and an associate, representing the USCCB, was mostly positive. Indeed, Forbes found it difficult to believe that Pullman was attacking the Catholic Church. He referred to Pullman's "very much fictionalized" church as "a stand-in for all organized religion." But this was simply wrong: Pullman made it crystal clear that his target was the Catholic Church. [For more on the Forbes debacle, see p. 10.]

The victory over "The Golden Compass" followed closely on the heels of the Catholic League victory over the Miller Brewing Company. In both instances we called for a boycott (which is not something we do too often), and in both instances we got what we wanted: a total apology and a box office flop.