

NON-CATHOLICS OPINE ON POPE; TOLD TO "BUTT OUT"

The selection of Pope Benedict XVI was hailed by American Catholics as a great choice. One poll showed that more than 80 percent supported the selection of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, and most of those did so with enthusiasm (no doubt the figure would be much higher if only practicing Catholics were sampled).

However, the selection has not sat well with dissident Catholics, and many non-Catholics have made it clear that they are unhappy as well. The latter group triggered a response from William Donohue: he plainly told them to "butt out." (For more on this subject, see pp. 4-5.)

In a statement released to the media, Donohue said, "It's one thing for them to be voyeurs—peering into the Catholic Church the way kids peer into candy stores—quite another when they become meddlers." And at a press conference in Louisville (see p. 6) Donohue added that it was hypocritical of the press to complain about Catholics mixing it up with politics when the media have had a field day injecting itself into the internal affairs of the Catholic Church over the selection of the new pope.

The level of media meddling was unprecedented. Never before have so many people who are not Catholic offered their commentary on the teachings of the Catholic Church. While most of the media were respectful—especially in its treatment of Pope John Paul II—there was a loud minority of angry reporters and pundits who took aim at Pope Benedict XVI.

Regarding the coverage of the new German pope, Uwe Siemon-Netto of UPI noted, "Type the words 'Nazi pope' into the Google search line, and you will get nearly 700 mentions." The

headline of a reader's letter posted on the *New York Times* website said, "Nazi pope a clear and present danger to the civilized world." Similarly, John Kass of the *Chicago Tribune* observed that newspapers, television and the Internet carried phrases like "Hitler Youth," "God's Rottweiler," "Panzer Cardinal" and the "Pope's Hitman."

For the record, when Joseph Ratzinger was 14 he was forced to join some Nazi organizations, and when it was possible for him to escape, he did. *The Jerusalem Post* was particularly good in defending him, saying it was rubbish to suggest that he had Nazi sympathies. Indeed, his family was strongly anti-Nazi.

The Catholic League will carefully monitor the way Pope Benedict XVI is treated by the media.

HACK ATTACK

On Sunday, May 8, the Catholic League was bombarded with phone calls informing us that someone was able to "hack" into our website, replacing our homepage with a vile statement. Apparently, it was the work of Islamic extremists.

The heart of what was said was as follows: "F- BUSH - F- SHARON - FREE PALESTINE - FREE IRAQ"

The following inscription was also made: "Morocco RuleZ-Greetz [sic]: ALL Palestnian people [sic] - Ben_laden [sic] -sadam [sic]- ch33ta -Mianwalian - mani 1 - [code] - nEt^DeViL & all Moroccan Hackerz" [sic]

The day before our site was hacked, there was an article in the *New York Post* about the new movie, "Kingdom of Heaven." In it, William Donohue was quoted as saying, "It is a matter of

historical record that Muslim violence—in the form of a jihad—was responsible for Christians striking back, hence the Crusades. Yet in the film, it is the Christians who are the bad guys. This is on the order of doing a movie on the Warsaw Ghetto and blaming the Jews for all the violence.”

We contacted the New York City police and the FBI about this matter. Donohue also released the following comment to the press:

“I really can’t stand dealing with illiterates. If these jerks can spell Palestine correctly, why can’t they spell Palestinian people correctly? And I’m not so sure that bin Laden and Saddam would care to know that their names have been misspelled.”

POPE BENEDICT XVI

Orthodox Catholics have cause for great celebration—the election of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger on April 19 as our new Holy Father sends an unmistakable message: the College of Cardinals wants a man who will continue the theological legacy of Pope John Paul II. There can be no greater tribute to John Paul the Great than this.

In 1986, Cardinal Ratzinger wrote a letter to an insubordinate priest, Charles Curran, saying, “The authorities of the Church cannot allow the present situation to continue in which...one who is to teach in the name of the Church in fact denies her teaching.” In 1998, as John Paul II’s enforcer of orthodoxy, he said that the Church’s prohibition against “priestly ordination of women” had “been set forth infallibly.”

The day before he was elected the new pope, Ratzinger said in

his homily before the College of Cardinals, “We are moving toward a dictatorship of relativism which does not recognize anything as for certain and which has as its highest goal one’s own ego and one’s own desires.” This is straight out of John Paul II’s *Veritatis Splendor*, one of the most powerful statements on morality ever written.

In other words, Ratzinger understands that a society that refuses to acknowledge that morality is a social attribute—not an individual one—is bound to culturally implode. This message may be resisted by some, but it is nonetheless true.

The Catholic League is delighted. Those who are not need to do some real soul searching.

POPE JOHN PAUL II: ROLE MODEL FOR THE WORLD

On April 2, God called home the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II. The Catholic Church lost its leader and the world lost its most prominent role model.

Never before has any public figure, from any quarter of society, captured the love of so many people as John Paul II. For the most part, even his biggest critics found it almost impossible to dislike the man, so genuinely charismatic was he. He had an ability to reach young and old, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. He was truly a saintly person.

The complete text of the Catholic League’s news release on the death of Pope John Paul II appears below.

“Karol Wojtyla was an intellectual, actor, philosopher,

athlete and human-rights advocate, but above all, he was a priest. That is what defined him more than anything else—he was a priest in service to the Lord.

“Having traveled to over 100 nations, and having reached out to the members of all the world’s religions, he managed to touch people in a way very few have. It is only fitting that someday he will be known as John Paul the Great, making him only the third pontiff in history to be bestowed this honorific title.

“Pope John Paul II will be remembered for many things, but at this time it is important to recall his signature statement, ‘Be Not Afraid.’ It was in his first homily as pope in 1978 that John Paul broached this phrase, and it is one that he restated thousands of times over during his papacy. That these were not empty words can be disputed by no one: consider what happened after he told millions of his fellow countrymen in Poland one year later, ‘Do not be afraid to tell the truth.’

“John Paul II’s unyielding commitment to speaking the truth will surely prove to be one of his most enduring legacies. In a world where moral relativism runs rampant, and the lies of postmodernist thought are trumpeted, nothing could be more countercultural than the pope’s speeches and writings on the existence of an objective moral order. His courage, along with his intellectual acumen, was astounding.

“It is only just that we remember Pope John Paul II for what he was, and will always be—a role model for the world.”

NBC SHOW PROTESTED; VICTORY SCORED

Following the February 22 episode of the NBC-TV sitcom, "Committed," we were hit with an avalanche of complaints. We investigated the matter and immediately demanded that this particular episode be permanently retired, never to air again. NBC agreed.

The episode featured two non-Catholics who are mistakenly given Holy Communion at a Catholic funeral Mass. Nate, who is Jewish, and Bowie, a Protestant, don't know what to do with the Eucharist, so they make several failed attempts to get rid of it. For example, they try slipping it into the pocket of a priest, dropping it on a tray of cheese and crackers, etc.

At one point, the priest, who is portrayed as not knowing the difference between the Host and a cracker, goes to grab the "cracker" from a tray of appetizers; he initially balks when he discovers that it is the last one. Then he changes his mind, saying, "Oh, what the hell." By far the most offensive scene occurs when Nate and Bowie accidentally flush what they think is the Host down the toilet.

In our news release, we said, "The complaints have come from bishops, college chaplains, pastors and the laity, and they have come from all over the country. With good reason: NBC has made a direct frontal assault on Roman Catholicism, choosing to mock, trivialize and ridicule the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ."

We also pointed out that what happened was no accident: "What happened was deliberate. According to a January 2 story in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the writers for the series, Eileen Heisler and DeAnn Heline, have been encouraged by NBC executives 'to push the limits of comedy.' For obvious

reasons, the writers...chose not to push the buttons of homosexuals (or some other protected group), so they decided to play it safe and stay in good standing with their bosses by bashing Catholics."

We then sought a promise not to rerun this episode again.

It speaks well for NBC that its top officer in charge of such matters immediately called William Donohue. After he saw the episode, he agreed it should never air again. Donohue then issued another statement saying that NBC's response was "fair and decisive."

HALLMARK PULLS CARD

It wasn't the worst we've seen, but it was still unnecessarily offensive. So we made a complaint to Hallmark and they decided to withdraw the birthday card for good.

On the cover of the card was a sketch of a homely nun wearing a habit, saying, "I'm so excited about your birthday, I feel like doing a cartwheel." On the inside, it said, "Oops. Better not. Just remembered it's 'No Underwear Day' here at the abbey."

Some of our members, including a dedicated soul from the Bahamas, sent us the card and asked what we could do about it. So we wrote a letter to the President and CEO, Donald J. Hall, Jr., wanting to know why Hallmark, which has a good name to protect, would want to stock such a card. We subsequently received a letter from Eileen Drummond, the Creative Director of the Writing & Editorial Department, saying, "we will cease any future production and shipping of this card."

Ms. Drummond also said that the intent of the card “was never to offend.” Perhaps. But whether it was or it wasn’t doesn’t really matter in the end: we’re more than a little sick and tired of the “creative types” taking liberties with our religion. Not that it would make us feel any better, but why don’t these “artists” pick on some other group once and a while?

On the other hand, it speaks well for Hallmark that they didn’t try to justify the card as a humorous statement. All we ask is that our complaints be taken seriously, and Hallmark did exactly that.

PIUS XII SMEARED AGAIN; EFFORT BRANDED A “HOAX”

The campaign against Pope Pius XII picked up steam in January when the *New York Times* reported that there was documentation to suggest that the Vatican issued instructions after World War II not to return baptized Jewish children to their parents; this story was based on an article that had recently appeared in an Italian newspaper. Before the month ended, the sensational story was exposed as bogus (see pp. 4-5 for our response).

No one seriously disputes the fact that Catholics successfully hid legions of Jewish children during the war. Many of these Catholics, which included priests, religious, nuns and laypersons, risked their own lives to shelter Jewish kids from the Nazis. What is in some dispute is what happened to these kids once the war was over.

Problems were evident with the *Times* story from the beginning.

For example, Jesuit Father Peter Gumpel, the postulator of the beatification cause of Pius XII, quickly noted that the document was unsigned, written in French and bore the seal of a Catholic official working in France. In short, the reason it didn't appear on Vatican stationery is because it did not emanate from the Vatican.

We then learned from another Italian newspaper that the document in question was merely a summary of a larger document. And what did the full text of the document say? It said the exact opposite of what had been reported. To be specific, the Vatican had given instructions to return Jewish children to their original families whenever possible. But were they? Two decades after the war, Dr. Leon Kubowitzky, an official of the World Jewish Congress, said he knew of "hardly a single case where Catholic institutions refused to return Jewish children."

Father Gumpel correctly branded this latest attack a "hoax." But the same media outlets that trumpeted the first story largely ignored the second story. Worse, some Jewish pundits and organizations continued to hype the original story, even to the point of charging that the Vatican "kidnapped" Jewish kids during the war.

What's really going on here is a campaign to stop the Vatican from making Pius XII a saint. The anti-Pius forces aren't giving up, but neither are we. The fact remains that Pope Pius XII did more to save Jews than anyone in Europe.

BUCKLEY: DEATH TO POPE

William F. Buckley Jr., the founder of National Review, wrote a column on February 9 for Universal Press Syndicate titled,

“Death for the Pope.” He began his piece as follows: “At church on Sunday the congregation was asked to pray for the recovery of the pope. I have abstained from doing so. I hope that he will not recover.”

Here is what William Donohue told the press:

“The kindest thing that can be said of Bill Buckley’s vile column is that he’s gone off the deep end. It matters not a whit that he calls the pope ‘a major historical figure,’ because even the most inveterate anti-Catholic must acknowledge as much. Indeed, even the biggest Catholic basher in the world is not likely to write, ‘So, what is wrong with praying for his death?’ If you have to ask, sir, then you are beyond hope.

“This is so tragic. Having lived a life of distinction, Bill Buckley will now be remembered as the guy who had a death wish for the pope.”

Had Buckley simply said that it was time for the pope to retire, there would have been no hullabaloo. But that wasn’t enough for the conservative stalwart. He had to take the extra step of wishing—indeed praying—for the speedy death of the pope.

We recognize the great good that Bill Buckley has done in his lifetime, and we wish him many good years to come. We just wish he’d never written this piece.

CHRISTMAS WARS ESCALATE:

CHRISTIANS FIGHT BACK

Never before have more Christians fought back in an effort to reclaim Christmas.

For example, in 2003, a Glenview, Illinois firehouse was told it could not display Christmas decorations. In 2004, they won approval. In 2003, an 8-year-old boy from Plano, Texas was forbidden from giving his friends candy canes in school. In 2004, he was allowed. In 2003, a crèche in Cranston, Rhode Island triggered a lawsuit. In 2004, it was erected without controversy.

In 2004, Christians organized to protest the exclusion of nativity scenes from the same South Florida malls that allow menorahs. When a school in New Jersey banned the singing of Christmas songs, local residents staged their own “protest” concert. When four atheists protested the display of a nativity scene in Milford, Connecticut, 200 pro-crèche supporters greeted them.

Atheists in Reynoldsburg, Ohio lost in their effort to stop the display of a nativity scene. Residents of a lower East Side housing project in New York City successfully protested a ban on Christmas lights. When Christmas songs were banned from school buses in a Chicago suburb, parents began their meeting with school officials by singing “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.” They won. Singing “Silent Night” was first banned from a concert in the schools of Egg Harbor, New Jersey. The ruling was then reversed.

Stafford township in New Jersey initially balked on displaying a crèche, but later reversed its decision. Residents of Pasco County, Florida revolted when Christmas trees were banned. The decision was reversed. Taxpayers in Mustang, Oklahoma were so angry at the banning of a nativity play in a school that they killed a school bond bid. And in Fairfield, Connecticut,

nativity scenes were allowed to be displayed for three days, but only if they were monitored around the clock. Nello Ceccarelli, who is 89, agreed to do just that.

In addition to these battles, the Catholic League was critical of the newly created holiday, Chrismukkah. The purpose of this holiday is to jointly celebrate Christmas and Hanukkah, the target audience being Christians and Jews who have married. We are pleased to note that at the request of the New York Board of Rabbis, we issued a joint statement criticizing Chrismukkah for diluting the significance of both Christmas and Hanukkah.

The cultural fascists who waged war on Christmas never expected such a backlash. Hope they got the message.

SNUBBING MEL

It will be a miracle of sorts if Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" gets an Oscar.

The Passion was one of 49 films deemed eligible for a foreign-language Golden Globe, but it came up short in December: it was not among the nominees voted on by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

Here is what William Donohue had to say about the snub: "Mel Gibson releases the most significant blockbuster movie of the year, but it's not good enough to make the cut for a Golden Globe. That's because his film promotes Christianity, and the Hollywood crowd will have none of it. The only movies they like to make about Christianity these days are ones that demean it."

We couldn't help but notice that one movie that did make the

cut in the foreign-language category was "The Motorcycle Diaries," a film that shamelessly lies about the notorious Cuban communist, Che Guevara. According to A.O. Scott of the *New York Times*, the film views Guevara "as a quasi-holy figure" who turns away "from the corruptions of the world toward a higher purpose." This may explain why Jack Mathews of the New York *Daily News* says that director Walter Salles "comes close at times to posing Guevara as a Christ figure."

In other words, because Mel gives us a faithful rendition of Christ's Passion, he is shunned by the Hollywood elite for doing so. But a movie that whitewashes a ruthless tyrant gets the nod.