

MUHLENBERG DIGS A HOLE

Last month in *Catalyst*, we reported on an icon of Mary that was placed in the chapel at Muhlenberg College, accompanied by a statement about Christian reluctance to accept Mary's Jewishness and an attack on Pope Pius XII. William Donohue wrote a letter to Muhlenberg's president, Dr. Arthur Taylor, expressing his concerns. The reply he got was more startling than the subject of his criticism.

In Dr. Taylor's letter to Donohue, he said that for "the Catholic League to try to force your point of view on us violates our freedoms and *brings the Catholic Church to a position which it held centuries ago.*" (Our emphasis.) He closed by saying, "We will not respond to any further communications in this matter."

Donohue responded with a news release saying that "I am absolutely astounded that any college president would actually make such a bigoted remark. Had this happened on a radio or TV show, it would have been equally inexcusable, but at least it might have been understandable as a slip of the lip. But to commit oneself in writing to such an anti-Catholic comment is mind-boggling." The league made sure to contact the local media in Allentown, Pennsylvania, the home of Muhlenberg.

League members who would like to write to Dr. Taylor can do so at the following address: Muhlenberg College, 2400 Chew Street, Allentown, PA 18104. Muhlenberg is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

VILLAGE VOICE TO CHRISTIANS: NO NEED TO APPLY

Most people think that the days are long gone when Christians were told they need not apply for a particular job. Yet in the February 17 edition of the *Village Voice*, there was a public notice ad for a pair of vocalists that ended with the following sentence: "Must be dedicated, creative, not afraid to offend everyone and anyone. NO CHRISTIANS."

After reading this, Catholic League president William Donohue called the Classified section of the newspaper requesting that the following ad be placed: "A pair of male vocalists to play with band. Must be dedicated, creative, not afraid to offend everyone and anyone. NO GAYS."

Donohue describes what happened next:

"The woman who fielded my call paused at the mention of 'NO GAYS' and said she would have to check to see if this was okay. After checking, she said that it wasn't acceptable.

"When I asked why it wasn't, she hesitated, saying that there was a word for something like this. Being a nice guy, I volunteered, 'bigoted'? Yes, she said. I then informed her that she must be mistaken because the *Village Voice* certainly has no problem with bigotry, offering as an example the 'NO CHRISTIANS' ad. That was an error, I was told, and against the rules. I got nowhere when I questioned how she could be sure that it wasn't intentional, so instead I simply asked for a copy of the rules. Lo and behold, she was unable to provide me with them.

"Disturbed again, she got off the phone to ask for more advice. I then disclosed who I was and what this was all about. Once again, she put me on hold. When she returned I told her that I was on to her game and that if I wanted to, I

could sue the newspaper for this. After a nervous reply, we ended the conversation.”

The Catholic League is not interested in suing the *Village Voice*, but it is interested in letting everyone know just how tolerant these Kings and Queens of Tolerance really are, which is why we notified the press about this incident. As for our courageous rock performers, it is obvious that when they brag about offending everyone and anyone, they really don’t mean what they say, otherwise they’d start bashing some group other than Christians.

“NOTHING SACRED” AXED AT LAST

Just as we were going to press, we learned that ABC apparently has decided to cancel “Nothing Sacred.” Several phone calls to the network, and everyone else connected to the show, failed to secure a definitive answer. It seems that ABC is quietly walking away from “Nothing.”

On March 19, the *Los Angeles Times* said that “Nothing” had been pulled for the next few weeks. “Although the network would not say the series is officially cancelled,” the newspaper said, “sources say it is not expected to return. The show has completed its production order, and the writing staff was completely dismissed.” The Catholic League was called by reporters who also learned that the show was unofficially pulled.

TV insiders told the league that ABC probably would not be forthcoming, and they were right. Evidently, the network doesn’t want to give the Catholic League the satisfaction of knowing that it won.

When William Donohue learned from a Catholic News Service reporter that the show was cancelled, he was delighted. He also said that the league took *some* credit for “Nothing’s” demise; he added that there was no audience for a depressing show about a dissident priest in a dysfunctional parish.

If everything that the league has learned proves to be accurate, then it is abundantly clear that this victory belongs to the members of the Catholic League. Congratulations on a job well done.

BIGOTRY TARS TWO NEW YORK STATE CAMPUSES

For the past few months, the Catholic League has been involved in an on-going battle over anti-religious bigotry that took place on two campuses of the State University of New York (SUNY). A satisfactory resolution to this matter was reached with the Stony Brook campus of SUNY, but not with the New Paltz campus.

In November, SUNY-New Paltz hosted a conference entitled, “Revolting Behavior: The Challenges of Women’s Sexual Freedom.” The conference featured a sex-toy sale, masturbation workshops, explicit discussions of sadomasochism, lesbian sex, etc. That was bad enough, but what got the league involved was the attack on Christians and Jews; both were mocked and humiliated in a most callous way. Then things really exploded at SUNY-Stony Brook when a campus newspaper published an anti-Catholic attack on Dr. Candace de Russy, the SUNY Trustee who blew the whistle on the fracas at New Paltz.

The newspaper, the Stony Brook *Press*, depicted graphically and

editorially a vile, anti-Catholic and ad hominem attack against Dr. de Russy. The league came to her assistance by writing to the governor, school chancellor, SUNY trustees, the presidents of the two SUNY campuses and every member of the New York State legislature. The letter asked school administrators to denounce the bigotry and requested members of the Assembly and Senate to support Dr. de Russy. Free speech, we reminded them, applies to politicians and educators, not just offending students.

Dr. Shirley Strum Kenny, president of the Stony Brook campus, responded professionally by criticizing what she labeled as a "sexist, anti-Catholic outburst against Mrs. de Russy." She also pledged to push for a course in Ethics in Journalism so that students will "take their ethical responsibilities seriously in the future."

There has been no response from New Paltz president Roger Bowen and that is why the league has not dropped this case. However, Governor George Pataki and SUNY Chancellor John Ryan, as well as many members of the legislature, strongly criticized what happened. Most encouraging, a resolution was introduced in the Assembly that addresses this issue in a responsible manner.

The league is most pleased with the support that Dr. de Russy has received. Aside from a dishonest editorial in the *New York Times* accusing her of "meddling," the public and the press have stood by this courageous Catholic scholar.

AMBASSADOR NOMINEE CHALLENGED

The Catholic League has asked the U.S. Senate not to confirm James Hormel as U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg. The league's

objections to President Clinton's nominee stem from Hormel's role in the 1996 San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Parade.

Providing commentary on the parade on KOFY-TV, Hormel gave his tacit endorsement to the anti-Catholic group, Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (the group has been mocking Catholicism since its founding in 1979). Hormel joined two broadcasters in welcoming the nun-dressed drag queens, laughing at their antics and showing general support for their agenda. Furthermore, when asked by Senator Tim Hutchinson to repudiate those who mock the Catholic Church, Hormel failed to do so.

The league believes that any one who sanctions religious bigotry has no legitimate role to play in representing the U.S. Hormel had an opportunity to object to the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence right on the air, but he did not do so. Worse, he refused to condemn Catholic bashing when asked to do so by Senator Hutchinson.

Considering the fact that Luxembourg is 97 percent Catholic, it makes no more sense to elevate Hormel to this post than it would to send Louis Farrakhan to Israel or David Duke to Kenya. Because of other problems in the White House, a vote on the Hormel nomination has been put on hold.

CRECHE CONTROVERSIES CONTINUE

In many parts of the country, this past Christmas was marked by conflict over its public celebration. The Catholic League was engaged in battles over the public display of crèches, winning some and losing some.

In Lorain, Ohio, the ACLU threatened to sue city officials for

erecting a crèche in Veterans Park; the ACLU director who led the charge is a pastor in a Lutheran church. The ACLU did more than threaten—its sued—officials in Florissant, Missouri for putting a crèche outside the Civic Center. The city of Syracuse, New York, was successful in securing a court order to display a crèche in Clinton Square, but in Jersey City, New Jersey, the city lost in its bid to place a crèche in front of City Hall. Glen Cove, Long Island erected, over much criticism, a crèche in the Village Square; the Catholic League and the Knights of Columbus were active in the cause.

In a memo to public school officials, New York City Schools Chancellor, Rudy Crew, stated that it was acceptable to display such secular symbols as “Christmas trees, Menorahs, and the Star and Crescent.” Upon learning of this development, league president William Donohue phoned the attorney who wrote the memo and asked her to cite the court ruling that determined the secular nature of a menorah. This led to confrontation.

To buttress her argument, the attorney cited the 1989 *County of Allegheny v. ACLU* decision. Donohue informed her that this ruling explicitly makes his case, namely that the court ruled in *Allegheny* that a menorah is a religious symbol. After quarreling, she pledged to research the case further. She later admitted that “there is much merit” to what Donohue said. He will be meeting with her early in the year to discuss a new policy for 1998.

On a positive note, the Catholic League erected a crèche in Central Park (this was the third year it did so) and displayed, for the first time, a crèche in Philadelphia. The crèche in Philadelphia was an especially gratifying experience as it was situated on federal property, across from the Liberty Bell. Cardinal Bevilacqua blessed it on December 18; unfortunately, as we went to press we learned that it was desecrated after the new year. The league asked that it be investigated as a possible bias crime. Plans are to erect

another one next year.

SANTA CLAUS CRUCIFIED

In a story that received national attention, the Catholic League protested a painting that hung in the front window of the Art Students League in New York City. The painting, by Robert Cenedella, showed Santa Claus nailed to a cross, hovering over New York. The artist claimed that his work was designed to protest the commercialization of Christmas.

The league asked the executive director of the Art Students League to move the painting inside, to a place that was less conspicuous; the display on a busy street, 57th street, made it difficult for passersby to avoid. Her refusal led to a media blitz over the matter.

The league's objection centered strictly on the misappropriation of the cross. We took no objection to art that protested the commercialization of Christmas, but we also maintained that it was not obvious that the painting conveyed that message. Our point was that the artist could have made the same point by putting Santa in a noose, thus avoiding a conflict with Christians.

What revealed the hypocrisy of the artist was his statement that he would not want to put Santa in a noose because that would offend African-Americans. Yet the same artist had no problem offending Christians by misusing the cross!

Because we never sought to remove the painting from the gallery, we were successful in carrying the argument; public sentiment was on the side of the Catholic League.

AGENDA OF “NOTHING SACRED” EXPOSED

The Catholic League’s protest of the ABC show, “Nothing Sacred,” has succeeded in exposing the agenda of Disney/ABC/20th Century Fox.

From the beginning, the league has maintained that this show was conceived not as entertainment first, but as propaganda. There is now overwhelming evidence that the league’s contention was right.

The networks subject all shows to the litmus test of ratings: if they’re good, they stay, if not, they go. This is not true of “Nothing Sacred.” Unlike other shows, “Nothing Sacred” does not live or die by ratings, rather it lives despite its awful response with the public. And the reason it lives is because there is a strong ideological investment on the part of its backers, one that is so strong that they are willing to lose money for the sake of keeping their political agenda alive.

Here’s the proof. ABC has canceled “Time Cop” and “Over the Top,” even though these shows posted better ratings than “Nothing Sacred.” It has announced that it will not extend the show, “You Wish,” beyond its initial run of 13 shows, even though the ratings for this show are far better than “Nothing Sacred’s.” It has put “Hiller and Diller” on the shelf for a month, even though its ratings are spectacular compared to those of “Nothing Sacred’s.” The reason is simple: these four shows have no agenda undergirding them.

As if more proof is necessary, consider the following. On October 23, ABC placed full-page ads in every major newspaper

in the nation defending “Nothing Sacred.” They spent hundreds of thousands of dollars quoting four priests who have spoken highly of the show. This, of course, is unprecedented: when has any network spent so much money advertising a show that has done so badly?

Then there were the ads by Kevin Anderson, the actor who plays Father Ray. Sitting in a chair, Anderson pleads with the public to make up their own minds whether the show is “controversial,” “blasphemous” or the “best new drama on TV.” Again, no show with ratings as bad as “Nothing Sacred” has ever received such treatment.

ABC has announced that it is standing by “Nothing Sacred” and has ordered a full-season of 22 shows. Unfazed, the Catholic League remains resolute in its commitment to do what it can to upend the show (see story inside).

PRISONERS’ RIGHTS VICTORY

The Catholic League’s intervention in a prisoners’ rights case ended in victory when a New Jersey correctional center bowed to the league’s demands.

In the fall, the league was contacted by an inmate at the Cape May County Correctional Center in Cape May, New Jersey, alleging that Mass was being denied to those incarcerated in protective custody. The league accepted the case after learning that Protestant inmates in protective custody were not denied religious services. The league asked for equal treatment.

The problem was resolved when the correctional center worked out a schedule with Our Lady of Angels Church in Cape May and

the Legion of Mary to provide for weekly Mass. The prisoner first contacted EWTN for advice and then EWTN contacted the Catholic League.

The league respects the rights of correctional facility authorities to maintain order in their prisons. It also understands that there are inmates who invoke religious rights for bogus means, as when escape plans are hatched and/or drugs are exchanged when they meet in private for supposed religious services. But in instances such as this one, there is no excusing the authorities.

What settled the issue for the league was the flagrant discrimination of Catholic inmates: if Protestant inmates (or those who belong to other religions) are accorded rights, and Catholics aren't, then that is reason enough for the Catholic League to enter the fray.

PROTEST OF "NOTHING SACRED" SETS NEW RECORD

The Catholic League's boycott of the sponsors of the ABC show, "Nothing Sacred," has already broken all previously-held boycott records for TV. Twenty major corporations have pulled sponsorship of the show, something no other organization has ever come close to doing. In addition, another quarter-million persons have signed the league's petition, bringing to 750,000 the number of Americans who have petitioned Disney to drop the show.

Thus far, the following corporate sponsors have stopped advertising on the show: Isuzu, Weight Watchers, K-Mart, Benckiser, DuPont, Red Lobster, Ocean Spray, Sears, AT&T,

Glaxo Wellcome, Ponderosa, Dunkin' Donuts, Scott's Liquid Gold, Chrysler-Plymouth, Honda, Arm & Hammer, Home Depot, Borden, Alberto Culver and Montgomery Ward.

Interestingly, Chrysler-Plymouth appeared as a sponsor on the October 2 episode of "Nothing Sacred" in the New York City (WABC) and Boston (WCVB) markets, though no one from the automobile company authorized any such ad. An investigation by Chrysler-Plymouth determined that the ABC affiliates in New York and Boston "erred" in placing the ads; an apology was quickly forthcoming from the affiliates.

A total of 32 Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim organizations have joined the Catholic League in the boycott. In addition to those listed in the last issue of *Catalyst*, the following eight organizations have joined: Catholic Central Union, Catholic Coalition for Truth, Catholics United for the Faith, Christian Action Network, Dove Foundation, National Association of Black Catholics, National Cops for Life and Pro-Ecclesia Foundation.

"Nothing Sacred" may be popular with the critics (they almost uniformly labeled it the best new show on TV), but it's a flop with the public. The ratings for the first month are in and "Nothing Sacred" is on the bottom of all the prime time shows on the four major networks.

The league's efforts have been so strong that Disney/ABC has struck back with pledges to energize their side against us. "There will be a significant response to the Catholic League," said co-executive producer of the show, David Manson. "We tried to be polite about their rhetoric, and perhaps that was a mistake. You will see a mobilized effort of support on behalf of the show," he added.

Reporters have told us that Disney does not want to pull the show for fear of allowing the Catholic League the opportunity to claim victory. However, many have said it's already too

late to say otherwise.