

# DISNEY SQUEEZED

Disney has seen better days. The latest financial data shows that these are bad times for the once family-friendly giant.

In mid-May, it was reported that Disney+ subscriptions had taken a nose dive, plummeting by 4 million customers around the world. Its streaming business lost \$659 million during the first three months of this year. It has lost more than \$1 billion in each of the last two quarters.

News reports note that at least part of this decline is a direct result of the pushback by parents against the entertainment giant. One story attributed the company's problems to its embrace of "identity politics—particularly, transgenderism, drag queens, and other types of gender non-conformity."

The release of our Disney movie during the first quarter of this year obviously played a role in accounting for its woes—millions have seen it—but exactly how big our input was is something we will never know.

If its numbers were going north, instead of south, during the time our documentary was released, we could conclude that we failed to move the needle. That, however, is not the case.

We know one thing: our film won another major award. "Walt's Disenchanted Kingdom" was named a GOLD Award Winner for Best Documentary Short in the overall competition. Jason Meath, who was co-executive producer with Bill Donohue, picked up the BRONZE Award for Best Director.

We still don't trust Disney. But we'd be happy if they proved us wrong.

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# DISNEY MOVIE SCORES; WINS 4 AWARDS AT L.A. FILM FEST

The Catholic League's documentary, "Walt's Disenchanted Kingdom," was an entry in the L.A. International Short Film Festival; the U.S. was one of 22 nations to offer nominations. We were nominated for six categories, and we learned on March 24 that we won in four of them—we even won the big one!

We won the award for "Best Documentary," "Best Editing," "Best Sound Design," and received Honorable Mention for "Best Trailer."

In each category, there were 3-5 nominations. Importantly, the awards we won for editing, trailer production and sound design were not just for documentaries—they were judged the best of *all* films submitted to the international festival. Bill Donohue and Jason Killian Meath are the executive producers.

Our movie has also been nominated for "Best Documentary" and "Best Poster Design" at The Prisma Film Festival in Rome, Italy; The Perth Christian Film Festival in Perth, Australia selected it for "Best Documentary"; and The Arizona Faith and Family Film Festival chose it as an "Official Selection for Best Documentary."

Moreover, we are delighted to report that our movie is doing extremely well on Amazon Prime, doubling or tripling the number of people who view it each week. When we add in the numbers from all platforms that have featured the film, it is clear that we have reached millions of Americans.

We never heard a word from Disney. They basically had two choices: sue us or shut up. They chose the latter, knowing

they had not a leg to stand on by suing us. We were very careful to take material that was in the public domain, effectively disarming those who may have wanted to settle this in court.

We did this movie because we wanted to alert Americans as to what has happened to this once family-friendly giant. Disney continues to do some good work, but that is overridden by its insistence on siding with those who are bent on sexualizing children. If only Disney would consistently treat children as children, no one would complain.

At a recent shareholder's meeting, Bob Iger, the Disney CEO, was asked about the agenda-driven content of Disney offerings. "We've recently gotten criticisms, as you expressed, for what some perceived to be agenda-driven content, and I'm sensitive to that actually," he said. "I'm very serious about that. It should not be agenda-driven. It should be entertainment-driven. That should be the goal of all of our stories."

Wonder who he had in mind?

We still don't trust him. That is why we will continue to press Disney whenever they go off the rails.

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## **FBI CROSSES THE LINE**

The FBI wants Catholics to rat on each other. In doing so, it has crossed the line.

On April 11, Bill Donohue wrote to FBI Director Christopher Wray asking him to make public those documents that are related to the FBI's outreach program to "mainline Catholic parishes" and "local diocesan leadership." They were targeted

because of “radicalization” within the Catholic Church.

“This is taking the FBI into new, and disturbing territory,” he said.

We know from previous disclosures that the FBI was probing “Radical-Traditionalist Catholics” (RTCs). To this day we have not seen any evidence that they are a threat to anyone. Now the FBI has upped the ante, going after “mainline” Catholics and dioceses.

On February 9, Donohue made public his concerns about the FBI’s interest in RTCs. “What’s next?” Will it be a war on “Catholics who are orthodox?”

The First Amendment provides for a healthy measure of autonomy between church and state, so when the state encroaches on religious bodies, it had better have unambiguous and very serious reasons for doing so. Donohue asked Wray, “I would like to know what they are in this instance.”

Catholics have a right to know what the FBI is up to. The evidence is clear: Violence against Catholic churches and crisis pregnancy centers are largely going unattended to, yet probes of innocent Catholics are being conducted. This raises important questions that go to the heart of the FBI’s legitimacy.

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## **RELIGIOUS RIGHTS THREATENED; BIDEN TARGETS STUDENTS**

The Biden administration is threatening to excise the religious rights of students on campus installed by the Trump

administration.

Under Trump, colleges and universities were prohibited from restricting religious student group activities; if they did, their federal funding would end. Now the Biden administration is seeking to overturn this rule, allowing institutions of higher education to return to their censorial ways.

The Department of Education (DOE), under Secretary Miguel Cardona, said that beginning February 22, the public would have 30 days to comment on the proposal to nix the Trump initiative. The DOE says that "it is not necessary in order to protect the First Amendment right to free speech and free exercise of religion given existing legal protections." It also says the policy is "unduly burdensome."

Both of these statements are manifestly false. It was precisely because the religious rights of students were not protected on campus that the previous administration was beckoned to act. Moreover, it is risible for an administration that is regulation-happy to start worrying about rules that are "unduly burdensome."

When it comes to the rights of LGBT students, the Biden administration says we can't have enough protections. Why, then, when it comes to the rights of religious students is it deemed they have enough rights?

A few years ago, Princeton professor and Catholic League board of advisor Robert P. George noted, "There is an antipathy, sometimes an open hostility to religion" on campus. George speaks with authority: he is a former chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom.

In 2019, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities' Presidents Conference, a network of over 180 Christian colleges worldwide, registered their concerns about the religious rights of students. Shirley Mullen, president of Houghton College, a Christian liberal arts college, said, "The

standard western narrative of progress has assumed that deeply held religious beliefs, especially when there is diversity in those beliefs, result in intolerance, conflict, violence, oppression.”

There certainly is no shortage of examples of religious students being badgered on campus. Courses, lectures and workshops abound on the prevalence of alleged “Christian privilege,” a term used to bash Christians, especially male heterosexuals.

It is because of this poisonous milieu, where religious students are treated as outcasts, if not the enemy, that their rights on campus merited protections from the previous administration. The Biden administration wants to eviscerate those rights.

To read our report on the plight of religious students on campus, see pp. 4-5.

On February 28, we issued a news release informing our subscribers how they could register their objections with the Biden administration.

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## **“SOUTH PARK” REDUX**

When “South Park” creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker depicted Prince Harry and Meghan Markle—making cartoon characters out of them—the celeb couple threatened to sue. This inspired the *New York Post* to interview Stone and Parker.

The creators said their work has been the subject of “various lawsuits,” adding that they have been criticized so many times “we can’t even remember.” But they did remember one critic:

the Catholic League.

“It [the criticism] was all coming from the right, we were considered counterculture. The Catholic League are always on our a-s—it kind of always came from that side.” Bill Donohue immediately set them straight.

“After I was lampooned on April 4, 2007—I was portrayed as taking over as pope from Pope Benedict XVI (only to be done in by Jesus)—I was asked on TV why I didn’t sue them. I didn’t and that is because I am a public figure, and therefore under *New York Times v. Sullivan* (1964), I am fair game.”

In fact, the day after Donohue was depicted, he said the following:

“I have no idea why ‘South Park’ creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker caricature me as a heartless thug. In any event, I stand convicted and have no defense. Now I have to get back to business—I hear someone just took liberties with the Easter Bunny.”

Every year since 2007, Comedy Central runs the “South Park” episode, “Fantastic Easter Special,” featuring Donohue. Check your listings close to Easter.

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## **DISNEY FILM A SMASHING SUCCESS; A TRUE CULTURAL MARKER**

The January 23rd release of our Disney documentary, “Walt’s Disenchanted Kingdom,” has won the plaudits of Americans from every walk of life. It promises to be the cultural marker we

expected it would be. In fact, it has been selected as an entry into several film festivals as the Best Short Film of the year.

The movie was made available on the Catholic League's website, via our YouTube channel, as well as on Amazon Prime, SalemNow, MRCTV, Google, Facebook, CNSNews and FRONTPAGE.

It didn't take long for YouTube to slap an age restriction on it for those under 18, making viewers jump through a few hoops before seeing it. It also didn't take us long to go around them by posting the movie on Rumble. We reached an enormous audience.

Multiple radio and TV interviews extended our reach, and all were friendly. None of our critics sought an interview, but we know they didn't like it. We know that because of the hate mail we received. It had no effect on us—par for the course.

We did not hear a word from Disney, which was expected. What, exactly, was it going to say? Everything in the movie was accurate and we ran it by several lawyers to make sure that Disney had no opportunity to do anything other than carp.

We could have chosen to charge a fee to see the film, but we decided against it. After all, our goal was to reach as many people as possible—from every religious body—so we wanted to make it available to everyone. Also, many of our members contributed to appeals asking for funding, so we didn't want to hit them up again.

How will this affect Disney? We know they have had some serious money problems as of late. Their stock declined by 44 percent last year, and they recently laid off 7,000 workers; it needs to cut costs by \$5.5 billion. Disney lost \$1.5 billion from July through September last year, and its television earnings are expected to decline by \$1.6 billion in 2023.



We have no illusions about taking down Disney. Our goal is twofold: to educate the public about its moral decline, and to inspire Disney stockholders and officials to reconsider its programming. If it would only stay out of politics and stop trying to sexually engineer kids, it would win the support of millions whom it has alienated. It would also make money in the process.

We are thankful to all our members for their prayers, goodwill, and donations. Without your support, projects like “Walt’s Disenchanted Kingdom” would never happen.

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## **BIDEN’S ABORTION QUIP**

On January 30, when President Biden was walking on the White House lawn, he was asked by a reporter about Catholic opposition to publicly funded abortions. “Catholic bishops are demanding that federal tax dollars not fund abortions.”

In an angry reply, Biden pointed his finger and said, “No, they are not all doing that, nor is the Pope doing that.”

Biden’s monumental ignorance of basic Catholic teachings on abortion is startling.

From the day abortion was legalized by the Supreme Court in 1973, right up to today, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has not only opposed abortion, it has resolutely opposed publicly funded abortions.

Indeed, as recently as January 27, the USCCB’s Pro-Life Committee, chaired by Bishop Michael Burbidge, sent a letter to House and Senate leaders about this issue. Burbidge said that the “government should never fund the destruction of

innocent preborn children.”

For Biden to misrepresent Pope Francis is even more serious.

On September 15, 2021, Pope Francis was unequivocal on this issue. “Abortion is murder.” He rightly observed that Catholic teaching is consistent with science. “Scientifically, it’s a human life. The textbooks teach us that. But is it right to take it out to solve a problem? This is why the Church is so strict on this issue because accepting this is kind of like accepting daily murder.”

For a Catholic president to misrepresent Catholic teaching on a life and death issue is appalling.

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## **POPE BENEDICT XVI, R.I.P.**

Pope Benedict XVI was a towering intellectual, something he shared with his predecessor, St. John Paul II. His philosophical and theological writings will be studied for decades. But it was his courage that endeared him to so many Catholics.

As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, he served St. John Paul II as enforcer of the Church’s doctrinal teachings. He did so with prudence and justice, setting an example for those who would come after him in this post.

In 2006, he sparked much controversy for his comments on Islam. In his address at Regensburg University, he said, “Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.”

Unfortunately, most of the media did not emphasize that he

twice said, "I quote." He was referring to a remark made by a 14th century Byzantine emperor. Cardinal Ratzinger's point was that faith and reason must exist together, and just as the universities must be criticized for promoting radical skepticism—reason without faith—there are those who purport to be followers of religion who promote faith without reason. Both are unacceptable.

In 2005, the day before Ratzinger assumed his duties as pontiff, he addressed the cardinals in Rome. He spoke about the "doctrine of relativism," the popular and pernicious notion that there are no moral absolutes, and no moral hierarchy of virtues.

In the same historic Good Friday homily, he unloaded on abusive priests. "How much filth there is in the Church, even among those who, in the priesthood, ought to belong entirely to him!"

No one did more to purge the Church of the homosexual subculture than Benedict. He made it clear that men with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" should not become priests.

Benedict's critics were often as inaccurate as they were unfair. Laurie Goodstein of the *New York Times* wrote in 2013 that Benedict never removed predators from the priesthood. She was wrong. All total, from 2005 to 2013, he defrocked some eight hundred molesting priests.

Benedict's detractors called him "God's Rottweiler" for being too draconian in his sanctions against dissidents. They were factually wrong. No one's license to teach theology was pulled and no one was fired from teaching at a Catholic college or university because of Rome's intervention.

Bill Donohue is proud of the fact that the *New York Times* called him the "Rottweiler's Rottweiler," a backhanded tribute to his strong defense of him.

Pope Benedict XVI was a selfless man, and his contributions to the Church, both in word and in deed, will be heralded for years to come.

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## **DISNEY MOVIE SET TO OPEN**

The Catholic League movie “Walt’s Disenchanted Kingdom” is set to open on several media platforms. Please check our website for information on where it can be accessed (when we went to print this matter was being fine-tuned).

We will report in the March issue the kind of reception the documentary garnered, but the early indications suggest it will be a hit. We put a lot of effort and money into this project, knowing the time was right to take on Disney.

Disney, of course, is just a microcosm of what is wrong with our culture. But it symbolizes how aggressive the ruling class has become in shoving its secular agenda down our throats. That’s why we made the movie.

Here’s some good news that is not widely known. An investor, Kenneth Simeone, has filed a 22-page lawsuit against Disney demanding the company turn over its internal records about its opposition to the Florida law that seeks to stop sexualizing children in the public schools. This could prove to be very revealing.

Had the previous Disney CEO, Bob Chapek, agreed to meet with Tony Perkins, the evangelical leader, and Bill Donohue, perhaps the company would have been able to skirt the problems it is now experiencing. But that’s now too late.

The first public showing of the movie trailer was at the

Legatus event in New York City (see p. 2). It was very well received. We expect that the movie will also hit a chord.

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## **DISNEY FILM WILL OPEN SOON; BIG AUDIENCE ANTICIPATED**

The Catholic League documentary on Disney was scheduled to be released by now but it has been delayed until early next year because of some timing issues associated with its distribution. It will be available on various streaming services. The trailer will be posted on our website in mid-December.

Salem Media is slated to pick it up, and we are hopeful that many other prominent platforms will also roll it out.

We have an all-star cast.

Jason Meath is the Executive Producer and CEO of Meath Television Media LLC. He did the planning, the interviews and the editing. Without his active engagement, the film would not have been made.

Tony Perkins is president of the Family Research Council and one of the nation's leading evangelical leaders. Bill Donohue has been working with him for decades.

Mercedes Schlapp is a Cuban-American and a distinguished commentator on contemporary political issues. She and her husband, Matt, are well known in the conservative community. She is the host of the film.

Dr. Ben Carson served as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Trump. He is an outspoken African

American whose pro-life record is second to none.

Miranda Devine hails from Australia and is a committed Catholic and author. She writes a column for the *New York Post* and frequently appears on TV.

Brent Bozell is president of the Media Research Center and an advocate for all the right causes. He serves on our board of advisors; we have worked cooperatively together for many years.

Vivek Ramaswamy is an Indian-American entrepreneur. A Hindu (he attended a Catholic high school), he is best known for trying to steer big corporations in the right direction.

David Horowitz is a Jewish activist who spent his early years promoting radical causes. But he had “second thoughts” about his political leanings and has been an important conservative voice for decades.

Christian Toto is a film critic at the *Washington Times* and author of a book on how Hollywood became a partisan of left-wing politics.

It is obviously too early for us to know the impact of this movie. We anticipate it will be well received by a big audience. Many in the cast are in a position of influence themselves to bring it to their followers.

Our culture is in crisis, and what is driving much of it is a callous disregard for the innocence of children. Too many activists, celebrities and educators are bent on indoctrinating young boys and girls with some very sick ideas. Regrettably, Disney is one of the most guilty players.

Check out our website for the most current information on the film's release.