

Fodor's Agrees To Changes

The Catholic League is pleased that Random House has agreed to make changes to the following entries (in italics) in its Fodor's guidebooks. The alterations to be made, as detailed by Fodor's vice president and publisher Timothy Jarrell, are also outlined here:

From *Mexico 2007*:

Outside the Antigua Basílica stands a statue of Juan Diego, who became the first indigenous saint in the Americas with his canonization in summer 2002. (This canonization was widely seen as a shrewd political move on the part of the Catholic church as it tries to retain its position, particularly among Mexico's indigenous population.)

Jarrell: "We have removed the phrase 'a shrewd political move' which implies—without counterargument—that the church acted for political motives instead of moral and religious ones."

From *Exploring Ireland* (6th Edition):

The position of women in the republic is much affected by the power of the Catholic Church, and Pope John Paul II's reaffirmation of its doctrines on contraception, abortion and divorce. Ireland ranks last among the world's developed countries with access to birth control (though the impact of AIDS has had a sharper effect than decades of religious dogma), and until 1996 was alone in Europe in having no civil divorce. A booming economy and child abuse scandals in the Catholic Church have pushed the South further towards the liberalism of mainland Europe.

Jarrell: "We agree that the paragraph implying that the position of women in Ireland has been negatively affected by the Catholic Church is simplistic, one-sided, and debatable."

Obviously, millions of women in Ireland believe otherwise. We will reword that section for the next edition."

From *France 2007*:

The main point of interest in the region is the Abbaye de La Celle, a 12th-century Benedictine Abbey that served as a convent until the 17th century, when it was closed because its young nuns had begun to run wild and were known less for their chastity than "the color of their petticoats and the name of their lover."

Jarrell: "Although it has been popularly reported that the monastery at Abbaye de La Celle was closed because its inhabitants possessed loose morals, we have not been able to independently confirm this. Therefore, we have dropped the reference. (If you have documentation showing why the monastery closed, we would be happy to add an explanation for the closure to the hotel description.)"

Thousands flock to Lourdes annually, many in quest of a miraculous cure for sickness or disability. A religious pilgrimage is one thing, but a sightseeing expedition has other requirements. The famous churches and grotto and the area around them are woefully lacking in beauty. Off-season, acres of empty parking lots echo. Shops are shuttered, restaurants closed. In season a mob jostles to see the grotto behind a forest of votive candles. Some pundits might say that Lourdes ingeniously combines the worst of both worlds.

Jarrell: "We have dropped language labeling the faithful as a 'mob.' We have also dropped the last line stating that Lourdes 'ingeniously combines the worst of both worlds.'"

From *Portugal (7th Edition)*:

In a 1930 Pastoral Letter, the Bishop of Leiria declared the apparitions worthy of belief, thus approving the "Cult of Fatima."

Jarrell: "We have removed the phrase 'Cult of Fatima.'"

We thank our supporters who told us about the Fodor's problem. Should you find similar problems in other books, please contact us.

CNN Gets It Wrong

On August 7, CNN did a report on the opening of "Gay Street" in Rome, a section frequented by homosexuals. The network's Rome bureau chief, Alessio Vinci, concluded his report this way:

"In a country where practically everyone is Catholic, the words of the pope still carry some weight. And although the Vatican did not comment on the opening of Gay Street, the pope's position is well-known: on numerous occasions, he reaffirmed that gays in the Catholic Church are not welcome."

It was nice to know the pope still carries "some weight" in a nation where nearly everyone was baptized in his church. What came as a surprise, however, was the news that the pope has a "position" on homosexuality: all along we thought that he merely accepted what the Catholic Church has always taught about the subject. And, of course, what the Church teaches is that homosexuals are, in fact, welcome. What is not welcome is homosexuality. Neither, for that matter, is adultery, though that hasn't stopped the Church from welcoming heterosexuals.

All of this may be confusing to the average reporter, but we have higher expectations for CNN's Rome bureau chief. Surely there must be some Catholics there he can repair to for advice.

Catholic Bashers Smear Brownback

An e-mail was circulated in late July among evangelicals in Iowa asking them not to split the Christian vote between former Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas and Kansas Senator Sam Brownback; they were urged to vote for Huckabee, an evangelical, over Brownback, a Roman Catholic.

The letter stemmed from Walnut Creek Community Church in Windsor Heights. It said that unlike President George W. Bush, and his father, both of whom had to learn “how to speak to evangelicals,” Governor Huckabee is “one of us.”

The missive continued as follows: “I know Senator Brownback converted to Roman Catholicism in 2002. Frankly, as a recovering Catholic myself, that is all I need to know about his discernment when compared to the Governor’s. I don’t know if this fact is widely known among evangelicals who are supporting Brownback.”

Bill Donohue addressed this issue in a July 31 news release:

“Discernment. Evangelicals have it, and Catholics do not. But are those evangelicals who ex-press themselves this way capable of discerning the difference between persuasiveness and abrasiveness? Do they really think all Catholics are rote-minded robots who let the Vatican do their thinking for them? We thought we’d gotten beyond such nonsense, but apparently some stereotypes are proving hardier than others.

“Like Sam Brownback, Mike Huckabee is a man of character, and as such he would never choose to be associated with such bigotry. The blame for this incident lies squarely with Rev.

Tim Rude, pastor of the church. Unfortunately for him, he has now compounded his problem by saying that he did not intend his e-mail to be made public, and that in any event, 'All I was trying to say is that Protestants should vote for Protestants.' Great. But now that his gig is up—everyone knows about his stealth campaign against Brownback—the time has come for Rev. Rude (what a great name!) to fess up and apologize. He might also take this opportunity to explain his lack of confidence in the ability of Protestants to discern whom they should vote for in the election."

Shortly after Donohue's news release went out, Rev. Rude issued an apology in which he admitted that his references to Catholicism were "careless." He explained, "I support Governor Huckabee first and Senator Brownback as a close second" and that "in no way do I think a Catholic would not make a great president." It was telling that Rev. Rude was at first questioning Brownback's discernment as a Catholic convert, but then in a space of mere hours was making Brownback his second choice (out of more than a dozen candidates) for president.

"The Ten" Amuses Critics; Double Standard Is Nauseating

On August 3, ThinkFilm released "The Ten," a movie composed of 10 different vignettes depicting characters breaking each of the Ten Commandments. The Catholic League's own Kiera McCaffrey watched the film and found it to be absolutely asinine. The skits, all absurd comedy, are a mix of the vulgar, the scatological and the blasphemous.

Amidst characters like a woman who has sex with a wooden ventriloquist's dummy and prisoners who sodomize each other is a virginal librarian who travels to Mexico and begins an erotic affair with a carpenter named Jesus. The name is no coincidence. The man she is having sex with is Jesus Christ. He's supposed to be bringing about Armageddon, but finds it too much of a hassle, so he chooses to bed the American visitor instead. During sex, she screams his name (thus breaking the second commandment). Years later, when she is married to another, she has flashbacks of her affair whenever her husband leads the family in saying grace at the dinner table.

Another skit, related to keeping the Sabbath holy, has grown men lying to their wives about being sick on Sunday mornings. Instead of going to church, they take the opportunity to sit around naked together. To them, this is a better way of getting in touch with God's creation than attending services.

"The Ten" did not open in many theaters, and has not made very much money. What we found troubling, however, are the reactions of the critics to this offensive and thoroughly uninteresting film. Various reviewers were amused by puerile comedy; a quick sampling shows they were not concerned by the anti-Christian content:

Variety declared, "Only Christians with a very liberal sense of humor are likely to enjoy 'The Ten.' Even lay viewers will need to be tolerant of gags as envelope-pushing as anything in 'Borat.'" The online magazine *Slant* admitted, "'The Ten' is, I guess, sacrilegious in the strictest sense of the term..." And Roger Ebert heartily approved, noting, "'The Ten' is comprised of 10 blasphemous and hysterical stories that put the insanity back in Christianity."

The web site *NotComing.com* declared, "'The Ten' is cohesive in the irreverence of its scenarios (in my favorite, Jesus Christ-Justin Theroux as a disheveled, overly hirsute

carpenter....)” Another online page, EfilmCritic.com, said of the filmmakers, “They’re almost gleeful in their crudity; grinning ever-wider as they seem to ask the audience just who this bit of blasphemy is hurting.” Critic Emanuel Levy described the film as “Comprised of ten blasphemous vignettes, each inspired by one of the Biblical Commandments, [it] goes out of its way to be irreverent and hilarious....”

The Associated Press and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* both noted the Jesus sex scenes; Independent Critics.com proclaims the sketch containing them to be the funniest, noting as an aside, “By the way, did I mention that conservative Christians may find this film offensive?” FilmStew.com raved, “‘The Ten’ is as sacrilegious as 1979’s *The Life of Brian*....”

In a culture where tolerance is touted as the supreme virtue, when it comes to Christianity, the media elites only show tolerance to those who misappropriate Christian beliefs and imagery for their own tawdry ends. We rarely see this happen with any other religions. As Bill Donohue said to the media on August 1, “If Hollywood were to substitute Muhammad for Jesus, it is a sure bet that many of these same critics wouldn’t find the humor in it. Moreover, we’d all be watching the fallout that such a movie would engender on the evening news.”

Jay Leno’s Obsession

During a five-week stretch in June and July, the “Tonight Show with Jay Leno” ridiculed priests six times and the pope once; all of the priest jokes were sexual in nature and painted priests as molesters.

- June 18: Robin Williams gets into an extended diatribe about

priests as pedophiles

- June 20: Leno cracks a joke about priests as pedophiles
- June 21: Leno makes a joke about a drunken pedophile priest
- July 12: Leno ridicules the pope for restating Catholic doctrine on salvation
- July 18: Leno portrays all priests as pedophiles
- July 23: Leno jokes about priests using the Harry Potter books as “bait” to lure kids
- July 23: Leno talks about a priest who pays to see a male stripper at a gay nightclub and jokes that the priest was cheating on his altar boy

Hypocritical priests make for good script, but in Jay Leno’s mind, priests apparently have a monopoly on hypocrisy. This suggests that either he is clueless about other forms of hypocrisy, or there is a strong animus against Catholicism at work. If it’s the former, the Catholic League can help—we track lots of hypocrites, many of whom live in Leno’s Hollywood backyard. If it’s the latter, we suggest he knock it off.

San Diego Minutemen Harass Catholics

The San Diego Minutemen, an anti-illegal immigrant group not affiliated with either the Minute-man Project or the Minutemen Civil Defense Corps, chose to target St. Peter’s Catholic Church in Fallbrook, California. Some of the Minutemen’s

protests were accompanied by anti-Catholic bigotry.

Father Edward "Bud" Kaicher, pastor of the suburban San Diego parish, extended a helping hand to day workers seeking employment in the area; for this, the San Diego Minutemen displayed the priest in effigy as Satan. Worse, this right-wing brigade harassed Catholics going to church, used bullhorns to spout their invective, uttered patently anti-Catholic remarks at parishioners, and even stooped so low as to intimidate little kids on the day of their First Communion.

Showing how incredibly de-based and uncivil they are, the San Diego Minutemen even sought to paint all priests as pedophiles and pledged to continue their incivility all summer long. To top it off, these xenophobes are illiterate. "With all the pediphelia [sic] problems going on in the church," a posting on the group's Internet site said, "it makes no sense to have 50 loitering men watching little children playing on the playground each morning."

There are legitimate ways to protest, but the tactics used by the San Diego Minutemen were anything but. By succumbing to anti-Catholic bigotry and harassment, the Minutemen discredited their cause and lost all moral grounds upon which to make their appeal.

On July 10, the day after the Catholic League blew the whistle on the Minutemen's anti-Catholic bigotry, the group accused us of creating "hatred amongst Cath-olics nationwide against Amer-icans standing up for what's right and legal." It also accused the illegal immigrants of increasing "crime and disease in our communities," and said that the "corrupt Catholic church" was committing "outrageous crimes and deeds."

Regardless of whether one is sympathetic or not to the plight of illegal immigrants—and/or the grievances of legal immigrants—there was one issue that all fair-minded persons should have been able to agree upon: there was no role for

bigotry in this dispute. All the Catholic League did was ask for all parties to this dispute to exercise civility. Unfortunately, some of our critics unleashed their own hate-filled screeds. Herewith is a sample of the invective that reached our office:

- “I’d be putting a mine field on the border—warn them of course and then do it.”
- “You compound your embarrassing blindness by attacking the messengers of these facts with petty name calling, and even go so far as to call for a ‘Catholic Jihad’ against those who are concerned about the impact that these very real issues will have...”
- “I don’t understand how the Catholic League can support a church that is harboring felons.”
- “I am also very angry that you’re issuing your news releases in Spanish! Why does the Catholic League need to explain itself to these people?”
- “South America and Mexico are pushing on my country and as an American citizen...It is against the law for churches to help day labor services because of the separation of church and state.”
- “By this sweeping and arrogant elitist attack on the people who oppose the illegal invasion of our country from the south, you are putting yourself in the same league with the overwhelming leftist, gay-friendly, California Amchurch hierarchy which hopes to replenish its dwindling flocks with illegal Mexicans.”
- “I also wanted to register my total shock and annoyance at your first-time ever, as far as I’m aware, use of Spanish as if it were incumbent on Catholics to explain to Mexicans in America in their language various situations as opposed to them learning, understanding and speaking English.”

This kind of nativism is unacceptable. It cannot be stressed too strongly, however, that the Catholic League does not condone illegal immigration and supports laws to enforce our borders.

Update On “The View”

Looks like our *New York Times* op-ed page ad of June 12 worked. That was the ad which questioned, “What’s Happened to Barbara Walters?” The ad was written to pressure Walters, co-owner of “The View,” to get her panelists in line: we recounted 15 occasions where anti-Catholic remarks were voiced on the program over the previous nine months.

Ever since our ad appeared, the gals have been good. We expect them to keep it that way.

House Effort To Snub Cardinal Fails

A congressional committee tried to snub a prominent U.S. cardinal. The Catholic League acted, and the committee backed down. That we achieved a victory shouldn’t surprise anyone—we’ve achieved lots of them. But the fact that it happened in a matter of mere hours was truly noteworthy. Here’s what happened:

On July 19, the *New York Post* reported that a nonbinding

resolution commemorating the 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese of New York had run into trouble in the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee. Aides to Rep. Henry Waxman of California, who chairs the committee, reportedly told Rep. Vito Fossella of New York, who introduced the resolution in May, that New York Archbishop Cardinal Edward M. Egan's name must be removed from the resolution if it was to be passed.

In a July 19 news release, Bill Donohue said:

"This is a defining moment for those who claim to be 'religion friendly': they can put up or shut up. The last thing any sitting congressman needs to do is to get into a fight with Catholics over this issue.

"It smacks of hubris for any public official to micromanage a resolution honoring the Archdiocese of New York. Moreover, it is only right that Cardinal Egan be mentioned in this resolution, and it is outrageous to even suggest that his name be deleted. If there is some congressman who wants to debate this issue with me, he or she should step forward now: I'll arrange for a debate on TV. Otherwise, we look forward to a speedy unanimous vote on this resolution as it was written."

Just a few short hours after Donohue's comments were re-leased to the media, the Catholic League learned that the Government Reform and Oversight Committee had passed the resolution as it was initially introduced by Rep. Fossella; committee chairman Waxman called Fossella to tell him the news. As a result, there was no showdown with those who wanted to manipulate Fossella's splendid resolution.

We then contacted the office of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to make sure that passage of this fine statement honoring the New York Archdiocese proceeded without delay or revision. On July 25, the House voted 423-0 to pass the resolution—with Cardinal Egan's name still included.

New Pittsburgh Bishop Assailed

On July 18, Pope Benedict XVI named Bishop David Zubik the new Bishop of Pittsburgh. A native Pittsburgher, he was greeted with enthusiasm by most area residents. A noticeable exception was the way John McIntire of WTZN-FM reacted.

McIntire sported his anti-Catholic colors by making several coarse statements about Bishop Zubik's reception with local children. "That's a dangerous scenario," he said. McIntire also exclaimed, "who the hell cares about a guy at the head of some bureaucratic organization," and went on to slam men "dressed in funny costumes" and gay seminarians.

The person who brought this issue to our attention is Br. Gabriel Myriam Kurzawski, a Benedictine Monk and seminarian at St. Vincent Archabbey. He registered a complaint with McIntire's boss, Jim Meltzer, labeling McIntire's remarks "crude and hateful"; he also demanded an apology. He added, "I do not feel that I have to list the many positive contributions the Catholic Church has made in the Pittsburgh area over the past two-hundred plus years; these acts are seen daily by those in need."

We agree with Br. Gabriel; Bishop Zubik deserves none of this. We suggest that our members tell McIntire's boss what they think. Write to Jim Meltzer, Vice President, 93.7 The Zone/WTZN, 651 Holiday Drive, Foster Plaza 5, Pittsburgh, PA 15220.

Let Meltzer know, too, that if McIntire wants to debate Bill Donohue, all he has to do is give him a ring.

Film Set In Inquisition Goes Too Far

“Goya’s Ghosts,” an English-language film released in Europe in 2006, opened in the United States on July 20. Set in Spain in 1792, the story recounts the fate of Inés, a young woman (a friend of the painter Francisco Goya), who is arrested by the Holy Office of the Inquisition after being accused of secretly practicing Jewish customs. The Catholic League’s Kiera McCaffrey viewed the movie to see how the Church was portrayed. Here is what she saw:

Brother Lorenzo, the fiery antagonist of the film, is disturbed by the fact that the Church isn’t doing enough to lock away and kill those who are not faithful Catholics. Lorenzo chiefly targets is those individuals who are “Judaizers” and secretly retain some of the practices of their Jewish ancestors. Brother Lorenzo appeals to the bishop and the other Spanish clergy, who put him in charge of renewed efforts in the Inquisition. Lorenzo teaches the priests how best to catch Jews, by ways such as being wary of any naked man who shields himself from view.

Two of Lorenzo’s disciples take their duty of observation to a local tavern, where they spy the beautiful young Inés having dinner with her brothers. After Inés refuses a pork dish, she is soon summoned to appear before leaders of the Inquisition. Seated in a dank dungeon, Inés is accused of being a heretic and practicing Jewish rituals. Insisting she just doesn’t like pork, Inés jumps at the chance to “prove” it. She doesn’t realize that this involves “the Question,” a method of interrogation involving tying the suspect’s hands behind her back and lifting her off of the ground by her wrists. Moaning

in pain, Inés continues to insist that she is a good Catholic. The Church leaders implore her to tell them the truth. Seeing no other way out, Inés asks them to tell her what the truth is—she'll agree to anything. She soon signs a "confession" for the crime of being a Judaizer, and is sent to prison.

After Inés' rich father tries to bribe the bishop to release his daughter, the cruel bishop takes his money and keeps the girl locked away. To free her would mean admitting that "the Question" can provoke false confessions, and the Church has great faith in "the Question."

While rotting in prison, Inés is repeatedly raped by Brother Lorenzo, and gives birth to a daughter who is taken from her and sent to a convent school. (The girl runs away and becomes a prostitute.) Inés is eventually freed when French forces release the prisoners of the Inquisition and jail the clerics, but she is now mentally unbalanced and physically disabled.

The general subject of the Inquisition itself is not a problem. Certainly grave sins were committed by leaders of the Church during that time, and this is not something that should be forgotten by Catholics or anyone else. In 1998, Pope John Paul II himself called for the Church to take an objective look at the historical truth of the matter and make an "examination of conscience" about the actions of certain members of the Church.

The issue with "Goya's Ghosts," however, is that every member of the clergy in the film is shown to be cruel and vengeful. All the priests are hungry for blood, and are more concerned with controlling the attitudes of the public than looking after the spiritual well-being of the faithful. The viewer is not provided with one redeeming member of the clergy. Anyone knowing little about the Catholic Church would walk away from the film thinking there is nothing at all positive about the faith.

In the United States, at least, there haven't been many people even walking into the theater. Panned by critics throughout the country as laughable and poorly melodramatic, "Goya's Ghosts" didn't meet with as much enthusiasm as it did in Europe, and failed to make a dent in the box office. It's refreshing to know that painting the Church as corrupt and brutal isn't enough by itself to pull in paying customers.