

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

William A. Donohue

Every time I think I've heard it all, I'm proven wrong. There is never a dull moment at the Catholic League. Consider what happened during Lent alone.

James Cameron of "Titanic" fame threw the first major salvo of the season by arguing, along with Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino, that the Jesus family tomb had been found. As a result, Christians were supposed to rethink the Resurrection, as well as the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene (familiar stuff to *Da Vinci Code* fans). Sounding more like Las Vegas gamblers playing the odds, these charlatans pretended they had a better than even chance of proving their claims. Indeed, Cameron even went so far as to say that he believes they succeed-ed in their efforts "beyond any reasonable doubt."

Cameron made his remarkable assertion in his Foreword to the Jacobovici-Pellegrino book, *The Jesus Family Tomb*. To say he stands alone—in the entire world—making this fatuous claim cannot be disputed. Here's what I told Pellegrino on the "Today" show back in March: "I look at this book, there's not one citation in the book, there's not one footnote, there's not one endnote. Both of us have doctorates. We know the way science proceeds. You go through a peer review or you present your findings in a scientific journal. James Cameron was right—he said this reads like a detective novel because it is a novel."

Pellegrino is a nice guy, but he's also someone who is determined to believe whatever he wants to believe. So at the end of the interview, I asked him, "Where did Judah [Jesus' alleged son] come from?" He then said that a Jesuit told him that "if there was a child" his name would have been "Didymos

Judas Thomas.” To which I responded, “I thought it would be O’Malley.” At least the camera crew got a good laugh.

Then we learned that a schools superintendent in Rhode Island banned the Easter Bunny. The reasoning employed by this learned man was that the Easter Bunny reminds people of Easter and Easter is a Christian holiday and that excludes non-Christians. The only response I could think of that would make any sense was to make a parody out of this. This explains why I objected to the Peter Rabbit substitute: anyone who would steal from Mr. McGregor’s garden is not a proper role model for impressionable youngsters.

On a more serious note, we swung into action to protest a substitute teacher who had the nerve to wipe ashes off the forehead of a Catholic high school student on Ash Wednesday (in a mostly Protestant area). We are following through on this due to the lame response afforded the public official in charge. That this can still happen in 2007 is startling.

The naked chocolate Jesus artist, Cosimo Cavallaro, was another treat. Anderson Cooper was kind enough to invite us on to discuss the “artwork” on CNN. After complaining that the Catholic League had stopped him from displaying his work at the Roger Smith Hotel, Cavallaro asked me, “Where do you think I should exhibit this?” My retort did not bring a smile to his face: “In New Jersey is where New Yorkers put their garbage. There’s a big sanitation dump. That’s where you should put it.

By the way, lest you think that the artist is just a little eccentric, think again. When I debated him on a Los Angeles radio show, Cavallaro admitted to working with cheese and other food products, as well as chocolate. He also plead guilty to working with feces. To the question, posed by one of the co-hosts, “Where do you get it?”, he answered, “I use my own.” I countered, “You have just given new meaning to the term B.S. artist.”

When I debated Joan Walsh of Salon.com on “Scarborough Country” on the chocolate Jesus, I wasn’t happy when she failed to describe exactly what the Catholic League was protesting. “Tell the truth about this,” I said. “It was on street level. It was made of chocolate, with his genitals exposed, asking people to come in and eat him during Holy Week. Now, if you can’t figure that out, why that might be offensive, then you are really in a minority!”

At the tail end of Lent came the “South Park” episode that has evidently assured me a place in the pop culture. It was cute. What I couldn’t understand is why some people on my side thought I’d be livid, even to the point of suing Comedy Central! But if you can’t laugh at yourself, you’re pathetic. As I said on a Fox News show, I took this as a cartoon version of being roasted.

The stupidity, and the malice, that we encounter is mind-boggling. But what is worse is the incredibly vicious hate mail we receive. Of the aforementioned issues, the chocolate Jesus controversy drew the most vitriolic response. It is absolutely amazing to read letters—and there are many of them—lecturing the Catholic League for objecting to anti-Catholicism. The only saving grace is that it ensures that we never have a dull moment.

EXPELLING GOD FROM THE UNIVERSITY

by David French

Emily Brooker is a recent honors graduate in social work from Missouri State University. A bright and attractive young

woman, she has a ready smile, a heart for serving the poor, and an enduring stain on an otherwise sterling academic record.

University of Florida student Christine Miller is one of the most engaging people you will ever encounter. Compassionate, intelligent, and intellectually curious, she serves her classmates as an R.A., and by all accounts she is widely admired. She, too, is living with a stain on her record.

Scott Savage is a pacifist. He is gentle in speech, slow to anger, and almost painfully thoughtful in conversations. He is a librarian at The Ohio State University's Mansfield campus, and the dark cloud of a faculty-initiated harassment investigation hovers over him still.

From the threats of violence directed against Ruth Malhotra at Georgia Tech, to the attempted expulsion of Ed Swan at Washington State, and the actual expulsion of Scott McConnell at Le Moyne College, the stories go on and on—one of the great underreported scandals of higher education. It is as if the academic establishment has collectively decided a certain group of people is so reprehensible and abhorrent that they must change or be cast aside, relegated to the dustbin of history along with the racists of the Old South.

And who are Emily, Christine, Scott, and the others? They are certainly not violent or radicals of any stripe. In fact, their political views vary widely—they have different views about the Iraq war, on economic programs, and even social issues. They do, however, share a single, defining characteristic: they are theologically conservative Christians, who believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God .

For Emily Brooker, it all started when one of her professors gave her class an assignment to draft a joint letter that was intended to express public support for same-sex adoption.

While she has no problem exploring alternative views in class, she drew the line at drafting and signing a public document expressing a viewpoint that violated her deeply held beliefs. For her respectful moral stand, she was investigated by the socialwork department and charged with ethics violations.

Christine Miller made the mistake of expressing a Biblically orthodox view of sexual morality—that sex should be reserved for a man and woman within marriage. She was reprimanded by a university housing department who saw that view as incompatible with its own expressed “solidarity” with the university’s “GLBT community.”

Scott Savage’s case is even more bizarre. He volunteered to serve on a book selection committee for the “First Year Reading Experience”—suggesting book options for freshman students. After the other members of the committee suggested a series of books from a leftist perspective, Scott suggested the students read a series of conservative books, including one, *The Marketing of Evil*, by David Kupelian, that refers to homosexual sexual behavior as “sinful” or “evil.” Acting on complaints from homosexual faculty that the book recommendation made them feel “unsafe” on campus, the faculty assembly voted without dissent to accuse Scott of “sexual harassment.” Later, several professors—acting with the full knowledge and express approval of the faculty—filed formal charges against Scott.

And what of Ruth Malhotra, Ed Swan, and Scott McConnell? Ruth was threatened after challenging Georgia Tech’s unconstitutional policies in court. Ed was almost denied a degree after he expressed opposition to same-sex adoption and affirmative action during classroom discussions. Scott was actually expelled after writing a paper in which he decried the multicultural orthodoxy of the school and noted that corporal punishment could be an appropriate method of school discipline.

While a few anecdotes do not necessarily describe a trend, or even a crisis, the anecdotes keep coming and coming. In the last six years, approximately 50 colleges and universities have either expelled or attempted to expel Christian student groups from campus. These actions have led to multiple lawsuits as Christians struggle to maintain ministries that have—in some cases—existed for decades. Student groups have sued Rutgers, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Ohio State University, Southern Illinois University, Penn State, the University of Minnesota, Washburn University, Arizona State, the University of California at Hastings, Cal State Long Beach, and San Diego State all in the effort to maintain a presence on campus.

Aside from the actual violation of their rights, Christian students widely report their faith being mocked by professors and fellow students alike. A January 2005, article in the *Christian Science Monitor* documented some of these stories. The article begins:

When Chris Gruener moved to the San Francisco Bay Area to begin graduate school, he looked forward to experiencing the region's renowned tolerance of all people and lifestyles.

Mr. Gruener was raised in a devout Christian family near Seattle and attended a Baptist high school and a Christian college, where he studied business. His passion, however, was literature, and so he was excited to begin a master's program in English at Sonoma State University. But during his first semester, a classroom incident put a damper on Gruener's ardor.

While lecturing on James Joyce's rejection of the church, a professor drew two mountains with a valley between them on the chalkboard, explaining that Joyce's church believed one mountain was man and the other mountain was God.

Next he drew a cross in the valley, touching both peaks—a

visual metaphor Gruener knew from childhood—and explained that this was Christ on the cross connecting man to God. Then the professor broke into peals of mocking laughter. The rest of the class joined in.

Stories like this are not uncommon. Spend any time at all with a Christian fellowship group at a secular university and you will hear similar tales. If the students are fortunate, their experience is limited to mere mockery. All too often, however, the mockery moves into actual action, and the students face the censorship, punishment, and threats outlined above.

Beyond the anecdotes are the statistics, which show that Christian faculty are profoundly underrepresented in higher education and that Christian students dramatically abandon faith practice as they progress through college. According to Stanley Rothman, Robert Lichter, and Neil Nevitte's recent analysis of the role of politics and ideology in faculty professional advancement, "religiously observant Christians are disadvantaged in their placement in the institutional hierarchy" even "after taking their professional achievements into account ... Republicans, women, and practicing Christians fare significantly worse than their colleagues at similar levels of achievement."

Clearly, when it comes to religion, the campus culture wars are building to a climax. Not content with cleansing our secular universities of an institutional religious presence, the academic left moves now to remove any meaningful individual religious voice. Why?

The answer lies in an important article by Maggie Gallagher in the 15 June 2006 issue of the *Weekly Standard*. In "Banned in Boston," Gallagher outlined the next phase of the constitutional conflict: the assault on fundamental civil liberties in the name of civil rights for homosexuals.

Now, if same-sex marriage and gay rights" are the next great

civil rights struggle, then campus administrators and faculty are cast in the role of Martin Luther King and those who defend traditional sexual morality take the role of Eugene "Bull" Connor. To the campus establishment, there is no functional or moral difference between an evangelical Christian proponent of traditional Judeo-Christian sexual morality and George Wallace standing in the schoolhouse door.

When viewed through this prism, each of the cases discussed above makes sense. Emily Brooker and Ed Swan opposed same-sex adoption; Christine Miller and Scott Savage think that homosexual sex is sinful. Ruth Malhotra opposed speech codes designed to protect homosexuals from "hate speech," and even Scott McConnell's opposition to "multiculturalism" can be read as a stand-in for moral opposition to the university's agenda. And for each of the Christian fellowships booted from campus, the issue is their alleged "discrimination" when they choose to reserve membership and leadership of Christian organizations for practicing Christians. As cases at Tufts University, Hastings, Southern Illinois, Ohio State University, and elsewhere make clear, the real university concern is not whether groups like Muslims or Jews can join Campus Crusade for Christ but instead whether practicing homosexuals have the opportunity to join (or even lead).

What is also crucial to note is that none of the Christians in any of the cases above had taken any action whatsoever to censor, silence, or deprive any homosexual student of their rights recognized by law. It is not as if Christian student groups are asking that they be permitted to organize while "gay rights" groups stand on the sidelines. Ruth Malhotra's opposition to speech codes would have the practical effect of granting greater free-speech rights to everyone. Scott Savage was not asking that any member of the faculty be silenced. He simply made a book recommendation.

The campus culture wars will continue until one side triumphs. There is too much at stake for our side not to win.

David French is a senior legal counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) and the former president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. He served as counsel to the students mentioned. This is an excerpt of an article from the Spring 2006 edition of Academic Questions. It is reprinted here with the permission of Mr. French and the publisher.

RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL BANS EASTER BUNNY

William Rearick, Schools Superintendent of the Tiverton Public Schools in Rhode Island, banned the Easter Bunny from appearing at a March 24 fundraising event at the Tiverton Middle School. He also banned the word “Easter” from all school events.

He told the *Providence Journal* that during the last year and a half, he has become more aware of folks who don’t have a Christian background.” Taking the place of the Easter Bunny was Peter Rabbit; children were able to get their picture taken with him.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented on this the day before the fundraising event:

“I am astonished that Schools Superintendent Rearick only recently discovered Jews and Muslims. But better late than never. However, it was not a Jew or a Muslim who complained about the Easter Bunny—it was an ex-Catholic, Michael Burk; he is vice chairman of the school committee. No matter, I have news for Superintendent Rearick: he has not resolved the problem.

“It is unconscionable that in this day and age Superintendent Rearick would choose to honor a thief. As every schoolchild knows, Peter Rabbit stole from Mr. McGregor’s garden. To now hold him up as a role model to impressionable youngsters sends the wrong signal. At the very least, grief counselors should be dispatched to tomorrow’s event.

“There is also a more serious matter going on. The event smacks of sexism: Peter Rabbit had three sisters—Flopsy, Mopsy and Cottontail—and there is no historical record of them ever having committed a crime. So why were they passed over? Looks like the glass ceiling is still in place.”

Donohue urged League members to register their outrage by contacting Rearick. “Tell him to bring the Easter Bunny back,” said Donohue, “as only ex-Catholics are likely to be offended.” Rearick told the *Warren Times Gazette* on March 30 that he received about 280 emails, “all from the Catholic League.”

JESUS-TOMB STARS CRASH

After “The Lost Tomb of Jesus” premiered on March 4, the Discovery Channel yanked three scheduled repeats of the film. Given that the film’s claims of Jesus’ bones being discovered in an ancient ossuary have been unanimously rejected by archaeologists and scholars, this wasn’t surprising—at least not to us. But the film’s creators, Simcha Jacobovici and James Cameron, still didn’t get it.

In the March 26 edition of *TelevisionWeek*, Jacobovici had this to say: “The fact that nobody has been able to punch a hole in our reporting is a testament to how well we’ve done our homework. Even if it’s only a 50-50 chance [of it being Jesus’

tomb], it's still the biggest story on the planet."

It was nice to know that Jacobovici was not as cock-sure as Cameron was. The director of "Titanic" wrote in the Foreword to the book, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, that their work proves "beyond any reasonable doubt" that they've found the bones of Jesus.

Now if that were the case, *The Jesus Family Tomb*—which corroborates the film's findings—would be replete with evidence. But as we told the media in a March 27 news release, there is not one endnote or footnote in the book. It doesn't even have an index.

The big story wasn't "The Lost Tomb of Jesus" itself, but the avalanche of scholarly criticism that it triggered. From the Biblical Archaeology Society to esteemed professors in Israel, experts have torn this fable to shreds. So much so, in fact, that in honor of Cameron, we dubbed his latest film "The Titanic Fraud."

OHIO STATE NEWSPAPER RIPS CATHOLICISM

On March 27, an anonymous journalism student wrote a very obscene column in *The Lantern*, a student newspaper at Ohio State University, titled "Going Down with the Catholics." Her remarks included a smear regarding the Immaculate Conception

Though *The Lantern* receives no money from the university, it is afforded a place on the campus, and is therefore subsidized by Ohio taxpayers. That is why we contacted Dr. Karen Holbrook, president of Ohio State, asking her to treat this

incident the way she addressed a comical, yet racist, matter last year. About a year ago, several students at a branch campus sent racist letters to some blacks on the Wooster campus. "If they were intended to be funny," said Dr. Holbrook, "there was nothing funny about them."

President Holbrook wrote to us agreeing that the writer was "offensive," but that the column represented "the view of one student and in my opinion is not characteristic of the overall feelings and actions of Ohio State's student body."

BIGOTED GEORGIA TEACHER GETS OFF SCOT-FREE

Exposing acts of anti-Catholic bigotry is, of course, our specialty at the Catholic League. We blow the whistle on those responsible, be they the perpetrators or the enablers.

On Ash Wednesday, February 21, the perpetrator was a substitute teacher at a public high school in Georgia. The enabler? The local board of education superintendent, who pooh-poohed the teacher's outrageous actions as nothing more than "an honest error in judgment."

A substitute teacher at White County High School in Cleveland, Georgia walked up to a 17-year-old Catholic student seated in class and, without saying a word, wiped the girl's Ash Wednesday ashes off her forehead.

The teacher then made matters even worse when some of the girl's classmates protested; she responded by berating the girl in front of the entire class and making patently untrue and derisive statements about Catholicism. The girl's parents

informed the Catholic League about this incident two days later.

On March 5, Bill Donohue wrote to Paul Shaw, superintendent of the White County Board of Education, wanting to know what disciplinary measures would be taken against the teacher. Shaw's reply to Donohue was, to put it mildly, inadequate.

In his letter of March 21, Shaw said, "I am aware of the incident and believe the principal resolved the matter in an appropriate manner. He has met with [the girl] and her father to hear concerns. The employee made an honest error in judgment and has been appropriately counseled and cautioned and I believe a similar incident will not be repeated."

Bill Donohue responded on March 27 by contacting Kathy Cox, the State Superintendent of Schools in Georgia, asking her to investigate the matter.

Donohue deemed Shaw's response "totally unsatisfactory" and called to Cox's attention Georgia's Code of Ethics for Educators (505-6-.01), which has a section on "Abuse of Students." The Code says that unethical conduct includes "engaging in harassing behavior on the basis of race, gender, sex, national origin, religion or disability."

We were then referred to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission because, under Georgia state law, Superintendent Cox does not have the power to launch an investigation into the actions of a county superintendent such as Shaw. On April 3 Bill Donohue wrote to Dr. Gary Walker, director of the Standards Commission's Ethics Department. Dr. Walker followed through, but at press time the situation remained unsatisfactory.

Meanwhile, we learned that the offending substitute teacher had been dismissed by the White County school board—but for reasons having nothing to do with the Ash Wednesday incident. She was apparently let go, according to the offended girl's

parents, for not showing up to teach classes that she had agreed to cover.

“The real issue here is not the teacher, rather it is Dr. Shaw,” Bill Donohue said at that point. “For him to say that a teacher in his employ made ‘an honest error in judgment’ by wiping ashes off the forehead of a Catholic student on Ash Wednesday—and then berated her in front of her classmates—is beyond lame. It’s morally reprehensible.”

All of this makes us wonder: if the teacher had berated a Muslim student during Ramadan, would the White County school authorities treat it as a serious matter? Or would they simply dismiss it as “an honest error in judgment”?

STATE TROOPER TOLD TO REMOVE ASHES

A Catholic state trooper for the South Carolina Highway Patrol informed us that he was ordered by his supervisor to remove ashes from his forehead on Ash Wednesday. The trooper had come on duty after attending church that day.

The trooper was told to wipe off the ashes on the grounds that they violated Highway Patrol uniform policy.

After refusing to remove the ashes (and after completing his shift that day without incident), the trooper told us that he contacted his captain, who then contacted the troop’s legal department to seek a ruling.

The legal department is currently reviewing the Highway Patrol’s policy.

As troubling as this story was, at least the state trooper in question was able to finish his shift without actually having to remove his Ash Wednesday ashes, as ordered by his supervisor. The poor high-school girl who encountered the anti-Catholic substitute teacher on Ash Wednesday in Georgia did not fare quite as well.

LOS ANGELES TIMES SLANDERS CATHOLICS

On March 26, the *Los Angeles Times* printed an article by John Spano that gave credence to a totally baseless charge by attorney Irwin Zelkin, who is handling sex-abuse lawsuits against the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Zelkin told the *Times* that Catholics are permitted to skirt the truth under oath in order to protect the best interests of the Catholic Church.

The article, "Catholic Doctrine is Cited in Priest Sex Abuse Cases," called into question the veracity of Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, and San Diego Bishop Robert H. Brom.

Zelkin told the *Times* that a so-called doctrine of mental reservation allows Catholics to dodge the truth in cases where the reputation of the Church might be sullied.

The *Times* printed a correction on this story on March 31, but by then the damage had already been done—which is why we deemed the correction "entirely too lame."

Instead of saying that Zelkin's accusatory statement regarding

Bishop Brom—charging him with invoking mental reservation—was “based only on the recollections of Irwin Zelkin,” the *Times* should have printed an apology to Cardinal Mahony and Bishop Brom for leaving the impression that they might counsel lying under oath. The *Times* never issued one.

There is no mention of mental reservation in canon law or the Catholic Catechism. And there is no “doctrine” of mental reservation—it is a concept that has been used to blunt the truth without technically lying. The last time it was floated in any seriousness was not during a trial involving a Catholic in a sex abuse case, rather it was during the impeachment proceedings of President Bill Clinton in regard to his testimony on his sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky.

In other words, mental reservation is not something the Catholic Church invented to justify not telling the truth.

GANGING UP ON CARDINAL MAHONY

In an April 5 *Los Angeles Times* column, George Skelton criticized Cardinal Roger Mahony because Mahony, the Los Angeles Archbishop, expressed disappointment with a Catholic public official, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, for supporting a bill that would authorize doctor-assisted suicide.

Skelton referred to the Catholic Church as “looking like an ugly old political attack dog,” accusing the cardinal of violating church and state lines. Thus did he call for “a bill to reexamine the tax-exempt status of church property.”

Skelton also said “the church hierarchy is on shaky grounds these days when lecturing about moral leadership.”

Assemblywoman Patty Berg wondered, “Why aren’t they taking care of their own shop?”; and Nunez called the cardinal’s remarks “extreme and dogmatic.”

Anti-Catholic bigots have tried before to strip the Catholic Church of its tax-exempt status and failed miserably. But it shows how far we’ve come from the days when Mr. Separation of Church and State himself, President Thomas Jefferson, gave \$300 to the Kaskaskias Indians to build a Catholic church, to the bullying of George Skelton.

On March 2, 2006, a *Los Angeles Times* editorial commended Cardinal Mahony for “reinforcing the right of religious leaders to speak out on the moral ramifications of political issues.” The issue then was restrictive immigration bills; the cardinal opposed them on moral grounds. So how is it that Cardinal Mahony is now all of a sudden violating the Constitution when he addresses doctor-assisted suicide?

Cardinal Mahony has every right to speak out about contemporary moral issues. Those who want to silence him would do well to purchase a copy of the United States Constitution. They may especially profit from learning about religious liberty and freedom of speech. Hint: they’re in the First Amendment.

CATHOLIC BASHERS SPARED IMUS TREATMENT

In mid-April, talk-show radio host Don Imus was blasted for an on-air racial comment directed at the Rutgers University women’s basketball team. There were demands from numerous quarters that Imus be fired—we couldn’t help but contrast

these calls for Imus' head with the way Catholic-bashing is so often dismissed as "free speech."

Two years ago, Penn Jillette (of the comedy team Penn and Teller) went on Showtime calling Mother Teresa "Mother F-king Teresa" and called the nuns who worked with her "f-king c-ts.

Showtime is owned by Viacom and that is why we wrote to its chief, Sumner Redstone, to register a complaint. He wrote back extolling the merits of "artistic freedom" and "tolerance."

Last year, on Viacom-owned CBS radio, Jillette said Mother Teresa "had this weird kink that I think was sexual," compared the saintly nun to Charles Manson and said she "got her [sexual] kicks watching people suffer and die." Again, nothing was done about this.

In 2005, Bill Maher went on HBO at the time of the death of Pope John Paul II and said, "For those who could not make the funeral, the Vatican has asked that in lieu of flowers, just stop touching your d-k." He also said that the whole story of Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the Resurrection was "grafted from paganism"; he ended by mocking the death of the pope and the upcoming conclave.

The letter we received from HBO said that "it's a free country, and people are free to say silly things—even on HBO."

Right before Easter, the Catholic League protested the chocolate Jesus with his genitals exposed that was to be shown in the art gallery of the Roger Smith Hotel in midtown Manhattan (located on street level, the public was invited to eat him). Air America radio co-host Cenk Uygur, writing about it on "The Huffington Post," said, "So is the argument that Jesus didn't have ad-k? Or were people offended because it was too big? Too small? Too immaculate? Not immaculate enough?" Regarding Imus' remark, Uygur was much more disturbed, calling it "derogatory and insulting."

Similarly, Joan Walsh on Salon.com said the chocolate Jesus was not “a big deal,” and advised people not to go see it if they didn’t like it. She called on Imus to be fired.

Even New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg said “don’t pay any attention” to the chocolate Jesus, but found it necessary to brand Imus’ comments “repugnant.”

In other words, Catholic bashing is humorous and an exercise in liberty. Racism is awful. Bigotry, then, is neither good nor bad—it just depends who the target is.