

NO POST-IMUS CULTURE FOR CATHOLIC BASHERS

In the wake of the controversy last month involving shock-jock Don Imus, CBS chief Les Moonves remarked that Imus “has flourished in a culture that permits a certain level of objectionable expression that hurts and demeans a wide range of people. In taking him off the air, I believe we take an important and necessary step not just in solving a unique problem, but in changing that culture, which extends far beyond the walls of our Company.”

The Catholic League didn't miss these events and took the opportunity to share our thoughts about the double standards at play with the press in an April 16 news release:

“It was a great statement, but no sooner had Moonves spoken when Catholics learned that his words represented wishful thinking

“On the HBO show ‘Real Time with Bill Maher’ on April 13, the comedian showed a picture of guitarist Keith Richards in his ‘New Rules’ segment and said, ‘New rules, snorting your father isn't crazy’ (this was a reference to Richards’ hoax about snorting the ashes of his dead father). Maher then showed a picture of a Catholic priest administering Communion, saying, ‘Eating your father, that's crazy.’

“The next day Seth Meyers read a news story on ‘Saturday Night Live’ wherein he remarked, ‘For the second consecutive year the number of sex abuse claims against the nation's Catholic priests had dropped. Undisputable proof that fewer kids are going to church.’

“Even the TV Guide Channel got into the act on Sunday when John Henson questioned why anyone would want to blow himself up to get into heaven just to be with 72 virgins when you

could have '72 naughty Catholic schoolgirls.'

"It is one thing when comedians like Maher label all religions 'childish, destructive and nonsense' (as he did April 16 on 'The View'), quite another when the Eucharist is mocked and priests are slandered.

"The Catholic schoolgirls' remark was not offensive, per se, but it was entirely gratuitous in both forum and context. All in all, it goes to show that Catholic bashing will survive in a culture that penalizes race and gender bashing."

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Finally, a unique film that combines the excitement of sports and the richness of the Catholic Faith! "Champions of Faith: Baseball Edition" is a film that showcases Catholicism in a positive and respectful manner. Too often Hollywood uses the Catholic Church as a punching bag, choosing to treat Catholics as "looney" and out-of-touch with reality. This film portrays Catholicism in a heroic light and truly makes one excited to be Catholic.

"Champions of Faith" showcases the Catholic faith-lives of a range of All-Star Major Leagueball players, coaches and managers. These men take their faith seriously and live out that faith with joy, enthusiasm and love. Superstar athletes all too often get caught up in fame and fortune, but the men profiled in "Champions of Faith" are so down-to-earth that they could be considered "the guy next door"—or more fittingly, "the guy in the next pew."

Filled with exciting game footage from Major League Baseball,

this groundbreaking film features inspiring and personal faith stories of some of baseball's greats.

Future Hall of Famer Mike Piazza shares how the Word of God started resonating inside of him and how it impacted his storied career.

Five-time All Star Mike Sweeney speaks of his conversion and reveals the difficulty of seeking forgiveness for a brutal on-field fight.

Third-base coach Rich Donnelly talks about how his faith in God deepened during his daughter's life-and-death struggle with a brain tumor.

2006 World Series MVP David Eckstein and National League Championship Series MVP Jeff Suppan describe how they saw each other at Mass one Sunday and never knew the other was Catholic. From then on the two St. Louis Cardinals teammates attended Mass together and led their team through adversity and to a World Series crown.

And legendary manager Jack McKeon explains how the intercession of St. Therese after he was in "retirement" finally brought him his lifelong dream—a stunning World Series victory.

At a time when the Catholic Church and Catholics in general are under massive assault in the culture, "Champions of Faith" comes along with the unique ability to change hearts and perceptions. The more than two-dozen cultural icons featured in "Champions of Faith" are proud to be Catholic and unashamed of their Faith. These men are shining examples of what it means to be a man of God and a pillar of the Church.

Produced by Catholic Exchange (who last brought you the best-selling *A Guide to the Passion*), "Champions of Faith" is a powerful weapon in the culture wars of our times. It offers a unique opportunity to discuss faith, family, teamwork and

leadership along with other spiritual lessons to be learned from the game of baseball. It's an inspiring film that is sure to touch the hearts and lives of everyone who sees it.

For more information or to obtain a copy visit www.ChampionsofFaith.com or call 1-877-263-1263.

THE SCANDAL THAT HAS NO NAME

On April 11 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released the 2006 report on clergy sex abuse.

Rachel Zoll of Associated Press did her usual fine work in her coverage of the story, but because most of the news was good, her piece was either ignored or drastically reduced by most newspapers.

Here are some of the key findings:

- Of the 635 credible accusations made in 2006, 71 percent of the alleged cases took place between 1960 and 1984. Only 2 percent occurred in 2006.
- Most—71 percent—of the accused priests are either dead or have been removed from ministry; some are missing.
- 80 percent of the alleged victims are male.

In other words, the abuse flared during the sexual revolution of the 1960s and ended when AIDS was discovered in 1981.

The report refers to allegations involving “children under the age of 18,” and in doing so confuses 7 year-olds with 17 year-olds; the latter are not generally regarded as children.

Since most of the victims are males and all of the victimizers are males, what this means is that pedophiles and homosexuals commit most of the molestation. Incredibly, neither the word pedophile nor homosexual is mentioned once in the report. The report conveniently lumps together cases which began between the ages of 10 and 14 (they account for 52 percent of the cases), thus making it impossible to determine whether pedophilia or homosexuality was at work (puberty begins between 10 and 12). No matter, there were almost twice as many alleged victims aged 15 or over as there were those aged 9 or less.

What no one wants to talk about is the 11 percent of priests whose allegations against them could not be proven or were proven false. What is being done for these men? What outreach program have they benefited from?

GIULIANI AND CASEY: MAKING LIFE DECISIONS

Catholics who accept the teachings of the Catholic Church on the life issues have every reason to be angry with Rudy Giuliani's recent pledge to maintain taxpayer-funded abortions if elected president. His overall position on abortion is incoherent. He says he is now opposed to partial-birth abortion except to save the life of the mother, would appoint "strict constructionist" judges and says he personally "hates" abortion.

Giuliani has no need to qualify his opposition to partial-birth abortion: the American Medical Association has determined that there is never a medical need for this type of

abortion.

Moreover, if he appoints the kinds of judges he says he will appoint, it is not likely they will uphold the wholly contrived right to abortion-on-demand. So why not simply say that *Roe v. Wade* invented a right that nowhere appears in the Constitution?

What exactly is it that Giuliani “hates” about abortion? And why does he want to impose on the public the burden of paying for something that is constitutionally suspect and morally repugnant?

When running for the senate seat in Pennsylvania, Casey would not commit on how he would vote on federally funded embryonic stem cell research. Recently, however, he said he’s against it. This is good news. It makes it all the more difficult for him to later renege on his pro-life position on abortion, and thus should be welcomed by practicing Catholics in both parties.

Catholics look to people like Giuliani and Casey to promote a culture of life. Giuliani’s mixed signals are in need of repair. Casey is off to a good start.

BEHAR STRIKES AGAIN ON “THE VIEW”

Joy Behar, a panelist on ABC’s “The View,” is a former Catholic who denigrates the Church at every chance she gets. The April 13 show proved no exception.

When asked if she is superstitious, Behar remarked, “When I

was a kid I used to be because the Catholic Church has a lot of that sort of thing in it, but then I sort of grew out of it.”

What is clear is that Behar hasn’t grown out of her obsession with blaming the Catholic Church for her own issues. Just recently, on the March 26 airing of “The View,” Behar admitted her lack of knowledge about the Bible, claiming, “I never read the Bible as a child because I was Catholic.”

Behar would have viewers believe that it’s the fault of the Catholic Church that as a kid she was afraid of broken mirrors and black cats. She would also have them think it’s the Church’s fault she is too lazy to pick up a Bible.

DEFENDING THE RELIGIOUS RIGHTS OF ALL

Department of Justice publications on Religious Freedom

The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice recently released its *Report on Enforcement of Laws Protecting Religious Freedom* for the fiscal years 2001-2006. This publication contains useful information regarding protection of your rights in such areas as education, employment, and housing discrimination.

Another Department of Justice publication, *Protecting the Religious Freedom of All: Federal Laws Against Religious Discrimination*, is an invaluable guide to citizens wishing to know the full extent of their rights.

Anyone interested in reading about federal law in these areas

should go online and visit <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/religdisc/religionpamp.htm>.

Catalyst readers will soon learn that many of the injustices the Catholic League opposes each year are indeed illegal.

The Department of Justice highlights the following scenarios as being possible violations of federal law.

Education

- A group of students form a Bible club and ask for permission to meet in a classroom before school. While other student-created groups are given meeting space, the Bible club is barred because it is religious.
- A teacher berates a student in front of the class because he does not share the faith of the teacher and the rest of the class, leading to repeated harassment of the student by other children.

Housing

- An apartment complex has a meeting room that is available for residents to reserve for card games, social activities, and similar events. A resident is told that she may not use the room to hold a Bible study with friends.
- A tenant in public housing places a statue of the Virgin Mary on her balcony. Although other tenants are permitted to place similarly sized decorative objects on their balconies, the property manager says that religious items are not allowed in public housing.

Zoning and landmarks

- A small church is denied a permit to operate out of a storefront in a commercial zone, even though non-profit groups including fraternal lodges, a dance studio, and a

theater company are permitted in the same zone.

- A town's zoning ordinance requires all houses of worship to obtain a variance in order to locate within its borders. While there are a number of churches already in town, every application for a new house of worship since the ordinance was adopted has been denied.

Penal system

- Catholic prisoners seek space in a prison chapel on Sunday and permission for a volunteer priest to come in to say Mass, but are told that they should attend the nondenominational Christian service run by the prison's Protestant chaplain.

It is reassuring for people of all religious faiths to know that the federal government takes seriously violations of religious liberties such as the ones mentioned above. Americans of all creeds would do well to arm themselves with the information provided in these Department of Justice religious freedom publications.

Remember, knowledge is power—if you don't know your rights, you won't realize it when you're not getting a fair shake.

PROBE CUTS TOO CLOSE

Brian Brown, executive director of the Connecticut Family Institute, recently testified before some members of the Connecticut legislature. The issue was same-sex marriage.

During the questioning, Brown, known to the lawmakers as a practicing Catholic, was subjected to an improper line of inquiry. Bill Donohue sent a strongly worded letter to the

entire legislative body.

Two members of the state legislature, Representative Michael Lawlor and Senator Edwin Gomes, probed Brown's religious convictions as they pertained to the issue. While it is entirely legitimate to ask witnesses about the source of their convictions, religious or otherwise, a line has been crossed when the questions become personal, intrusive and persistent. "Separation of church and state, it needs to be stressed, cuts both ways: Just as it would be illegitimate of me to ask Rep. Lawlor and Sen. Gomes to go on record explaining their personal convictions about the wisdom of Catholic teachings, it is equally illegitimate of them to pepper expert witnesses about their private beliefs," Donohue said.

Donohue concluded saying that "if this continues, my response next time will not be in the form of a letter."

JESUS' TOMB NOT FOUND; CAMERON'S "TITANIC FRAUD"

On March 4, "Titanic" director James Cameron and TV-director Simcha Jacobovici released what they called a documentary on the Discovery Channel claiming they have evidence of a Jerusalem tomb that allegedly houses the remains of Jesus and his family. In the week prior to the showing, Bill Donohue hit the air waves challenging what he dubbed a "Titanic Fraud."

Not a Lenten season goes by without some author or TV program seeking to cast doubt on the divinity of Jesus and/or the Resurrection. Last April, NBC's "Dateline" featured the wholly discredited and downright laughable claims of Michael Baigent,

and two years ago ABC treated us to a special that questioned every aspect of the Resurrection. This year we have the Cameron-Jacobovici thesis.

Israeli archeologist Amos Kloner was in charge of the 1980 investigation of the tomb that Cameron-Jacobovici have seized on 27 years later to make their allegations. "The claim that the burial site has been found is not based on any proof, and is only an attempt to sell," Kloner said. He added, "I refute all claims and efforts to waken a renewed interest in the findings. With all due respect, they are not archeologists." Indeed, Kloner branded their claims "impossible" and "nonsense." Moreover, he said there is "no likelihood" that Jesus and his relatives had a family tomb. "It makes a great story for a TV film," he concluded.

Joe Zias, who spent a quarter-century at Rockefeller University as an archeologist, said that "Simcha has no credibility whatsoever." Zias wasn't shooting from the hip: Jacobovici's credibility explodes when one considers that he still believes the 2002 tale about an ossuary with the inscription, "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus." On June 18, 2003, an Israel Antiquities Authority committee unanimously condemned this claim as a modern forgery. Agreeing with this decision were Harvard's Frank Cross and Tel Aviv University professor Edward Greenstein.

Cameron and Jacobovici not only were criticized by people like Donohue, but by Christian theologians and Jewish archeologists. Indeed, they received almost no support from anyone.

Fortunately, the media gave the league the opportunity to frame the issue as a seasonal attack on Christianity that occurs during Lent.

KISSLING RESIGNS

On February 28, Frances Kissling stepped down as president of Catholics for a Free Choice. For a quarter century, she misrepresented herself to the public, pretending to be the head of a bona-fide Catholic organization. It would be more accurate to say that she ran an anti-Catholic front group.

Twice condemned as a fraud by the U.S. Catholic bishops' conference, Kissling would have had to have found another job long ago had it not been for her friends in the establishment. Kissling counts among her donors such organizations as the Warren Buffet Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation. Additionally, Hugh Hefner's Playboy Foundation and the Packard Foundation provide financial support. Without them, she would have folded long ago as her organization has no members.

Bill Donohue offered her this parting shot: "I hope she takes her tapestries of Tibetan Buddhist deities with her when she exits her office, as well as any New Age paraphernalia she may have acquired over the years. It would also be a good idea to take her poster of Che Guevara with her. How fitting that a woman who spent most of her adult life promoting the killing of innocents in the womb would idolize a terrorist who killed innocent Latinos who made it to birth. In any event, I can't wait to meet her successor, Jon O'Brien, on TV. I promise him a memorable encounter."

Kissling recently said the Catholic Church "abuses...anyone who thinks." It's reassuring to know she can't claim victim status.

KISSLING EXITS IN ANGER

William A. Donohue

Frances Kissling recently stepped down as president of Catholics for a Free Choice. It was not a quiet exit. In fact, she stormed out the door in total anger. The source of her anger made me smile. You're going to smile, too, when you read this article.

"The Catholic right is uglier and meaner than anyone on the religious right," she told Joe Feurherd of the *National Catholic Reporter*. "The viciousness of the [William] Donohues, the Deal Hudsons, the George Weigels and the [Fr.] Richard John Neuhauses is soul-numbing," she said.

This was to be expected. After all, we were among her main adversaries. What was not expected, however, was her tirade against her ideological friends.

As Feurherd accurately commented, "the 63-year-old Kissling saved some of her hardest-hitting barbs for those on the religious left, particularly, but not exclusively, Catholic progressives." Like many of her ilk, she was initially excited by the founding of Voice of the Faithful, the reform group that was established in the wake of the scandal. But now she writes them off as being ineffective. She notes, quite correctly, that donations to the group have dropped year after year, leaving Voice with a "paltry number."

Kissling spared none of her friends on the Catholic left. She blasted Call to Action, the Association for the Rights of Catholics, Dignity and the Women's Ordination Conference. Indeed, she has no respect for them, saying they are so weak that "the movement doesn't exist." All of these groups have

long been at war with the Catholic Church's teachings on sexuality, celibacy, ordination and the like, and all have failed to attract young people to their dissident agenda. They're dying out, and Kissling knows it.

A new left-wing Catholic group, Catholic Alliance for the Common Good, also merited Kissling's backhand. She said the group has gotten "a free ride" from the media, making absurd claims about its role in the 2006 elections. She failed to mention that the group was quick to give John Edwards a pass after the Catholic League exposed two anti-Catholic bigots on his payroll, thus further undermining its credibility. No matter, she is right to say that the group is pure "hype."

Kissling let the Democrats have it in spades. She is furious with the Democratic party for not having the guts to trot out gay rabbis and dissident Catholic feminist theologians. In a burst of candor, she complains that the Democrats call her and say, "Do you have a nun who still wears a habit who can show up at my press conference [or] can you send me a collar?"

That's right—you just heard it from the horse's mouth: The Democrats are exploiting the issue of religion for purely political purposes. At least Kissling is more honest in her approach.

And then there are the phony Catholics who love to champion abortion rights but prefer to lie about it in public. "My experience in the progressive movement in the church is that most of the people I work with are personally pro-choice and will simply not admit it publicly. They think it will be bad for their organization and they want to continue to have ties to the hierarchy, to parishes, and they know if they come out on abortion they are going to be totally marginalized within the institution, so it's the one [issue] on which they lie the most."

Kissling even told the *New York Times* that the reason she was

stepping down was because she was on the “verge of becoming boring or predictable.” The reporter added that Kissling “believed that her efficacy might soon wane,” thus the time had come to pack it in. This is quite a confession: She includes herself, along with her ideological soulmates, as failing to get the job done. Too bad she didn’t throw the towel in earlier—perhaps fewer babies would have been aborted.

Our side has every reason to smile. Here we have one of the most powerful pro-abortion operatives in the nation admitting that her side has failed—not just on the abortion issue, but in upending the Catholic Church. Of course, our side has every reason not to be complacent as we are still in the midst of a culture war, both inside and outside the Church. But we should never forget that if the Kisslings of this world are mad as hell at our side, then we must be doing something right. After all, it is not our side that has to lie in public about its convictions, and it’s not our side that has to adopt “God talk” so as to sound religious. That’s their problem.

It is highly unusual for anyone who has headed an advocacy organization for as long as Kissling has to walk out the door swinging wildly at everyone in sight. That she hates the Catholic League, and loathes the ineffectiveness of her side, is something to savor. Thank you, Frances. You’ve made my day. And you’ve made all of us Catholic Leaguers smile.