

Response to Thistlethwaite

Bill Donohue sent the letter below to Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, president of the Chicago Theological Seminary:

July 18, 2007

Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite
President, Chicago Theological Seminary
5757 S. University Avenue
Chicago, IL 60637

Dear Ms. Thistlethwaite:

I read with interest your lecture to the Catholic Church in the Washington Post blog site. As someone who belongs to a community that has lost over 50 percent of its members since 1960, you are in no position to get preachy with Catholics. Moreover, the relaxation of norms regarding the Latin Mass is none of your business: sticking your nose into the internal affairs of the Catholic Church smacks of hubris. Furthermore, the contrived nexus you offer trying to tie the Latin Mass to predatory homosexual behavior is illogical.

The Catholic Church is growing by leaps and bounds. Perhaps if you studied our success you would be less defensive about your community. You may even learn that any church, including communities like yours, that assimilates to the norms of the dominant culture is bound to go south. While we can all agree that it is a tragedy what has happened to your community, it does not excuse your sophomoric outburst.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President

Robertson Misses the Mark on Celibacy

Pat Robertson, host of “The 700 Club,” had this to say yesterday about sex abuse by Catholic priests: “I’m not Catholic so I’m hardly one to advise the Church, but I do think the policy of celibacy leads to this kind of behavior, and one day they’re going to have to re-evaluate it.”

Studies tell us, however, that sexual abuse of minors is no more prevalent in the Catholic priesthood than in the overall population. What’s more, Hofstra University researcher Carol Shakeshaft found that public school employees have the nation’s highest rate of child sexual abuse. Last time we checked, no celibacy vow was required of public school employees.

Robertson’s argument is rendered even more off-base by the fact that the vast majority of Catholic priests—at least 98% of them—have never molested a minor. If celibacy caused men to molest kids, then why are most Catholic priests innocent of it?

Robertson’s “700 Club” co-host, Terry Meeuwsen, chimed in by claiming that priestly celibacy is “not spiritual.” Jesus and St. Paul – neither of whom were married, and both of whom extolled the virtues of celibacy for religious reasons – might disagree.

Red Flag?

A recent [Associated Press piece](#) examined 16 presidential candidates and those donating to their campaigns. The article listed information such as each politician's total receipts to date, total spending, etc. The AP also listed individual donors who are "of note."

Of the 16, only Sam Brownback (arguably the most "Catholic" of the candidates) was reported as having received any donations from clergy of any religious denomination. According to the report, "Among the conservative Brownback's second-quarter contributors were...five Catholic priests from five different states." Are we to conclude that there is no record of any priests, ministers, rabbis or imams making contributions to any of the others running or president? Or are donations from religious leaders only noteworthy when they're made by Catholics to a Catholic candidate?

Bill Donohue Reacts to the Controversy Surrounding the Latin Mass

Yesterday morning, Bill Donohue appeared on NBC's "Today" to discuss the pope's recent decree allowing wider celebration of the Latin Mass. Below is a transcript of the segment, with Donohue's comment in bold.

When Pope Benedict decided to revive the Latin Mass he set off a firestorm of controversy and may have reopened a rift between Catholics and members of the Jewish faith. NBC's

Stephanie Gosk has more now.

STEPHANIE GOSK reporting:

Catholicism is a faith steeped in traditions, and now one of the oldest, the Latin Mass, is on the verge of a revival. Pope Benedict has opened the way for priests to give the 16th Century liturgy without seeking special permission, permission that has been required since the Second Vatican Council in 1970.

Father MICHAEL DUNNE (Holy Trinity Church, London): It speaks of our tradition, which, of course, is a key theological concept for we, as Catholics, that the voice of God speaks through tradition.

GOSK: Replacing the Latin Mass with a translated version three decades ago alienated an estimated one million Catholics. Pope Benedict says he hopes the reintroduction of the traditional liturgy will help heal that rift. But it also appears to be creating some new ones. Liberal Catholics are concerned.

Unidentified Man: They will think of it as a step back in time.

GOSK: The Jewish community worries what that will mean for their relationship to the Catholic Church.

Rabbi GARY GREENEBAUM (American Jewish Committee): For many, many hundreds of years, right in the liturgy of the Catholic Church, there were denigrating comments about, statements about Jews.

GOSK: In the Latin Mass given on Good Friday, Catholics pray for the conversion of the Jews and ask God to remove the veils from their hearts. But Pope Benedict has left rules in place to restrict the use of that Mass.

Mr. BILL DONOHUE (President, The Catholic League): This is an internal matter for the Catholic Church, all right? The

Catholic Church doesn't tell Jews what to do. Jews shouldn't be telling Catholics what to do.

GOSK: Even with the changes, it is unlikely the old Mass will be widely embraced. Many young priests don't even speak Latin. But for those that do, and for their nostalgic faithful, the once dead language has new life. For TODAY, Stephanie Gosk, NBC News, London.

Robin Williams Defends Catholic Bashing

Asked yesterday by "Today" show host Meredith Vieira about his [recent bigoted jokes concerning Catholic priests](#), Robin Williams expressed no remorse for labeling all Catholic priests as pedophiles. (He has acknowledged that he wouldn't treat other religions the same way for fear of being blown up.) Williams defended his unfair stereotyping of priests saying, "It's my job as a comic sometimes to keep going...it's not like it [the sex abuse scandal] didn't exist." He added, "They [the Catholic League] should have been up in arms basically after the Children's Crusade."

University of Michigan -

Dearborn: Regents Board Contacted

In response to a [letter from the Catholic League](#) regarding the University of Michigan-Dearborn using \$25,000 of student fees to install footbaths for use by Muslims students, many legislators suggested that the board of regents is best able to account for how such money is spent. Bill Donohue sent the following letter to members of the University of Michigan Board of Regents yesterday:

As the president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, I wish to see religious groups accommodated on college campuses whenever it is possible and within reason. However, I heartily object to government sponsorship of religion. This is why I was troubled to see that the University of Michigan-Dearborn plans to use \$25,000 in student fees to built foot-washing stations for use by Muslim students.

Do you and the other members of the Board of Regents think it is appropriate to use fees provided by all students for the promotion of a religious ritual performed solely by Muslims? If you believe this \$25,000 project to be merely accommodation of religion, rather than sponsorship, are you open to suggestions about how to use student fees to make it easier for Christian students to practice their faith?

If you are in agreement with me that this planned installation of footbaths constitutes special privileges for members of one religion, I would like to know how you plan on remedying this situation.

I look forward to hearing from you.

We will keep readers abreast of the responses we receive.

Leno's Obsession Continues

For the [second day in a row](#), NBC's Jay Leno—who frequently tars all priests with the pedophile brush—took a shot at the Catholic clergy. In his opening monologue on June 21 airing of “The Tonight Show,” Leno joked: “In Austin, Texas, a 61-year-old priest has been arrested after he left rehab. This priest leaves rehab, gets drunk and drives his car into a restaurant. So much for the Vatican's Ten Commandments of safe driving. Imagine that, a priest driving drunk into a restaurant. Thank God it was not a Chuck E. Cheese. Oh my God.”

Just like they did the night before, the audience groaned at Leno's clichéd and bigoted stereotyping. It clearly isn't the laughter of his fans that is driving his relentless jabs at the Catholic clergy. So what is it, Mr. Leno?

“Constantine's Sword” Cinematic Debut

On June 24, a documentary based on the John Carroll book, “Constantine's Sword,” will debut at the Los Angeles Film Festival. It is sure to warm the heart of all anti-Catholic bigots.

Carroll is an embittered ex-priest who has spent his adult life railing against the Catholic Church. If the film version is anything like the book, the audience will be treated to some of the most polished propaganda ever to hit the big

screen.

[When Robert Lockwood reviewed Carroll's book for us](#), here are some of things he had to say:

"Carroll's thesis is that the anti-Semitism which resulted in the Holocaust is central to Catholic theology and derived from the earliest Christians expressions of belief.

"Carroll believes that the New Testament is clearly anti-Semitic and, therefore, caused anti-Jewish sentiment that, in turn, eventually evolved into the philosophies that created the Holocaust. Rather than arguing that bad Scriptural interpretation in the past was used by some to declare that all Jews shared the blame in the death of Jesus, Carroll would rather agree that this is the proper meaning of Scripture.

"It is not the belief of the Church, the New Testament, the Church centered in Jesus, the understanding that Christ died for the sins of mankind, that created the horror of the Holocaust. It was the rejection of those, and the attempt to substitute for Judeo-Christian civilization a secularist pseudo-scientism of race, class and nationalism that generated Nazism and the Holocaust."

In a review in the June 22 edition of the Los Angeles Times, it says Carroll's movie "tries to link the errors of the past with the religious movements of today, moving fluidly from stories of the Crusades and clips of Hitler Youth rallies to scenes of Catholic youth cheering Pope Benedict XVI and ecstatic kids at evangelical Christian revivals." In short, Carroll's hatred of all things Catholic shines through from beginning to end. Which is exactly what we would have expected.

Why isn't this Big News?

Over the weekend, the *New York Times* ran an Associated Press story called ["Data Shed Light on Child Sexual Abuse by Protestant Clergy."](#) According to the piece, "the three companies that insure a majority of Protestant churches say they typically receive upward of 260 reports a year of children younger than 18 being sexually abused by members of the clergy, church staff members, volunteers or congregants."

Yesterday, the *Times* ran an article called ["Between Teacher and Student: the Suspensions are Growing."](#) The *Times* reported that "although federal statistics show that reported sex crimes aimed at young people in general – whether at the hands of middle school teachers, parish priests or relatives – have fallen nationwide since the early 1990s, New York State has reported a marked increase in a broader but similar category, what are called moral-fitness cases, involving certified teachers and administrators."

It is interesting that these two stories have not been more extensively covered by other major news organizations. In a time when Catholic priests are routinely the subjects of crude jokes and stereotyped as molesters, the study on Protestant ministers shows the problem of children being violated is far from limited to one religion. And as we have pointed out for years, the problem of kids being molested at school is often overlooked.

One particularly troubling aspect of yesterday's story is that there isn't much information on how students are being treated in schools across the nation. According to the *Times*: "the dearth of national data on reports of student abuse at the hands of educators is the result of its wide-ranging nature: a spectrum of misdeeds, from lewd remarks to actual sex, and a range of overlapping responses. There are school disciplinary proceedings, state hearings to revoke certification and

criminal prosecution. And many cases simply quietly disappear.”

These sort of stories need to be discussed. We have to make sure that children are protected wherever they are—whether in Catholic churches, any house of worship, or in the schoolroom.

Bashing the Clergy: the “Daily Show” and Jay Leno

When the Vatican’s Renato Cardinal Martino released “Guidelines for Pastoral Care of the Road,” or the “10 Commandments of Driving,” a number of news outlets took a light-hearted look at the Cardinal’s words. While playful, many of these stories managed to be respectful at the same time. For instance, on Tuesday night, CNN responded to the story with a segment that was humorous without causing any offense.

Not everyone is so well behaved, however. On NBC’s “Tonight Show” last night, Jay Leno (who frequently makes jokes casting all priests as sex abusers), suggested that the 11th commandment of driving should be “Thou shalt not use your car to transfer pedophile priests to another parish.” The crowd booed.

On Comedy Central’s “Daily Show” last night, host Jon Stewart passed the reins over to “senior Vatican correspondent” John Oliver. Oliver, standing in front of a Vatican backdrop, stated that as the Vatican suggested automobiles can be occasions for sin, people should not drive while “horny.” Oliver then unveiled a machine, in the form of a statue of a bishop, which he said was created in the Vatican’s labs. The

statue had a breathalyzer-style tube extending from the groin area, described by Oliver as a “sinalyzer”. The “sinalyzer” could be used to reveal whether the person blowing into it is “horny.”

It appears that Jay Leno and the “Daily Show” will jump at any excuse to portray the Catholic clergy as a bunch of perverts and sexual predators. Not only is this shtick bigoted, it’s become worn-out and pedestrian.