

Catholic League Newsday Petition

The following is the full text of the petition distributed to all pastors on Long Island following publication of the two Marlette cartoons by Newsday.

We, the undersigned, are outraged over the persistently biased coverage of the Catholic Church by *Newsday*. Our complaint has nothing to do with the right of *Newsday*, or any other media source, to disagree with the teachings of the Catholic Church. However, to disagree is one thing, it is quite another to disdain, deride and disparage; when that happens, a serious line has been crossed. The recent cartoons by Marlette (June 1st and 3rd) depicting Pope John Paul II as the ogre who oppresses women are a case in point.

All religions have doctrinal prerogatives, some of which are in striking contrast to the culturally accepted norms and values of the dominant society. *Newsday*, which never tires of repeating the twin mantras "respect for diversity" and "tolerance," apparently feels that the doctrinal prerogatives of Catholics are so objectionable that nothing less than disrespect and intolerance are merited. What is striking about this exceptionalism, however, is the fact that Orthodox Jews never seem to be targeted for bigotry, yet Orthodox Jewish women can no more become rabbis than Catholic women can become priests.

If it were only the Marlette cartoons that Catholics had to endure, then perhaps no comment would be warranted. But *Newsday* has a history of Catholic-baiting. More important, responsible persons in the Long Island Catholic community have long registered their concerns to the editors, but to no avail. It cannot be said too strongly that lame excuses, tortured rationales and half-hearted appeasement will no

longer suffice. That is precisely what *Newsday* offered in its editorial of June 7th: to say that the Marlette cartoons were not meant as “ridicule” is intellectual dishonesty.

So what do we want? An end to the practice of submitting Catholic teachings to ridicule and derision and an end to the double-standard of evaluating Catholic doctrine from a basis that is exclusive of all other religions. In short, what we seek is not special rights, but equal rights.

We are not interested in making threats. The mature way to address this issue is through dialogue. But it is also true that our goal is justice, and justice requires a winning strategy. We sincerely hope that you will cooperate with us in achieving our goal through the medium of dialogue. To that end, we would ask that the editors of *Newsday* meet with Dr. William Donohue of the Catholic League and a small contingent of area Catholics.