

CHANGING THE WORLD

A common complaint among Americans is that they feel powerless to change society. Things are so out of control, goes the refrain, that there is nothing any one individual can do to make matters better. Let's examine this popularly held conviction.

If things are bad now, how did they get that way? May I suggest the obvious? They got that way because some people made them that way. That's right, no one from another planet imposed present conditions on us, individuals living in America created the conditions in which we live. How did they do it? Mostly by reading, writing and talking. Sure, those who are organized have more clout than those who aren't, but in the end a culture is created by those who participate in crafting it.

Cultures do not change quickly, though it would be a mistake to think that it takes an eternity to turn things around. Everyone who is old enough to read this column knows that women have more rights, and smokers have less rights, than was true just ten and twenty years ago. Those changes happened because enough individuals were determined to change things. It stands to reason that if you're bothered by anti-Catholicism, you possess the resources to do something about it. Catholics, after all, are not denied the right to change society.

So what can you do? Read, write and talk about Catholic-bashing. We do it all the time. Now let me share with you one recent example of how we made things right. It's not a front-page item – nor should it be – but then again no change takes place in one gush. Change is more often incremental than it is cataclysmic.

Just before Christmas, I was contacted by Bishop Joseph

Delaney of Fort Worth Texas about an ad he found objectionable. He had forwarded to me an ad for a laser press copying service that advertised a picture of Pope John Paul II with the inscription, "Even the *Pope* supports our reproduction methods."

It most certainly wasn't the worst ad I've seen, but it was unduly offensive. I wrote a letter to the offending company and as a result the ad was instantly destroyed.

Did the Catholic League change the world? No, but it changed a part of it. And that's the way it's done. Little by little. So don't expect change to be grand in scale – it almost never is. But that's all the more reason why you should get involved now.

The next time you see or hear of something that bothers you, read about the causes, write to the offending parties and talk about your concerns. Tell everyone you know. And you know what? Things will change. Just keep your attention focused and never give up.

—William A. Donohue