

CLARIFYING OUR ROLE

William A. Donohue

Following the debacle with Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, I found it necessary to write a statement that would clarify what we do. There are some conservative Catholics, and others, who think we should give anyone in public life who is pro-life a pass, no matter what they say or do. If we did that, we would not only compromise our mission, we would become an enabler of the very thing we were founded to do—fight anti-Catholicism.

Greene has apologized to Jews and others for her offensive remarks, but not to us. She seems to think that because she is a cradle Catholic, and was married in the Catholic Church, that she has a right to condemn the entire Catholic Church.

She bolted from Catholicism to become an evangelical, which is fine, but unfortunately she found common cause with those anti-Catholics who are still present in some evangelical circles.

Greene tried to worm her way out of the jam she created by saying she was only attacking the bishops. As I point out below, those who “make sweeping condemnations of the clergy, blaming all priests and bishops for the miscreant behavior of some” are the mark of a bigot. Here are the comments that I released to the press explaining our position.

We are delighted with all the kind comments we have received from Catholics, clergy and lay alike, about our denunciation of Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene. Anyone who says the Catholic Church, or its leadership, is run by Satan is a bigot.

But we have our critics, too. There are those who hate the Catholic Church and therefore object to our comments about her. I am not interested in addressing these people—they are

haters. I am interested in addressing those who don't seem to know what we do.

Our primary mission is to combat anti-Catholicism. Secondly, we are strongly committed to religious liberty. These twin issues cover most of what we do. As a sociologist, I also write about issues that bear on the contours of our culture. After all, the Catholic Church does not exist independent of the dominant culture. Indeed, it is very much a part of it. This explains why we track the cultural currents of the day: they are bound to affect the Church.

We are not a wing of either the Republican Party or the Democratic Party, and we certainly are not in business to serve either of them. If we go after Democrats more than Republicans—and we do—it is because secularists tend to be Democrats and the more militant among them tend to be anti-Catholic.

We aren't a wing of the Catholic hierarchy. We are quite independent of them. To be sure, we are not some renegade Catholic organization—we are listed in the *Official Catholic Directory* as a bona fide Catholic entity. Just as the bishops don't tell us what to do, we don't tell the bishops what to do. We have neither the authority nor the will to do so. We know our place.

We do not go after critics of the Catholic Church who are upset with a particular public policy that it embraces. They have every right to do so. We only get involved when criticism spills into invective, into boilerplate, taking shots below the belt. We also object to those who make sweeping condemnations of the clergy, blaming all priests and bishops for the miscreant behavior of some. Those are the marks of a bigot.

It must also be said that we object to non-Catholics criticizing the doctrinal prerogatives of the Church: they

have no more business doing so than Catholics have a right to criticize the internal strictures of another religion. Fairly criticizing the Church for its position on abortion is one thing; criticizing its teaching on priestly celibacy is another.

Most Catholics, Jews, Muslims and Protestants are good people. But there are some within each group that are intolerant of Catholicism. Among the first two, it is the militant secularists within their ranks that are a problem; among the latter two, it is their extreme interpretation of their religion that is the problem.

Angry ex-Catholics and militant secularists within the Jewish community are consumed with hostility over the Church's sexual ethics. Practicing Catholics and observant Jews are not the problem—it is those who have lost their way.

When radical Muslims lash out at Catholics, it is usually the result of some twisted understanding of their own religion. Similarly, there is a strain of anti-Catholicism among Protestants, more commonly exhibited by extremists within the evangelical community.

Marjorie Taylor Greene belongs to two of these groups: she is an angry ex-Catholic and an extreme evangelical.

We do not give Republican pro-life politicians a break when they make remarks that are patently anti-Catholic and refuse to apologize. We denounce them. We don't cut corners for them because to do so would violate our mission. It is up to Republicans to get bigots like Greene into line—don't ever expect us to give anti-Catholics a break, no matter what their voting record is.