

COMEDY STILL HAS ROOM FOR SICK PRIEST JOKES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on changing norms for comedians:

Many comedians, including Jerry Seinfeld and Chris Rock, have said given the lack of humor that is commonplace among young people, they don't like to do college events anymore. When comedians have to tiptoe through their monologue—in deference to humorless snowflakes—it's just not worth it.

The latest to comment on this is Jennifer Aniston. She told an audience in Paris how difficult it is these days not to offend someone, so sensitive have people become. In fact, she said, "There's a whole generation of people, kids, who are now going back to episodes of 'Friends' and find them offensive."

Aniston notes, "Everybody needs funny! The world needs humor! We can't take ourselves too seriously. Especially in the United States. Everyone is far too divided." She's right about that.

If today's audience is hypersensitive about offending people, there is one group that is still fair game: Catholic priests. Indeed, it is perfectly acceptable to tell the most vicious and slanderous jokes about them.

On the March 24 episode of Bill Maher's HBO show, one of his guests, David Sedaris, explained how an irate father of a graduating student rushed the stage where he was giving the commencement address; the father was reacting to a joke Sedaris told. Maher asked him to repeat it on air.

"A cop stops a car, two priests are riding in it. 'I'm looking for a couple of child molesters,' the cop says. The priests look at each other. 'We'll do it,' they said." Maher, who has

a history of telling bigoted jokes, laughed heartily.

No other demographic group in the United States could ever be spoken about like this by a comedian. The fact that Sedaris felt comfortable telling this joke at a commencement address shows how low class he really is.

We know from virtually every study of the Catholic clergy that most of the molesting priests—over 80 percent of them—were homosexuals. (I wrote a book about it, *Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes*.) But will Sedaris, or Maher, tell their audiences a joke about queer perverts? Not a chance. They are such gutless wonders.

Comedians should be able to tell all kinds of jokes about every demographic group without walking through a sensitivity minefield. But they should also not engage in patently insulting commentary, cherry picking one group to smear.

Mel Brooks had no problem taking light jabs at virtually everyone, without ever getting into the gutter. Others can do so, if they choose. There is a happy medium.