

WHAT COUNTS AS OFFENSIVE?



“It Depends.”

Bill Donohue discusses how offensive conduct is treated these days:

There was a time when conduct deemed to be offensive, especially of a sexual nature, was condemned by everyone. But not today: what matters is the identity of the offender, not the conduct.

Yesterday, David Letterman warmed up his audience by making a joke about women. He said, “Treat a lady like a whore, and a whore like a lady.” The audience didn’t think this was funny, so he dropped it.

Yesterday, three Orthodox rabbis from New Jersey were convicted of conspiracy to commit kidnapping. They were charged with forcing unwilling Jewish men to get a divorce (known as a get), using electric cattle prods and handcuffs to torture them.

Yesterday, young women went topless in Times Square—they were body-painted from the waist up—hustling young men on the street to have their picture taken with them, for cash. They accosted minors. A tour guide complained that this was child pornography, but others thought it was cute.

Letterman tells obscene jokes about priests on a regular basis, and even though the audience does not always approve, he never stops.

The *New York Times* never misses an opportunity to write about a wayward priest—they have done stories about a priest who grabbed the behind of a teenager while wrestling—yet no reporter was assigned to do a story about the torturing

rabbis, either yesterday or during the trial.

Going naked in the street has never triggered outrage from most of those in the mainstream media, yet when a disturbed priest takes offensive pictures of children who are fully clothed (they were crotch-shots), it is labeled "pornographic" (see today's *Times* story on Bishop Finn).

In other words, what is considered offensive these days depends on who the offender is, not the behavior.