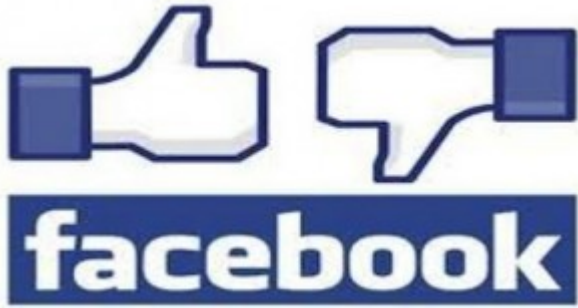


FACEBOOK'S DUPLICITY



Bill Donohue comments on the inconsistent way Facebook applies its global standards for unacceptable fare:

On July 1, the Catholic League filed a complaint with Facebook about an entry that showed an edgy picture of the Virgin Mary with the inscription, "Virgin Mary Should've Aborted." This was the reply: "We reviewed the page you reported for containing hate speech or symbols and found it doesn't violate our community standard on hate speech." When others continued to protest, the page was taken down, but then other pages, similar in content, appeared; they are still posted.

Alison Schumer, who works in Facebook's communication department, said in June that "hate speech" is defined as "direct and serious attacks on any protected category of people," but that "distasteful humor" does not qualify. That is an eminently defensible definition. But if that policy was violated when a cartoon of a naked Muhammad was posted—this happened last September when a French magazine took liberties with the prophet—then why does Facebook currently allow the Virgin Mary to be assaulted? It censored the French page.

Two other issues are involved. First, the policy that Schumer defended speaks to categories of people, not individuals. But it was invoked against the French magazine because of its assault on an individual. The point being that if the anti-Muhammad post had to be taken down, why not the anti-Virgin Mary page? Second, the cartoon (not a photo) was a depiction of Muhammad lying on his stomach, with his butt exposed. If the reason for taking down this page is nudity, then how does Facebook explain doctored photos of Sarah Palin sitting on a

chair with her legs spread, wearing a blouse, panties, nylons, and high heels? It's still up.

Overall, Facebook does a very fair job. But it owes Catholics an explanation. Better yet, simply treat Mary the way it treats Muhammad.

Contact Facebook's press room: press@fb.com