

# From the President's Desk...

Have you ever noticed how much blasphemy tends to track obscenity? Consider the following observations.

As the bus from La Guardia airport came to a stop in front of Grand Central Station, I noticed a vendor selling newspapers and magazines. Prominently displayed on the side of a vending booth there must have been at least a dozen magazine covers on display, and every one of them featured pictures of naked men or women.

When I went to claim my luggage, I noticed a huge ad alongside the bus. It showed a picture of the pop star Madonna on one side and a picture of Our Lady with baby Jesus on the other. In between was a statement that read "The Difference Between You and Your Parents." The ad was sponsored by VH-1, a second MTV music video channel.

It would be easy to shrug this off as just another commentary on how depraved New York has become. Unfortunately, there's a lot more to it than that. Those who are responsible for this condition have a very wide reach. For example, the new fall TV season is replete with offensive sitcom fare, making it virtually impossible to ignore. The premier of "Daddy Dearest" on Fox Network featured a segment where one of the main characters exclaimed "There goes my sex life. I might as well become a priest or something..." To which Don Rickles said, "That's not a bad idea, from what I hear they are getting a lot of action lately. "

On KFI radio in Los Angeles, promotional spots for Tammy Bruce's program asked parents if they would prefer to entrust their children to the care of Catholic priests or Michael Jackson. A similar statement, one that implied how sexually active priests are these days, was recently aired on the "John Larroquette Show." It seems that generalizing from the few to

the many – normally a taboo among the deep thinkers – is no longer in bad taste, not, at least, when it comes to Catholic priests.

The common thread linking these arguably disparate events together is a pervasive contempt for elementary standards of decency and a profound disrespect for Catholicism. To be sure, obscenity and bigotry are not new. But what is new is the extent to which the nation's elites take pride in their relentless assault on the moral order.

The Madonna poster is not simply the product of an exploitative TV station. It is the product of government. It was the City of New York that allowed this ad to be posted on buses and public phone booths throughout the city. Would the government have allowed an ad juxtaposing a dying AIDS patient with a gay athlete, allowing for the inscription "The Difference Between Today's Gays and the Gays of a Generation Ago"? No, at that point the relativism of today's progressives would quickly come to a halt. That would offend their values. The Madonna poster obviously does not.

Similarly, the TV and radio shows that promote the idea that all priests lead an irresponsible sex life would never be tolerated if the subject were gays. Don't expect the reckless producers of these shows ever to portray homosexuals as a sexually deviant group. That would offend their values. But unfairly portraying priests does not.

It's actually worse than this. The same elites in the media who generalize from a few deviant priests to all clergy feel compelled to distort the truth about homosexuals. For example, in the HBO movie, "And the Band Played On," a decision was made to excise from the script almost all references to the behavioral peculiarities that gave rise to the AIDS epidemic in the first place. This was a calculated act of intellectual dishonesty. Why? Because in the book "And the Band Played On," author Randy Shilts details quite vividly how AIDS came to

pass. But to tell the truth would offend gays, hence the decision to censor.

What's at work is more than a double standard: there is a concerted effort to redefine the meaning of vice and virtue. The increasing prevalence of blasphemy and obscenity are designed to facilitate this objective and that is why they tend to track each other. There's no conspiracy at work here (conspiracies have an element of latency that this effort lacks) but there is a well-defined attempt to trash the existing moral order.

Historically, those societies that have undergone a cultural inversion have not fared well, not even for the architects of destruction. Indeed the record shows that the more extreme the revolution, the greater the chance that the revolution will devour the revolutionaries. That's something our cultural elite would do well to ponder the next time they seek to engineer their nihilism.

– *William A. Donohue*