

# FRONTAL ASSAULT ON CATHOLICISM

Never has there been a more vicious, hate-filled anti-Catholic advertisement in a prominent American newspaper than the one found in the March 9 *New York Times* by Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). The demonization of Catholicism was palpable.

The pretext of the ad was the Catholic Church's opposition to the Health and Human Services mandate forcing Catholic non-profits to include abortion-inducing drugs, contraception and sterilization in its insurance plans. Its real agenda was to smear Catholicism. The ad began: "It's time to quit the Roman Catholic Church. Will it be reproductive freedom, or back to the Dark Ages?"

The ad blamed the Catholic Church for promoting "acute misery, poverty, needless suffering, unwanted pregnancies, overpopulation, social evils and deaths." It said the bishops are "launching a ruthless political Inquisition" against women. It talked about "preying priests" and corruption "going all the way to the top." In an appeal to Catholic women, it opined, "Apparently, you're like the battered woman who, after being beaten down every Sunday, feels she has no place else to go."

FFRF is led by a husband and wife team, Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker. Fortunately for Gaylor, her mother did not follow through on the advice she gave women in her book, *Abortion Is a Blessing*.

Not a single Catholic who read this ad would have been impelled to leave the Church. That is not the issue (Catholicism, unlike many other religions, is actually growing in the U.S., and worldwide). The issue is the increase in hate

speech directed at Catholics.

Nothing will stop Catholics from demanding that the Obama administration respect their First Amendment rights, this vile assault by FFRF notwithstanding. Why the *Times* allowed this ad is another issue altogether, but the developments that were unveiled a few days later spoke volumes.

Following the running of the FFRF ad, anti-Islamist activist Pamela Geller decided to submit an ad to the *Times* that played off the FFRF one by changing the wording to make it look like an attack on Islam. For example, she asked Muslims to quit their religion because they oppress so many people.

Neil Munro of The Daily Caller wrote a splendid article on Geller's courageous gambit explaining why she was turned down by the *Times*. It was rejected, they said, because "the fallout from running this ad now could put U.S. troops and/or civilians in the [Afghan] region in danger."

The *Times'* rationale for denying Geller's ad was sound: we are opposed to unnecessarily putting our armed forces in harm's way. But we wondered why it took fear to impel the *New York Times* not to run bigoted ads. Wouldn't ethics suffice? It certainly wasn't enough when they decided to run the FFRF ad assaulting Catholic sensibilities.

It would be wrong to merely pick on the *Times*. There needs to be a national discussion on the way the elite media extend a privileged position to some sectors of our society, while failing to extend the same protections to other sectors.