

# IRRESPONSIBLE JOURNALISM

We know there are bigots of every kind, those who hate Catholics, Jews, African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, et al. But when a bigot submits a column to a mainstream newspaper, we don't expect it to see the light of day. Well, one did. On May 12, *The Desert Sun*, a Palm Springs, California daily, published a piece by William Edelen that was so unbelievable it had all the markings of a person gone mad. The biggest problem we had with the article was the fact that it got published. Here is a sampling of Edelen's rantings:

"500 to 1000 [A.D.]: The church takes over and brings with it the cancer of the dark ages destroying almost everything that defined civilization. The Christian church all but wiped out education, technology, science, medicine, history, art and commerce. During this period the church amassed enormous wealth."

"1099: Christian crusaders take Jerusalem and massacre Jews and Muslims. In the streets were piles of heads, hands and feet. Millions were killed as a result of the Crusades."

"1231: Pope Gregory IX establishes the Inquisition. Inquisitors were given license to explore every means of horror and cruelty. Victims were rubbed with lard or grease and slowly roasted alive. Ovens built to kill people, made famous by Nazi Germany, were first used in the Christian Inquisition of Eastern Europe... Gruesome tortures used on hundreds of thousands of non-Christians in the Inquisition were so repugnant and horrible that I cannot even describe them to you."

"John Paul does not have enough days left in his life to say 'For my part ... I am sorry' to all of the millions and millions of human beings slaughtered by the Christian church, to all new discoveries of truth slaughtered by the church, or to a

legacy that has promoted sexism, racism, the desecration of the natural environment and the intolerance of other world spiritual traditions from Buddhism to the American Indian. Maybe the next Pope can be joined by others in continuing to say, "we are sorry" and showing it by deeds rather than only empty words."

And this is the "Religion" column of the newspaper!

William Donohue wrote the following to Julie Shirley, managing editor of *The Desert Sun*:

In the eight years that I have been president of the Catholic League, I have never read a more irresponsible article in the mainstream press attacking the Catholic Church than William Edelen's diatribe, "Many horrors perpetrated on the world in name of Christianity" (May 12). The article is not only hate-filled, it is riddled with preposterous claims. Indeed, some of the charges are so absurd that it appears Edelen is mad.

The problem, however, is not so much Edelen, but *The Desert Sun*. Surely crackpots write to your newspaper all the time. Would you dare publish a piece that was racist or anti-Semitic?

I will let our members across the country know about your collapse of standards. Perhaps you can explain to them why your newspaper welcomes Catholic-bashing columns.

Here is the address. Ask her for an explanation: Ms. Julie Shirley, Managing Editor, *The Desert Sun*; P.O. Box 2734; Palm Springs, CA 92263.