

Keep Your Victim Status!

by Susan Fani, Editor

A cartoon that appeared in the fall edition of the national college news- paper *Campus* was called "Diversity Training in the U.S." It showed a group of people pointing fingers at each other and crying epithets including "Racist! Homo! Reverse Racist! Anti-Semite! Anti-Catholic!" *Anti-Catholic?* That the term anti-Catholic is coming into vogue is heartening for civil rights activists. However, as Catholics, we hope not to fall into the contemporary trap of proclaiming victim status. It is true that we have substantive objections to the way we are received in society, but that is not synonymous with the quest for victimhood. Whereas some groups use their historically deprived status to seek special rights, insuring minority standing in perpetuity, Catholics have always wanted to stay faithful to the Church while being fully accepted American citizens. There is no conflict contrary to what many believe; nevertheless, it was a source of Catholic bashing prior to the election of President Kennedy.

Unlike others who clamor for victim and special status, Catholics as a group only want to be treated fairly. In fact, instead of being ostracized as being different-a fact Catholics have had to face throughout American history-Catholics want to be accepted as patriotic Americans who love their God and their country, not mutually exclusive concerns. Although Catholics can respect the concerns of many victim groups, they do not want to be lumped with them and treated as untouchable. The source of their ill treatment for the most part is no longer based in the idea that Catholics are loyal to a foreign power and thus fail to be true Americans. Now the problem, especially from the way the media, academia and the other elites treat Catholicism, is that the Church is one of the last moral strongholds left with absolutes in an era of relative indifference. That makes the Church and anyone who

agrees with her a target. Thus, a loud Catholic voice is finally fighting back.

Catholics, however, have not responded like many other victimized groups by demanding affirmative action programs to make up for past discrimination, of which there was plenty. ("Catholics need not apply" signs were not uncommon earlier this century.) Given equal access, Catholics have been able to achieve great success. Not that the remnants of past discrimination are all gone; there are pockets in America where being Catholic is a liability over and above the mockery that merely demeans. Followers of the Pope are seen as not being fully Christian by many in the Protestant community, for example, since there are segments that view the Pope as the Antichrist. In many respects, Catholics are more disadvantaged than others who proudly wear the mantle of victimhood—they are attacked for their strong moral beliefs, usually by the Left, and are distrusted for their traditional, hierarchical relations with the Vatican, usually by the Right.

Catholics by and large have not made excuses; they have persevered. Now that they have escaped the ghetto, as it were, they are prime players in the life of America. Catholics no longer have to suffer abuse by those who oppose beliefs, systems, and ideas that are uniquely Catholic. The awakening of one quarter of the population may be disturbing to the status quo, but that does not mean that Catholics want to join the spirited minority, many of whose groups band together to fight America. Catholics challenge what is wrong with the culture, but do not reject America itself. The difference is crucial, keeping Catholics in the mainstream and undeserving of minority, victim status. Thanks, but no thanks.