

League protests gag rule

For four years, crowds have assembled on the first Sunday of each month at the Marlboro, New Jersey home of Joseph Januszkiewicz to witness an apparition of the Virgin Mary. Though the Diocese of Trenton has not found reason to sustain Mr. Januszkiewicz's claim, others, like Karen and Vincent Bove, are convinced that the apparitions are real. The Boves publish a newsletter that reports on the monthly vigil and the crowds that attend. In December, Superior Court Judge Patrick J. McGann indefinitely banned the vigils, citing safety reasons. But he also placed a restraining order on the Bove's newsletter, requiring them to submit the newsletter to him before it is published. Judge McGann wants to be sure that the Boves are not encouraging crowds to visit the site.

In a statement, Catholic League president William A. Donohue criticized the judge's restraining order:

"Whether it is acceptable to bar the vigils out of concern for public safety is a debatable point. But there is nothing debatable about the decision of Judge Patrick J. McGann to censor the speech of Karen and Vincent Bove. Prior restraint is serious business, finding plausibility only in instances of war and other national emergencies. The vigils at the home of Mr. Joseph Januszkiewicz are hardly of such magnitude.

"The Catholic League feels confident that the ACLU will prevail in its suit on behalf of the Boves. To place a gag order on the Bove's newsletter is intemperate at best and irresponsible at worst.

"The Catholic League passes no judgment on the veracity of Mr. Januszkiewicz's claims. It only asks that the First Amendment rights of the Bove's be respected. "

Bishop John C. Reiss of the Diocese of Trenton, after a yearlong investigation by a four-member commission, announced

last September that there was no evidence of anything miraculous taking place in Marlboro.