

# LET THE PUS SURFACE

William A. Donohue

African-Americans have the NAACP, Jews have the ADL and feminists have NOW. Hispanics, Asians and Muslims are organized, as are many other segments of society, including homosexuals (gays have GLAAD). Catholics, of course, have the Catholic League. In each case, these groups have found it necessary to combat bigotry by establishing a civil rights organization. In most instances, the bigotry they fight is not openly expressed. There is one exception—anti-Catholicism: it is flaunted in public in a way that no other bigotry is.

How many times have you read a letter to the editor that is plainly anti-black, anti-Semitic, anti-Hispanic, anti-gay, etc.? How many times have you heard bigotry vented against these groups by callers to radio-talk shows? But when it comes to Catholics, and most especially when it comes to Catholicism, that's a different story. Just read the middle section of this issue—it is replete with hate mail directed at Catholicism that was printed in newspapers. No other group can match this kind of in-your-face type of assault.

That's because anti-Catholicism, unlike other strains of bigotry, is publicly acceptable. Elites, in particular, voice their animus against Catholicism with aplomb. And when protesters get vicious, they are rarely condemned for their behavior. This is a problem not only in the U.S., but abroad. Take Canada, for example.

I was honored to be the keynote speaker at the Banquet Dinner of the Human Life International (HLI) conference in Toronto that was held in April. When I got to the airport, I hopped a cab to the International Plaza Hotel, the site of the conference. The cabbie said, "Oh, that place. The last time I passed by, they had police in riot gear out in front." Though

they were gone by the time I got there, I was nonetheless stopped and questioned by a policeman as I entered the hotel.

As it turned out, earlier in the day there were hundreds of protesters in front of the hotel. The source of their protest was, of course, the conference. The protesters were aghast that Catholics had come from around the world to protest the killing of kids in the womb. So that is why they carried viciously anti-Catholic signs and taunted Catholics as they entered the hotel. Four years ago in Montreal, thousands of anti-Catholic bigots took to the street to protest the HLI conference.

Father Paul Marx is the founder and chairman of HLI, and he is ably assisted in his important work by Father Matthew Habiger and Father Richard Welch. The goal that these three decent men have carved out is to stop abortion, and for this they are subject to abuse. Those who hate them hate who they are just as much as they hate their work. That is why they flaunt their anti-Catholicism.

The Toronto media gave the event a lot of coverage. What they didn't do was to object to the anti-Catholicism of the protesters. That's because their ideological sympathies were with the anti-Catholic feminists, homosexuals and abortion providers who protested. It is not much different here in the states.

Surely it should be possible to object to the Catholic League's protest of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence without engaging in Catholic bashing. And it ought to be possible to object to Father Marx's work without advancing anti-Catholicism. But somehow it never works that way. The hatred of Catholicism is so deep, and so pervasive, that it rises to the surface—just like pus—whenever Catholics rally for a cause that is politically incorrect. Catholics like Sister Helen Prejean (of "Dead Man Walking" fame), who are passionately against the death penalty but not abortion, have

no idea what I'm talking about.

Matt Lauer recently asked me on the "Today" show if I wasn't making a mistake by bringing attention to the antics of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. I answered by saying it was more important to fight bigotry, especially when it is being embraced by government officials. It was also important for another reason: once again, it brought the pus to the surface. In the long run, it is better to have anti-Catholicism out in the open so that everyone can see it for what it is. However, even here there is a problem.

What is so novel about anti-Catholicism, as opposed to other forms of bigotry, is that those who object to it are often labeled bigots just for doing so. The ADL, in particular, is guilty of getting more exercised about the nature of the Catholic League's protest than it is with Catholic bashing itself. That says a lot about what passes as defamation these days at the ADL.

Cultures change, and that is why we will not be deterred. Four years ago, when we protested the Disney/Miramax movie, "Priest," the pundits said we couldn't be serious about taking on Disney. As you can tell from the cover story, they don't say that anymore.