

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

William A. Donohue

Every time I think I've heard it all, I'm proven wrong. There is never a dull moment at the Catholic League. Consider what happened during Lent alone.

James Cameron of "Titanic" fame threw the first major salvo of the season by arguing, along with Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino, that the Jesus family tomb had been found. As a result, Christians were supposed to rethink the Resurrection, as well as the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene (familiar stuff to *Da Vinci Code* fans). Sounding more like Las Vegas gamblers playing the odds, these charlatans pretended they had a better than even chance of proving their claims. Indeed, Cameron even went so far as to say that he believes they succeed-ed in their efforts "beyond any reasonable doubt."

Cameron made his remarkable assertion in his Foreword to the Jacobovici-Pellegrino book, *The Jesus Family Tomb*. To say he stands alone—in the entire world—making this fatuous claim cannot be disputed. Here's what I told Pellegrino on the "Today" show back in March: "I look at this book, there's not one citation in the book, there's not one footnote, there's not one endnote. Both of us have doctorates. We know the way science proceeds. You go through a peer review or you present your findings in a scientific journal. James Cameron was right—he said this reads like a detective novel because it is a novel."

Pellegrino is a nice guy, but he's also someone who is determined to believe whatever he wants to believe. So at the end of the interview, I asked him, "Where did Judah [Jesus' alleged son] come from?" He then said that a Jesuit told him that "if there was a child" his name would have been "Didymos

Judas Thomas.” To which I responded, “I thought it would be O’Malley.” At least the camera crew got a good laugh.

Then we learned that a schools superintendent in Rhode Island banned the Easter Bunny. The reasoning employed by this learned man was that the Easter Bunny reminds people of Easter and Easter is a Christian holiday and that excludes non-Christians. The only response I could think of that would make any sense was to make a parody out of this. This explains why I objected to the Peter Rabbit substitute: anyone who would steal from Mr. McGregor’s garden is not a proper role model for impressionable youngsters.

On a more serious note, we swung into action to protest a substitute teacher who had the nerve to wipe ashes off the forehead of a Catholic high school student on Ash Wednesday (in a mostly Protestant area). We are following through on this due to the lame response afforded the public official in charge. That this can still happen in 2007 is startling.

The naked chocolate Jesus artist, Cosimo Cavallaro, was another treat. Anderson Cooper was kind enough to invite us on to discuss the “artwork” on CNN. After complaining that the Catholic League had stopped him from displaying his work at the Roger Smith Hotel, Cavallaro asked me, “Where do you think I should exhibit this?” My retort did not bring a smile to his face: “In New Jersey is where New Yorkers put their garbage. There’s a big sanitation dump. That’s where you should put it.

By the way, lest you think that the artist is just a little eccentric, think again. When I debated him on a Los Angeles radio show, Cavallaro admitted to working with cheese and other food products, as well as chocolate. He also plead guilty to working with feces. To the question, posed by one of the co-hosts, “Where do you get it?”, he answered, “I use my own.” I countered, “You have just given new meaning to the term B.S. artist.”

When I debated Joan Walsh of Salon.com on “Scarborough Country” on the chocolate Jesus, I wasn’t happy when she failed to describe exactly what the Catholic League was protesting. “Tell the truth about this,” I said. “It was on street level. It was made of chocolate, with his genitals exposed, asking people to come in and eat him during Holy Week. Now, if you can’t figure that out, why that might be offensive, then you are really in a minority!”

At the tail end of Lent came the “South Park” episode that has evidently assured me a place in the pop culture. It was cute. What I couldn’t understand is why some people on my side thought I’d be livid, even to the point of suing Comedy Central! But if you can’t laugh at yourself, you’re pathetic. As I said on a Fox News show, I took this as a cartoon version of being roasted.

The stupidity, and the malice, that we encounter is mind-boggling. But what is worse is the incredibly vicious hate mail we receive. Of the aforementioned issues, the chocolate Jesus controversy drew the most vitriolic response. It is absolutely amazing to read letters—and there are many of them—lecturing the Catholic League for objecting to anti-Catholicism. The only saving grace is that it ensures that we never have a dull moment.