

NEW YORK TIMES OPINES ON BIGOTRY

The Terrence McNally play, "Corpus Christi," which opened in New York City ten years ago, came back for a short stint in Greenwich Village. But this time the Catholic League chose not to protest the play; rather, we protested two insulting articles about the play that appeared in the *New York Times*.

The play depicts Jesus as an ordinary person who has sex with his apostles. In 1998, Bill Donohue led 2000 demonstrators in a protest against the play when it opened at the midtown Manhattan Theater. Because the play was not at a prominent location this time, the league ignored it. However, Donohue did not ignore what the *New York Times* said about the play.

"If only the *New York Times* thought of Catholics as if we were all gay, we'd have no problem with the newspaper," Donohue said. The vile play which they love—not for artistic purposes but for its assault on Catholicism—features the Jesus character, Joshua, saying to his apostles things like, "F*** your mother, F*** your father, F*** God." The Jesus-character is dubbed "King of the Queers" and the script is replete with sexual and scatological comments. At one point, a character named Philip asks the Jesus-figure to perform fellatio on him.

On October 22, Jason Zinoman of the *New York Times* applauded the play for its "reverent spin on the Jesus story." To which Donohue said, "One wonders how debased a performance against Catholicism must become before this guy would call it irreverent. Moreover, one wonders what this guy would say if the play substituted Martin Luther King for Jesus."

On October 19, Mark Blankenship said those who protested the play in 1998 offered "stark reminders of lingering homophobia." Donohue responded by saying, "So when anti-

Catholic homosexuals like McNally feature Jesus having oral sex with the boys, and Catholics object, it's not McNally who is the bigot—it's those protesting Catholics. One wonders what this guy would say if a Catholic made a play about Barney Frank showing him to be a morally destitute lout who ripped off the taxpayers. Would he blame objecting gays for Catholic bashing?"

Donohue ended his comments by saying, "So nice to know what the gay-friendly *Times* thinks about Catholics." On the league's website, and in the e-mail blasts to members who get our news releases, he also asked Catholics to contact the paper's ombudsman, Clark Hoyt.

To his surprise, Donohue received a phone call from Hoyt; he wanted to know more about the league's hot reaction to what happened. On November 9, Hoyt ran an article about the controversy, stating Donohue's concerns.

Donohue did not object to the *Times*' decision to cover the play, but he did object to the two articles about it. The conversation was lengthy and cordial, but it was Donohue's conclusion that although Hoyt noted why Catholics might be upset with such a play, the newspaper's public editor struggled to really appreciate Donohue's reasoning. Not surprising was the reaction of liberal Catholic Paul Baumann of *Commonweal*: he was much more upset with Donohue's protest of the filthy, anti-Catholic play than he was with the play itself.

All in all progress was made, but big problems remain.