

NEW YORK TIMES TWEAKS CATHOLICS AGAIN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on today's *New York Times* "Arts" section:

Were it any other newspaper, it wouldn't merit a response. But only a month after being justly hammered by New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan, the *New York Times* is at it again, using its Friday "Arts" section to tweak Catholic sensibilities (Dolan registered two complaints, one of which was about an "insulting photograph" of a man dressed as a nun). Today, it is not the photo that is objectionable—a picture of five priests, two of whom are holding hands—it is the intended implication found in the caption below: "A 19th-century photograph of Roman Catholic priests in Danh Vo's 'Autoerotic Asphyxiation,' at Artists Space."

In the accompanying article, all we learn about the photo is that the priests were about to leave France for missionary work in Asia, one of whom was beheaded in Vietnam in 1861 (he was canonized as a saint in 1988). So what gives? How does this photo relate to autoerotic asphyxiation? Seen through the eyes of most men, namely heterosexuals, there is no connecting link. But for some homosexuals, male touching of the most innocent kind always carries a sexual connotation.

For example, the article discusses a homosexual photographer, Joseph Carrier, who bestowed Vo with much of his work. While in Vietnam from 1962 to 1973, "he privately documented the casual interactions he observed, intimate without necessarily being homoerotic, between Vietnamese men." Like shirtless guys hanging out? Who knows?

It is still not clear, at least seen through the lens of heterosexuality, why Vo chose to label his work "autoerotic

asphyxiation.” No matter, it’s clear that the *Times* invited those leafing through the “Arts” section to make the connection between priests and this depraved sexual act.

Contact Arthur Brisbane, the Times’ ombudsman, and tell him we’re on to their game: public@nytimes.com