

NFL SIDES WITH ANTI-CATHOLIC BIGOTS

Bill Donohue wrote the following letter today to NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell regarding the controversy over Harrison Butker. Please contact his communications chief: Brian.McCarthy@nfl.com

May 17, 2024

Mr. Roger Goodell, Commissioner
National Football League
345 Park Avenue
NY NY 10154

Dear Mr. Goodell:

NFL senior vice president Jonathan Beane addressed the commencement speech by Kansas City Chiefs' player Harrison Butker as follows: "Harrison Butker gave a speech in his personal capacity. His views are not those of the NFL as an organization. The NFL is steadfast in our commitment to inclusion, which only makes our league stronger."

So by stigmatizing Butker—in effect excluding him—for defending Catholic moral theology, you are flexing your inclusion muscles? Nice to know what you think about Catholicism—that is the real issue. Too bad you couldn't cite a single sentence that was objectionable.

Your credibility has long been shot. I will do what you cannot do—I will be specific in my criticisms of the NFL.

I wrote to you on October 11, 2011 about your decision to invite Madonna to perform at the 2012 Super Bowl. A week earlier I spelled out my concerns (which I repeated in December). Here is what I said.

In 2004, the NFL disinvited 'N Sync's JC Chasez from performing during the halftime of the Pro Bowl game. It objected to the sexist lyrics of his songs. This led me to draw a comparison with the NFL's handling of Madonna, citing her frequent "offensive lyrics, lewd behavior and misappropriation of sacred symbols." I also mentioned her repeated mocking of "the heart and soul of Christianity: Jesus, Our Blessed Mother, the Eucharist and the Crucifixion." But none of that bothered the NFL one bit. So revealing.

In 2013, when asked about the propriety of the Washington NFL team using the name "Redskins," you said, "If one person is offended, we have to listen." But you didn't listen when Catholics flooded your office with complaints following my statement on Madonna.

A lot more than one person was offended in 2018 when you announced a long-term extension of your partnership with Nike. Nike uses slave labor in China, exploiting the Uyghurs, a Muslim minority. Yet in 2019 you lauded your relationship with Communist China.

Anti-Catholicism doesn't bother you, but racism does. In 2022 you authorized a host of anti-racism slogans to appear on the players' apparel. If you were consistent you would condemn both expressions of bigotry, but you are not. And you certainly wouldn't approve slogans like "End Abortion" to appear on players' jerseys.

Earlier this year the NFL paired with an anti-Catholic organization, GLAAD, during the Super Bowl. You celebrated "A Night of Pride with GLAAD." This is the same organization that heralded the decision of the Los Angeles Dodgers to honor a viciously anti-Catholic group, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, at its June 16, 2023 game.

There is no question that you would veto any decision to give a platform to a group that celebrates gay bashing. But when it

comes to allowing a group that bashes Catholics, you are okay with it.

Harrison Butker speaks for millions of Americans, not all of whom are Catholic. The contempt you have shown for him, Benedictine College and Catholicism is repugnant. You are also a classic phony.

Sincerely,

William Donohue, Ph.D.
President