

# NPR DELIGHTS IN OFFENDING CATHOLICS

The Weekend Edition of National Public Radio (NPR) for July 5 aired a segment with host Scott Simon and musical satirist, Tom Lehrer, that was as insulting as it was unwarranted. Lehrer sang "The Vatican Rag," a song that disparages Catholicism by ridiculing the Eucharist ("Try playing it safer, Drink the wine and chew the wafer") the doctrine of Transubstantiation (Two, four, six, eight, Time to transubstantiate) and other Catholic teachings. He sang the song after first admitting that the last time he sang it he encountered "a lot of reaction."

After the song was finished, Lehrer said that he did not think it was sacrilegious because "it just makes fun of rituals, not the doctrines." In fact, just the opposite is true. It should be noted that Simon praised Lehrer.

William Donohue outlined the league's objections:

"When Catholics object to the insults of a Howard Stern, it is with the understanding that the marketplace allows for such abuse. But when Catholics object to the insults of NPR, the situation is much more serious because it is government that allows for the abuse. As a publicly-funded entity, NPR is entrusted with public responsibilities, and surely among them is the duty not to unwarrantedly offend the sensibilities of any segment of society.

"One of the lyrics says something about being a good 'Ave Maria,' which is striking: it is not likely that NPR would air the singing of the 'Ave Maria' because that might offend some listeners and might transgress church and state lines. However, these same sages think nothing of airing a song that blasphemes Catholicism. The lesson seems to be that if it is

Catholics who are offended, too bad, and if it is the state that is crossing church and state lines, then that's okay. We say tell it to the Congressional Appropriations Committees."