

# PHILADELPHIA                      NEWSPAPERS

## TARGET   ARCHDIOCESE

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* and *Philadelphia Weekly* recently published articles that sought to put the local archdiocese on the defensive. Thanks to Cardinal Bevilacqua and the local chapter of the Catholic League, the newspapers did not prevail without a stern rejoinder from both sources.

On April 14, the *Inquirer* published a story alleging that the archdiocese misspent funds for a teleconferencing center. What was particularly galling about the article was the fact that the reporter had previously met with archdiocesan officials and was supplied accurate information. But that didn't stop him from misrepresenting the story.

The article, "Archdiocese's high-tech multimedia center gets little use," alleged that the archdiocese got involved in a half-million dollar boondoggle by spending money for a teleconferencing center that never materialized. What it didn't say was that the funds were earmarked to pay for the renovation of almost the entire 12th floor of the Archdiocesan Office Center. Indeed, the conference room that was built is regularly used by employees and is not the useless space that the article suggested it was.

Cardinal Bevilacqua defended the archdiocese when he wrote that "the newspaper has done a great disservice to all the faithful of this Archdiocese for the story invites the reader to a belief that the Catholic Archdiocese consciously prioritizes material values and cooperate life over spiritual values and service to the poor."

His Eminence is right. The effect of such an article is to convey the message that the Church is more concerned about material comfort than the spiritual needs of the faithful.

This argument, which is a staple in the arsenal of anti-Catholic bigots, is especially unfair given the character of Cardinal Bevilacqua: those who know him know him as one of the most genuinely holy men of the Church.

Art Delaney, who represents the league in the Philadelphia area, called John Bull of the Inquirer to register a complaint. Delaney was supplied with important information by Brian Tierney and Jay Devine, two capable public relations executives who service the archdiocese; Tierney let his own thoughts on this matter known to the paper as well.

Though not as influential as the Inquirer, the editorial that appeared in the April 16 edition of the *Philadelphia Weekly* was even worse. Written by Tim Whitaker, the piece was nothing more than a tirade against Cardinal Bevilacqua. The trigger to the tirade was the decision by Cardinal Bevilacqua not to meet with Louis Farrakhan.

Attorney Michael Curry, an official of the Catholic League chapter in Philadelphia, wrote a stinging letter to the newspaper refuting the charges one by one. Curry was particularly incensed over the charge that the archdiocese rebuffed Farrakhan out of pure self-interest and not out of concern for Farrakhan's anti-Semitic, as well as anti-Catholic, record.

Curry also said that Whitaker never bothered to comment on the strange church-state entanglement that was evident in the decision by the Mayor's office to invite Farrakhan to a rally at Tindley Temple Methodist Church. Another "oversight" that Curry pointed to was the silence in the face of Farrakhan's "bodyguards"; they searched attendees and forcibly separated the men from the women in the church.

"In the end," Curry wrote, "your own bigotry towards the Catholic Church was the only real message of your editorial." He closed by noting that "The only good thing that I can say

is that, since your paper is given away, I didn't spend fifty cents to read your uninformed and unbalanced editorial."