PULLMAN'S OBSESSION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on news that English atheist Philip Pullman, author of the trilogy *His Dark Materials*, will release a book next year, *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ*:

I never think about atheists unless they start firing away at my religion. Pullman is an atheist and all he can think about is Jesus. There's something wrong with this picture. No matter, the man known in England for poisoning the minds of children with the wonders of atheism and the horrors of Catholicism is going back to the well one more time.

Pullman's new book will attempt to show that St. Paul affected the Gospels more than anyone else. How can this be? According to Pullman, "He had this great ability to persuade others and his rhetorical skills have been convincing people for 2,000 years." Pullman not only knows that St. Paul had a great delivery, he knows that what he delivered were fabulous tales of Jesus' godly abilities. This is traceable, we are told, to Paul's "fervid imagination." Imagine that—Pullman is so smart that he can read the minds of people who lived thousands of years ago.

In the book, Pullman maintains that Jesus was a scoundrel. How does he know this? "Parts of it [the book] read like a novel, parts like a history, and parts like a fairy tale," he says. My guess is he understates the latter.

Perhaps most revealing is Pullman's remark, "The story I tell comes out of the tension within the dual nature of Jesus Christ, but what I do with it is my responsibility alone." To be sure, no one else is likely to lay claim. But why is an anti-Catholic telling a story about a man whose dual nature undermines his own atheistic dogmatism?

The Catholic League is proud that in 2007 we successfully

boycotted Pullman's Christmastime movie, "The Golden Compass," and we are doubly proud that we killed his prospects for a film based on the second volume of his anti-Catholic trilogy. How we react to his new book, not-so-curiously timed to occur at Eastertime in 2010, remains to be seen.