

SEN. HARKIN'S CATHOLIC-BAITING REMARKS

At a news conference yesterday, Senator Tom Harkin denounced President Bush's veto of a bill that would expand embryonic stem cell research. He questioned, "Who set up the president of the United States, this president, as our moral pope? The president of the United States is not our moral ayatollah. He may wish to be, but he's not."

Sen. Harkin also said that the president has put himself "in the company of people like Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino, who told Galileo it was heresy to claim that the earth revolved around the sun..." He also claimed that Bush is now aligned "with people like Pope Boniface VIII, who banned the practice of cadaver dissection in the 1200s. This stopped cadaver dissection for over 300 years, over 300 years."

Here's how Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded:

"It's hard to know what's worse—Senator Harkin's Catholic baiting or his ignorance of history. When he votes to allow doctors to kill babies who are 80 percent born, no one calls him a moral pope. But the Iowa Catholic is quick to drop the Taliban card on President Bush for vetoing a bill that was opposed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He is just as quick in distorting history.

"Cardinal Bellarmine, as well as Pope Urban VIII, welcomed Galileo's research, presenting him with medals and gifts. It was only after Galileo persisted in promoting his hypothesis as fact (this was the heresy, not the claim that the earth revolved around the sun) that trouble ensued. As for Pope Boniface VIII, in 1299 he sought to stop the trafficking in bones from soldiers killed in the Holy Land—not to stop all dissection. In any event, dissection began again a few years

later, not 300 years later.

“Sen. Harkin’s reckless remarks will anger many in the Catholic community. There is no place in the senate for Catholic baiting, and it matters now a whit whether the guilty are themselves Catholic.”