

SMITHSONIAN LINKED TO ANTI-CATHOLICISM

Catholic League president Bill Donohue wrote a letter today to the members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, the Editor-in-Chief and Publisher of the *Smithsonian* magazine and the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. His letter concerns an article in the June edition of the *Smithsonian* by James Carroll titled, "Who Was Mary Magdalene?"

Donohue summarizes his position as follows:

"James Carroll has a long record of seeking to discredit the historical record of the Catholic Church so as to impugn its credibility today on issues that have little or nothing to do with his immediate subject. For example, in his book on the role of the Church during the Holocaust, he ends with a plea for the Church to change its teachings on women and sexuality. In his latest foray, he exploits and inflates the role of Mary Magdalene to accomplish the same ends. And he does so by treating Gnostic texts as if they carried the same historical weight as the New Testament. He also relies on two books that have been dismissed by serious students of history for their shoddy scholarship.

"Were it not for the source of Carroll's commentary, all of this could be written off as interesting discourse, or the mere chatter of cynics. But the *Smithsonian* is not just another magazine: it is the flagship publication of the highly revered Smithsonian Institution, and thus carries the implicit imprimatur of the federal government.

"For the Smithsonian Institution to be associated with an article about Roman Catholicism that is written by a man who questions the Resurrection, the need for salvation and the

divinity of Christ is reprehensible. It is obvious that anyone who would deny the heart and soul of Judaism or Islam would not find a receptive audience at the Smithsonian. What needs to be explained is why the same level of editorial scrutiny broke down in this instance."