

STATEN ISLAND CHURCH PROPERTY DEFACED BY BIGOTS

On July 21, 1994, a pro-life sign that sits on the property of the Church of the Holy Child in Staten Island, New York, was defaced by an anonymous band of anti-Catholic bigots. The sign, which sits on the corner of Arden and Amboy Road, reads "Abortion Stops a Beating Heart." It was paid for through donations raised by the Respect Life Committee of the church and has been posted for at least six months.

The pastor, Msgr. John D. Burke, has received several anonymous phone calls ordering him to remove the sign. Inscriptions have been made on the sign and an anti-Catholic poster was taped to it.

The poster accuses the Catholic Church of holding "vast economic and political resources" that are used by its "undemocratically chosen hierarchy" to enforce "its archaic views" about "abortion, women's rights, homosexuality and contraception." It says that "'free speech' in America is NOT free," and criticizes the Catholic Church for not supporting abortion in the Health Care Reform bill.

It also says that "We have chosen to use this sign to say: STOP IMPOSING YOUR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ON THOSE WHO DO NOT SHARE THEM." It ends with the following: "STOP ABUSING AND RESTRICTING WOMEN IN THE NAME OF GOD."

Dr. William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League, had this to say about the incident:

"When the property of any house of worship is defaced, it should be condemned by persons of every faith. What makes this particular defacement so odious is the motivation by anonymous bigots. The was not the act of drunken youths, but the work of politically infused extremists. They hate the Catholic Church

because the Church doesn't yield on its positions. By citing abortion, women's rights, homosexuality and contraception, the bigots bared their hand: this is clearly the work of those who think that freedom means emancipation from constraint. Instead of looking at the moral debris that this conception of liberty has wrought, the libertines pursue their agenda with characteristic fanaticism. And it is this fanaticism that explains their hatred of the Catholic Church.

"The Catholic League pledges to work cooperatively with the police in finding the guilty parties."

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics—lay and clergy alike—to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.