

CATHOLIC-BASHING DEFENDED BY CHRISTIAN LAW GROUP

Liberty Counsel, a Christian legal defense organization from Orlando, is defending the right of a Christian student to distribute anti-Catholic literature on his high school campus. After a series of incidents involving harassment of Catholic students at Niceville High School in Niceville, Florida, one of the offending students was suspended by the school. Catholic students at Niceville have been told that they are damned to eternal hell and have been subject to "laying on of hands" by some faculty and students.

Officials from the Okaloosa County School District have thus far acted responsibly by treating the matter with utmost seriousness. School Superintendent Walter Gordon has labeled the anti-Catholic literature as "hate" material and has commenced an investigation. One of the school board members has said that "This is not about prayer around a flag pole." Instead, he added, "This is about unsolicited proselytizing and harassment."

William Donohue of the Catholic League commented as follows:

"Liberty Counsel has done some very good work in the past, but that means nothing if anti-Catholicism also colors its work. To defend hate literature as religious expression, and to defend subjecting Catholic students to a climate of intimidation, is to defend the indefensible. This incident shows once again that Protestant militants stand in the way of true Christian dialogue and cooperation." The Catholic League expects that school officials will prevail and we stand ready to support them in any way we can."

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA SANTA CRUZ OFFENDS CATHOLICS

On May 31 and June 1, the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) will host the performance of a comic opera, "Sisters of the Visitation." The performance will end a month-long series of events celebrating the inauguration of the new chancellor of the school, Dr. M.R.C. Greenwood. The opera involves a reckless young man and his servant, both of whom sneak into a convent dressed as a priest and a nun in order to stop a young woman from receiving her final vows; the "priest" and the "nun" are involved in secret trysts.

According to a description provided by UCSC, the opera "is a hilarious comedy of errors as well as revelations about secret goings-on within the convent." Another description says it pokes "gentle fun at the formality of religious orders." The play was originally written at the time of the French Revolution and has been reconstructed by a faculty member.

Catholic League president William Donohue recently wrote to Dr. Greenwood asking her to reschedule the opera "for a time during the academic year that is less prominent." She refuses to do so saying that it was determined that the opera "would cause little or no discomfort," adding that "any anti-clerical humor would clearly be seen in its dated context."

Dr. Donohue offered the following comment to the press today:

"Dr. Greenwood thinks that 'Sisters of the Visitation' is okay because the harm done to Catholics is minimal and the audience that will see it will be sufficiently urbane to see the 'anti-clerical humor' in its historical context. Then why not schedule a few outdated stabs at women of color, Jews, gays,

Native Americans, Indonesians, Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans and Filipinos? I mention these groups because each of them was, or will be, the subject of a reverential tribute during the inaugural ceremonies. Indeed, there has even been a memorial prayer and meditation for Jews. Dr. Greenwood's duplicity is evident to every fair-minded person."

CONFERENCE ON PREJUDICE EXHIBITS ANTI-CATHOLICISM

The 1997 Bi-County Conference for Educators, an organization that represents educators in Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island, is holding a conference on May 21 on "Reducing Prejudice: A Matter of Education." The conference is being held at the Touro Law Center in Huntington, Long Island, and is sponsored by the Suffolk Association for Jewish Educational Services and the American Jewish Congress Center for Prejudice Reduction. In addition, there are many other co-sponsors—organizations drawn from many religions. One of these co-sponsors is the Catholic League.

On May 19, the Catholic League was notified that much of the material that it had sent to be displayed at the conference was rejected for being "too strident." Four women who stuff envelopes complained to Deborah Friedman of the Suffolk Association for Jewish Educational Services and it was her decision to withdraw the league's literature; Amy Levine of AJC was notified of this ruling as well.

The material in question is the league's monthly journal, *Catalyst*, and its Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism; only its brochure passed muster. A comment was made about how

offensive some of the anti-Catholic cartoons were and this was then used as a basis to deny the presentation of the report.

Catholic League president William Donohue expressed the league's thoughts on this matter today:

"The decision to remove Catholic League material—literature that proves the prevalence of anti-Catholicism—from a conference on prejudice, is surely one of the most incredibly ironic and demonstrably anti-Catholic statements that has been made in recent times. After accepting the league's money to join as a co-sponsor, we are now told that our journal and annual report are too much for the teachers to take. This act of censorship shows the depth of anti-Catholicism that affects even those educators who purport to be concerned about prejudice and discrimination.

"The league will make a formal complaint to the Nassau and Suffolk County Executive Directors asking them to suspend all relationships with the American Jewish Congress and the Suffolk Association for Educational Services. Not until the Catholic League receives a satisfactory response will it allow this issue to die."

BILL TO COMBAT RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION NEEDED

On May 20, a bill will be introduced by Senator Arlen Specter and Congressman Frank Wolf that is aimed at combating religious persecution abroad. Entitled the "Freedom From Religious Persecution Act of 1997," the bill is principally targeted at seeking relief for Christians who are being persecuted in China, Vietnam, Sudan, Cuba, Saudi Arabia,

Pakistan, North Korea, Indonesia, Egypt and Laos.

The bill, which is receiving broad bipartisan support, would create an Office of Religious Persecution Monitoring, one that would submit an annual report to the president on the status of religious persecution abroad. Among the sanctions that could be invoked against offending nations are limits on exports, foreign assistance and multilateral loans. It would be the job of the Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor to improve reporting on religious persecution that arises from governmental and nongovernmental sources.

League president William Donohue urged passage of this bill today:

“The Catholic League welcomes any congressional initiative that could help end Christian persecution abroad. In particular, the league is concerned about the long-standing persecution of Catholic bishops, priests, nuns, religious and laypersons in China.

“Unfortunately, there seems to be more interest in this issue in newsrooms than in the halls of Congress, but that may now change. Senator Specter and Congressman Wolf have each put forward splendid bills on this subject and their latest joint effort is the best yet. It is our hope that this bill will pass without delay.”

NEW YORK CITY MUSEUM HOSTS

VILE ATTACK ON CHURCH

The American Museum of the Moving Image, located in Astoria, Queens, will host this weekend the American premiere of Peter Greenaway's "The Baby of Macon." This 1993 play-within-a-film has been labeled by Gareth Rees as "a representation of a snuff film"; the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* called it a "corrupt movie"; Michael Brooke branded it "one of the most gratuitously unpleasant and indefensibly nasty films in recent years"; and the *New York Times* spoke of how the male and female stars in the movie are shown "in full frontal nudity in a blasphemous scene parodying the birth of Jesus in a manger."

The movie, set during the Renaissance in France, concerns the "miraculous" birth of a baby boy. The child's older sister pretends that she is the virgin mother and dresses as the Virgin Mary. She attempts to seduce a bishop's son, wishing to make him Joseph to Mary and chooses a stable for her seduction; it is complete with animals and a manger. The bishop's son is graphically disemboweled after the birth of the son.

The Church takes the child from the mother, holding her to be unfit to have a miracle child, and then sentences her to gang rape: in a scene that lasts for ten minutes, she is raped by 113 soldiers a total of 217 times. The child is then dismembered after his bodily fluids—spittle, urine, phlegm and blood—are sold by the Church at an auction.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

"This is perhaps the most obscene, blasphemous movie targeted at the Catholic Church that was ever made. It is the functional equivalent of a hate crime and deserves to be taken with the same degree of seriousness.

"What is even more obscene is that the museum that is hosting

this attack receives federal, state and city funding. Accordingly, the league will press federal, state and city officials to explain why any public institution has a right to deeply offend a large segment of the public while forcing them to pay for it.

“It is not for nothing that there is a Web Site for information on Peter Greenaway called ‘Art and Trash Video and Laserdisc.’ The ‘Baby of Macon’ is more than trash—it is a frontal assault on Roman Catholics and the Roman Catholic Church.”

MAD MAGAZINE PAINTS PRIESTS AS PERVERTS

In the April and May editions of *MAD* magazine, Catholic priests are portrayed as child molesting homosexuals. The April edition has a priest preaching from the pulpit asking parishioners to help pay for the millions that the Church has had to pay in lawsuits to cover the cost of “priests who have molested young boys.” In May, the magazine states that virtually all priests are homosexuals and therefore they wouldn’t be offended by a Disney movie like “Priest.”

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

“This is not the first time that *MAD* has attacked Catholicism. Like Howard Stern, *MAD* is intent on projecting the very worst stereotype of Catholic priests. And like Stern, the publication holds to the same double standard: both are on record saying that they would never do ‘victim humor,’ yet both have a strong interest in victimizing priests.

“John Ficarra, co-editor of *MAD*, recently said that ‘There are still many lines we wouldn’t cross,’ offering by way of example the self-imposed taboo against victim humor and AIDS jokes. Quite obviously, Ficarra feels that he hasn’t crossed the line by bashing Catholic priests.

“It is never innocent fun to defame an entire class of people because of the behavior of a few. The fact that *MAD* honors this tenet with regard to gays but not priests suggests that it feels quite at home playing the role of bigot when the subject is Roman Catholicism.

“The league will convey its concerns to *MAD* but it has no high hopes that it will persuade the publication to treat priests the way it treats gays. For if that were to happen, it would mean that *MAD* would have to explain to its parent company, Time Warner, why it has ceased to engage in Catholic-bashing, and that would take some explaining indeed.”

CANDIDATE’S CATHOLICISM MADE AN ISSUE ON LONG ISLAND

On May 8, at a union meeting in Oakdale, Long Island, an exchange between candidates for the school board in Connetquot resulted in an anti-Catholic remark. Lucille Johnson, the incumbent, disagreed with the sex education position of one of her challengers, John Mawn, and this led her to question his right to run for office given his Catholic status. Johnson said that Mawn had no business running in the race because he is a Catholic who believes in his religion. This statement has been verified by others who attended the meeting.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this

today:

“The U.S. Constitution has made it very clear that there can never be a religious test for public office. Yet here we are over 200 years later still revisiting this issue. For anyone to make an issue of the religious affiliation of his opponent is as un-American as it is despicable.

“There are only two responses that will satisfy the Catholic League at this point: one is that Lucille Johnson extend a public apology to John Mawn (as well as to Catholics in general), and the other is for her to resign immediately from the school board. We await her decision.”

Long Island media can contact Long Island Catholic League Chapter President Charles Mansfield at 516-741-1443 or at 516-775-6569.

CHICAGO CLUB EXPLOITS CATHOLICISM

A new nightclub called Convent is scheduled to open in Chicago on May 9. The thematic element to the club is Catholicism and the treatment that it is accorded is decidedly irreverent. The club is adorned with Catholic imagery and the bartenders and waitresses are dressed in Catholic garb.

As part of its marketing strategy, Convent hosted a preview of the club on May 7. Patrick Cremin, the president of the Chicago chapter of the league, was in attendance and what he saw was disturbing. Accordingly, the national headquarters of the Catholic League is asking the owners of the club, Surita

and Shar Mansukakani, to make certain modifications.

Catholic League president William Donohue gave the details today:

“The Chicago nightclub Convent takes liberties with Catholicism that is purely indefensible. To exploit a world religion for the purpose of commercial gain is the kind of thing that no one from any religion would find acceptable. What the league is asking for is a modification of the most egregious examples of this exploitation.

“The Catholic League is asking the owners of the club to alter the dress code of its bartenders and waitresses; apparently some bartenders dress as priests and all of the waitresses dress in Catholic schoolgirl outfits. It is also asking that the mirrored crucifix in the Hell Room be removed and that such drinks as Holy Water and Confessionals be retitled.

“The Catholic League, with the assistance of the late Cardinal Bernardin, recently fought for the modification of an offensive logo sported by the House of Blues. We were pleased with that outcome and we hope that the owners of Convent model themselves on the House of Blues by making reasonable changes. In the event cooperation is not shown, the league is prepared to make this a case of national significance.”

BETHANY COLLEGE HOSTS ANTI-CATHOLIC PLAY

Bethany College, a Disciples of Christ institution located near Wheeling, West Virginia, is hosting *Agnes of God*, a play based on the notoriously anti-Catholic movie by that name. The

play will be performed May 7 to May 10 on the Bethany campus. It is the senior project of a female student in the department of fine arts. Faculty members supervised the project and the completed work will be filed in the college library archives.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, commented on this development today:

"It is always distressing to learn about anti-Catholicism on our nation's campuses. But it is particularly disturbing to learn that a Christian college would actually sponsor bigotry against the Catholic Church. *Agnes of God*, which was released as a movie in 1985, has been branded as anti-Catholic by Hollywood critic Michael Medved. Movie critic Roger Ebert told his audience that the psychiatrist in the movie, played by Jane Fonda, 'has a personal hatred of the Catholic Church.'

"The student who chose this movie, and the faculty who found it acceptable, obviously could have selected a script that was not offensive to Catholics. But, instead, they chose to do a play about a nun who murders her baby in the convent and flushes it down the toilet. This is a sad commentary on their thinking and it is an embarrassing statement about the Christian status of this Christian college."