

HOUSE CHAPLAIN SELECTION DEMANDS FULL DISCLOSURE

Last week, Rep. John D. Dingell wrote to the Speaker of the House, Rep. Dennis Hastert, calling for the full release of all records, transcripts and other materials relating to the selection of the new House Chaplain. The selection process has been questioned by the Catholic League, and others, because some of the comments made by those involved in the search were troubling. No Catholic has ever been chosen for this job.

At stake is whether anti-Catholic prejudice worked against the selection of Father Timothy O'Brien, the Catholic priest who was chosen first by the search committee and was subsequently recommended along with two other candidates to Rep. Hastert, Rep. Dick Armey and Rep. Dick Gephardt; Rev. Charles Wright, a Presbyterian minister, who placed third in the balloting, was ultimately chosen to fill the post. On January 27, the full House will vote on the new House Chaplain.

Catholic League president William Donohue today backed Rep. Dingell's call for full disclosure:

"In reply to a letter I wrote to all members of the House of Representatives on December 2, Rep. John Dingell requested of Speaker Hastert that he release all documents relating to the selection of the new Chaplain of the House. I was told today by a staff member in Rep. Dingell's office that no reply has been forthcoming.

"The Catholic League fully supports Rep. Dingell's request for full disclosure on this matter and urges all congressmen, Republicans as well as Democrats, to do the same. If anti-Catholic bias was not at work, there is nothing to worry about. But if it was, every House member has a duty to take this into account when the vote is taken.

“For the record, the Catholic League favors neither Republican nor Democrat. All we care about is rooting out anti-Catholicism.”

“DATELINE” DUMPS ON CATHOLICS AT CHRISTMAS

On December 21, the NBC show “Dateline” did a segment on a mental institution in Quebec (St. Julien’s) that was operated by the Catholic Church in the first half of this century. Some of those who were assigned there were reportedly abused by the nuns who ran the facility.

Catholic League president William Donohue did not question the veracity of the story, but he was troubled by two things: out of the entire universe of stories that “Dateline” could address, why was this one chosen and why was it shown the week of Christmas? He expressed his concerns to NBC and received a prompt response from NBC executive producer for broadcast standards, David McCormick. McCormick said that “this was not a report on the Catholic Church in general but a specific orphanage in Canada.” He added that “There was no intent to criticize the role of the Church at this time of the year.”

Donohue then called McCormick to complain that his central questions were never addressed. Unfortunately, the phone conversation did not resolve the issue.

Donohue had this to say about the matter today:

“In my letter to NBC, I stressed that ‘My point is to question the decision-making process that resulted in this story and its timing. Of all the stories that may interest

viewers—babies born alive in abortion clinics, the source of Rev. Al Sharpton's income, the legalization of torture in Israel, gay sexual practices and the AIDS epidemic—'Dateline' chose to reach back to the first half of this century to do a piece about a Catholic-run institution in another country that just happened to air during Christmas week.'"

Given McCormick's unsatisfactory response, the league will notify its members in the next issue of its monthly journal, Catalyst, to contact McCormick and express their concerns.

NEW YEAR'S GIFT FOR BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

In recognition of the closing of the "Sensation" exhibit on January 9, the Catholic League has bought a New Year's gift for Brooklyn Museum of Art director Arnold Lehman. The gift is an extra-large pooper scooper and a package of ten hypo-allergenic disposable latex gloves; they are to be used to dismantle the dung from Chris Ofili's "The Holy Virgin Mary."

The present will be mailed on Thursday with the expectation that it will be delivered on the first business day of the New Year, January 3. A picture of Catholic League president William Donohue with the gift is available on our website at www.catholicleague.org.

William Donohue explained why he bought the gift:

"Just as we provided vomit bags to facilitate the process of puking when the exhibit opened, we are now providing a pooper scooper and surgical gloves—latex, of course—to facilitate the sanitary removal of the dung. This should put to rest the

rumor that we are not eco-conscious at the Catholic League. And besides, who wants to step in barf and feces while dismantling this masterpiece?

“We hope that Arnold Lehman appreciates our thoughtfulness and puts our New Year’s gift to good use. We also hope he doesn’t exploit museum workers by ordering them to clean up his filth.”

VERMONT SUPREME COURT SENDS MESSAGE TO FAITHFUL

The Vermont Supreme Court ruled today that gay couples are entitled to the same benefits and protections as married couples. Just one week ago, on December 13, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a decision by the Vermont Supreme Court—made in November—that bars state tuition payments for children attending religious schools; state subsidies to private non-sectarian schools, the Vermont court said, were constitutional.

Catholic League president William Donohue spotted an irony here:

“The Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim citizens of Vermont who ascribe to the teachings of their religion, and seek to educate their children in the schools of their faith, have just been told by their state’s judges to take a walk.

“In the eyes of the Vermont State Court judges, the faithful must pay for homosexuals to get the same benefits as a married couple, even though doing so means having to subsidize expressly immoral behavior that compromises their sincerely-

held religious beliefs. In addition, they must pay for public schools that they cannot support in principle and are entitled to zero relief for electing to send their children to religious schools of their choice. Welcome to Vermont.

“These decisions have little to do with fidelity to the constitution and everything to do with ideology. Coercion is a staple in the arsenal of ideologues and the Vermont judges are a textbook example. The faithful should take note and either hold their legislators accountable by pressing for a change in their state constitution or literally taking that walk. New Hampshire, we understand, is a nice place to live.”

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OFFICIALS STILL DON'T GET IT

Yesterday's defacement of the disputed canvas, “The Holy Virgin Mary,” at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, was greeted as follows by Catholic League president William Donohue:

“The Catholic League takes great delight in mounting a protest against the Brooklyn Museum of Art for sponsoring a cruel, obscene and blasphemous exhibition, ‘Sensation.’ But we do not condone the actions of the man who defaced the controversial Madonna painting. There is a right way to protest and a wrong way to protest, and throwing paint on a canvas is wrong.

“That said, it is also true that the trustees of the Brooklyn Museum of Art still don't get it. For them to say that this was an ‘incomprehensible act’ is what is truly incomprehensible. Even a child knows that when someone viciously attacks another person's family, religion or country, there will be a strong urge to retaliate in kind. The

real issue here is not the defacement of the canvas but the desecration of Our Blessed Mother. With public funding, no less!

“This raises a serious question: is it possible to deface a desecration? Or to put it somewhat differently, is it possible to deface dung? I leave this to the savants at the Brooklyn Museum of Art to ponder. Assuming they comprehend what I mean, of course.”

THREE TV SHOWS THIS WEEK RIP CATHOLICS

Three network television shows this week featured lines that were offensive to Catholics.

In the December 13 episode of the CBS sitcom, “Becker,” there was a segment about a Christmas pageant that revolved around Joseph and Mary. Dr. Becker, played by Ted Danson, at one point told the man dressed as Joseph, “You told the ‘Virgin Mary’ she had a nice ass, didn’t you?”

In the December 13 episode of the NBC show, “Suddenly Susan,” employees were complaining about their Christmas party. “These drinks are totally watered down,” said one character. To which it was said, “I get a better buzz during Communion.”

In the December 15 episode of the NBC show, “West Wing,” the subject was hate crime legislation. A discussion took place about the murder of a gay man in the mid-west by three young men. “They made him say Hail Marys as they beat him to death,” said a character. She then commented how this crime was really about “racism, or sexism or anti-Semitism or homophobia that

are only the tip of the iceberg of the pathology troubling this country.”

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“All of these attacks were done intentionally and were timed to offend at Christmastime. Researchers who have studied those who work in senior positions in Hollywood shed light on what’s behind this. We know that most of them have no religion and many of them find it impossible not to bash religion. Their favorite target is, of course, Catholicism, and this is the time of the year when their bigotry gets uncorked. Notice, too, how phony they are: they loathe attacks on blacks, women, gays and Jews. But Catholics—they are fair game. We will contact CBS and NBC about this.”

ROLE OF RELIGION IN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

The mention of Christ’s name in Monday night’s Republican presidential campaign has triggered a national conversation on the role of religion and politics.

Catholic League president William Donohue, who will address this issue on tonight’s edition of *Hardball* with Chris Matthews (MSNBC), made the following remarks today:

“Surely there are those who run for public office, including the office of the presidency, who exploit religion for crass political purposes. But it is dangerous to assume that the mere invocation of God’s name, or some recitation of faith, will lead us down a scary road where church and state will

merge. That is pure demagoguery, designed to intimidate those who believe in the public expression of religion.

“Would those who are upset with George W. Bush and Gary Bauer for citing Christ as the ‘political philosopher or thinker’ with whom they most identify with be just as upset had they answered Ayn Rand, the high Objectivist queen of atheism? Would those who have no problem marketing their anti-religion message in the public schools be just as upset had a candidate invoked the name of Hillel or Buddha? Speaking of Buddha, why is it that Al Gore caught less flack from his critics when he used a Buddhist temple for a fundraiser than he did for brandishing his faith in Christ?

“Most revealing of all is the attack on Gore and Bush for advocating the utilization of faith-based institutions for social services. Those with an agenda to eradicate all vestiges of religion from the public square will seize on any opportunity they can to exploit this issue. It is they, and not those who may be guilty of pandering, who are the real threat to our freedoms.”

RASH OF ANTI-CATHOLIC ADS IN MAJOR NEWSPAPERS

In the space of one week, four anti-Catholic ads were run in major American newspapers. All of the ads were sponsored by the Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-Day Adventists (a splinter group from the Seventh-Day Adventists). The ads identify the Catholic Church as the “WHORE” and the “BEAST,” and charge the Holy Father with breaking down the barriers between church and state.

The "Earth's Final Warning" full-page ads were run on November 28 in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; on December 1 they ran in the *Miami Herald* and its sister paper, *El Nuevo Herald*; and on December 2, they ran in the *Dallas Morning News*.

Commenting on this outbreak is Catholic League president William Donohue:

"This is not the first time that we've had problems with the anti-Catholic ads run by the Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-Day Adventists. Our experience has been that when we register our complaint with the publishers of the newspapers which accepted the ads, they prove to be uniformly reasonable. Unfortunately, one of those newspapers, the *Miami Herald*, is now a repeat offender. But in fairness to this outlet, a new publisher has since been selected for the job. It is our hope that Alberto Ibarquen proves to be as reasonable as his predecessor, David Lawrence; we expect a fair hearing from the other publishers as well.

"Despicable though the 'Earth's Final Warning' ads are, they are not half as disturbing as the decision of newspaper advertising executives to run them. It is not likely that the Klan would find space in a mainstream American newspaper, and the same should be true of the Eternal Gospel Church of the Seventh-Day Adventists. The Catholic League is determined to fight these ads every time they appear and to convince as many publishers as possible as to the impropriety of running them."

RALLY AT BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF

ART

On Wednesday, there will be a rally outside the Brooklyn Museum of Art to protest the “Sensation” exhibition. The rally is being sponsored by Msgr. Peter Finn, Co-Vicar, Staten Island, and the Catholic League. It begins at noon. Several local elected officials will address the crowd.

Catholic League president William Donohue shed further light on the need for the rally:

“December 8 is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a Holy Day of Obligation in the Catholic Church. It is appropriate, therefore, that Christians come together to register their outrage at the disgraceful portrait by Chris Ofili, ‘The Holy Virgin Mary.’

“By throwing elephant dung on Our Blessed Mother, and surrounding the painting with pornographic pictures, Ofili is promoting hate speech. Worse, the directors of the museum have willfully conspired with Charles Saatchi, the owner of the art, to sponsor this trash at the taxpayer’s expense.

“It is only right that Christians protest this exhibition on a day that honors Our Blessed Mother. We intend to send an unmistakable message to the Brooklyn Museum of Art that there is no legitimate role for publicly-funded hate speech in America.”

ANOTHER CATHOLIC-BASHING

MOVIE?

There is a new movie that is being filmed in Jerusalem that is of interest to the Catholic League. "The Body" stars Antonio Banderas and revolves around the story of an Israeli archeologist who finds the body of Christ. In response, the Vatican dispatches a priest to the Holy Land to investigate her claim. His encounter with the young woman leads him to challenge both his belief in God and his vow of celibacy.

"The Body" is being directed by the same person who wrote the movie, Jonas McCord. He recently explained the message of his new movie: "In a world where Kosovo became a situation [and] where, in the name of God, people do...violence, this film says God has no place in politics."

William Donohue, Catholic League president, commented as follows:

"'Catholicism is a hoax.' From what is known about 'The Body,' that appears to be a fair way to characterize the movie. If this is indeed the theme of the film, the Catholic League will lead a fight against it.

"The screenwriter and director, Jonas McCord, wants us to believe that religion is the basis for war. His sense of history apparently excludes the 20th century: the greatest monsters of this century—Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot—have all been committed atheists, men who killed hundreds of millions in the name of abstract ideas emptied of religious significance. Indeed, all worked tirelessly to destroy every vestige of religion in their society.

"If history is a guide, it is religious cleansing that McCord should fear, not its public expression. But to those who have an agenda, historical truth does not matter. What matters is that their perverted vision of history prevail.

“Needless to say, we will keep a close eye on ‘The Body.’”