

SCHOOL SHOOTINGS RAISE CHURCH-STATE QUESTIONS

The recent school shootings in Littleton, Colorado and Conyers, Georgia raise significant questions regarding the proper relationship between church and state.

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue today:

“President Clinton and the First Lady went to Littleton yesterday to console the surviving families of the Columbine High School massacre. Hillary Clinton told the crowd how ‘we’ have prayed for survivors and their families. This meeting took place in Light of the World Catholic Church. Prior to going to the church, President Clinton told reporters that ‘We thank God that the injuries to the students do not seem to be life-threatening.’

“By choosing a church as their venue, and by acknowledging their reliance on prayer, the Clintons made a statement that transcends the symbolic. They didn’t choose a public hall or a Wellness Center for their meeting. Nor did they choose a site sponsored by Wicca or some New Age religious group. But more important is this: why, if religion is what most people repair to in times of crisis, do so many of our elites treat it as if it were a communicable disease?

“In the Georgia shooting, it has been reported that at least one teacher ‘herded her students into a closet and recited Bible verses to them.’ Will she now be fired for violating laws requiring separation of church and state? That’s what happened in New York City last June when Mildred Rosario lead her sixth-graders in prayer following the death of one of their classmates. The civil libertarian police couldn’t wait to hang her.

“What these shootings tell us is that we as a nation are clearly schizophrenic about religion. Ninety-four percent of the American people believe in God, the President and the First Lady do their counseling in a Catholic Church, almost everyone prays when they learn of lives cut short, social scientists confirm the relationship between religion and citizenship, and yet we are taught to be skittish about religion. Makes no sense to us.”

WFOR TV, MIAMI, AIRS “NEWS” STORY ON CONFESSION

On May 16, the CBS affiliate in Miami, WFOR TV, featured a story on its late-night news that depicted the Catholic Sacrament of Reconciliation in a most questionable way. All throughout the movie that preceded it, “Joan of Arc,” promotions for this “news story” were flagged.

The news segment informed viewers that many Catholics practice their faith in different ways and that some Catholics are choosing not to confess their sins to a priest. Confession scenes from the movies “Moonstruck” and “Mortal Sins” were shown, thus adding to the triviality of the report. If there was one statement made by the commentators that summed up the tenor of the report, it was this: “The fact is many Catholics never go to confession. They simply don’t feel comfortable confessing their innermost thoughts to a priest. Yet these same people consider themselves to be good Catholics.” The closing comment by one of the reporters was a musing, “Very interesting.”

Catholic League president William Donohue remarked as follows:

"The real news about the WFOR news clip on confession was that there was no news in it at all. This begs the question, Why was it run? By flagging it during the two-hour movie, 'Joan of Arc,' the station hoped to lure the expected Catholic audience to tune in and learn what all the controversy was about. This kind of baiting is more appropriately the stuff of tabloid journalism, not serious news reporting.

"The point of this piece was to create controversy where none exists: Catholics either go to confession or they do not—what they don't do is sit around and moan about it. And, of course, we have the forced symmetry that is so popular with some segments of the media, namely the strategy that puts Catholics who reject Church teachings on the same ground as Catholics who are loyal to the Church. This smacks of an agenda—not an honest inquiry."

SEN. SCHUMER ENGAGES IN CATHOLIC BAITING

Note: Immediately after faxing this news release to Sen.

Schumer, he called Dr. Donohue to explain that he never intended to disparage Catholic schools. He did not dispute the accuracy of the quote, instead he argued that this comment was immediately followed by a reference to Christian Coalition schools and schools run by the Nation of Islam; he never mentioned Catholic schools.

Dr. Donohue accepted Sen. Schumer's explanation and thanked him for his forthrightness.

SEN. SCHUMER ENGAGES IN CATHOLIC BAITING

On May 15, at the Spring Education Conference of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), Senator Charles Schumer of New York charged that those who are in favor of school vouchers are not interested in educating students, but rather are interested in proselytizing.

“Those who argue that we ought to have vouchers,” said Schumer, “and those who argue that the money ought to be sent to the private system—look who they are. They’re not interested in educating—they’re interested in proselytizing.”

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“Sen. Schumer leaves no doubt as to who the ‘they’ are, and that is why he owes Catholics an apology. His remarks smack of demagoguery, pure and simple.

“Unlike Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew, who makes his case against vouchers strictly on the merits of the issue, Sen. Schumer cannot resist inflaming the passions of anti-Catholics by drumming up their worst fears. To suggest that Catholic educators are not interested in educating students—many of whom are not Catholic and come from poverty-stricken families—is to either lie or express profound ignorance.

“Unlike Sen. Schumer, I taught at a Catholic school in the inner city and never once did I witness or hear about proselytizing. Indeed, if there had been such abuses, I would have known about it: I not only taught religion, I was the Director of the Religious Education Council of the Archdiocese of New York in the mid-1970s.

“By descending to the level of prejudice, Sen. Schumer reveals a side to him that no decent person can admire. We await his quick response to our concerns.”

INTERNAT'L PLANNED PARENTHOOD SCORES VATICAN

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) has announced that it is launching a massive campaign directed at undermining the Vatican's role in the United Nations. The IPPF, which is headquartered in London, is urging "governmental, non-governmental and other institutions to endorse existing appeals for a review of the Vatican's status with the United Nations." To counter this move, the Catholic League is embarking on a project that will make public the anti-Catholic element in Planned Parenthood's history.

The decision to target the Vatican is being led by IPPF Director-General Ingar Brueggemann. It comes in the wake of protests by the Vatican to Planned Parenthood's response to the refugee problem in Kosovo. The Vatican has objected to the IPPF policy of distributing condoms and abortion-inducing pills to the refugees fleeing Kosovo.

Catholic League president William Donohue responded this way:

"Only an organization driven by fanaticism would think that the men, women and children in Yugoslavia who are being victimized by Slobodan Milosevic are in dire need of condoms. What these people need is precisely what Catholic Relief Services offers, namely food, clothing, shelter and medicinal supplies.

"Drunk with ideology, the IPPF now seeks to punish the Holy See by challenging the Vatican's non-member state permanent observer status in the U.N. In defense of the Vatican, the Catholic League is contacting U.N. officials informing them of the anti-Catholic strain that has marked Planned Parenthood's

record. To that end, the Catholic League is compiling evidence of this bigotry, and will make public its findings in the not-too-distant future. Our objective is to inform government officials in the U.S., and at the U.N., of the bigoted legacy of Planned Parenthood. The record will show that this organization has no legitimate place at the public policy table in any nation.”