

SEN. LIEBERMAN'S REMARKS ON RELIGION AND POLITICS WELCOME: CHOICE OF VENUE IS NOT

In the past 24 hours, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and American Atheists, Inc. have criticized Senator Joseph Lieberman for his remarks on religion and politics.

The ADL said the remarks given by Senator Lieberman at a Protestant church last Sunday were inappropriate: "Language such as this risks alienating the American people." Similarly, American Atheists said that Senator Lieberman's "'assurances' about the role of religion and politics ring hollow considering his hostility toward rational thinking Americans."

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"Senator Lieberman is to be commended, not criticized, for discussing the public role of religion. For too long, public office holders have succumbed to elite pressure by silencing themselves on this issue. Senator Lieberman not only has a First Amendment right to exercise his freedom of speech, he has a moral obligation to share with Americans his religiously-informed vision of the polity.

"The problem the Catholic League has with the speech that Senator Lieberman gave last Sunday at the Fellowship Chapel in Detroit is not with its content, but with its venue: elected officials and candidates for public office should not be stumping in houses of worship. Take, for example, what happened last Sunday. Just before Lieberman took to the pulpit, the pastor of the church (who is also the president of

the local NAACP chapter), Rev. Wendell Anthony, gave Lieberman a tacit endorsement and then criticized George W. Bush and Dick Cheney.

“Republicans and Democrats alike are guilty of campaigning in Protestant churches and synagogues. It is time this abuse was ended and it is time for ministers and rabbis to follow the lead of Catholic priests by not extending invitations to speak from the pulpit in the first place.”

ABCNEWS.COM REPORTER GETS TOO CUTE FOR CATHOLICS

In a story posted yesterday on the ABC News website, ABCNEWS.com, reporter Sue Masterman ridiculed Catholicism in her report, “Holy Disorder: Kids Are Dressed to Thrill at the Vatican Bash.” Her article was based on the throngs of youths who have converged on Rome for World Youth Day. Here are some of her observations:

- “The Vatican’s strict dress code for visitors to St. Peter’s Church in Rome has collapsed...” Instead, there are “scantily clad pilgrims” wearing “hot pants, miniskirts, tube tops and other scanty clothing. Dogs, however, are another question. However well covered in fur, they have to stay outside. They have no souls to redeem, the church decrees, thus access is denied. No holy water for them.”
- Priests are hearing confessions “from all youngsters who want absolution from sins they have hardly had time to commit.”
- “If God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Holy Ghost are

getting to see more than usual of the flesh which He created in places where the Roman Catholic clergy want it covered up, then it does not seem to be causing much divine offense.”

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, offered his reaction:

“I called Beau Brendler, executive news editor of ABCNEWS.com, yesterday to discuss this matter. The message I left on his answering machine was not returned.

“What is most appalling about this article is its placement in the ‘hard news’ section of the website. This was not an editorial or news commentary. On the contrary, it was presented as factual reporting.

“I do not believe for one second that Masterman would snicker at any other religion. For some reason, she has it out for Catholicism. We will press this issue with ABC officials to find out what her problem is. We will also ask that she be subjected to appropriate sanctions.”

NO FREE SPEECH FOR CATHOLICS AT DENVER AIRPORT

Denver International Airport (DIA) has a chapel that is used by Christians, Jews and Muslims; an interfaith organization that represents the three religions, DIA Interfaith Chapel Inc., leases the space from DIA. Mass is available for Catholics on Sunday and holy days of obligation. Catholic passengers are alerted to the Mass schedule via the public address system (as reported in today’s *Denver Post*, it goes

something like, "Catholic Mass begins in 15 minutes in the chapel").

However, because one individual registered a complaint saying that this was a violation of separation of church and state, no more such announcements are permitted until airport attorneys decide what to do. The local chapter of the ACLU is defending the ban arguing that only Catholic services are announced on the public address system. What the ACLU did not say was that Jews and Muslims have opted not to use the system and are defending the right of Catholics to do so.

Catholic League president William Donohue remarked as follows:

"This is a straight First Amendment case that will be won in court, if that is necessary. The issue is not the establishment clause, but freedom of speech. What is amazing about this is that the champions of free speech, the ACLU, are defending the gag order. Had activists from the North American Man/Boy Love Association used the public address system to alert pedophiles which room they had rented to conduct their S&M exercises on eight-year-olds, the ACLU would be defending them on the grounds of free speech.

"This event is striking. Those of us who are upset with Hollywood rot are routinely told to 'turn the channel' or 'don't go to see the movie if you object to it.' But this bit of wisdom seems to apply only to those who defend traditional values: if it applied across the board, then those who object to religious services being announced on a public address system would simply ignore the message. The reason they won't is because they, like the ACLU, are at bottom the real censors."

APPEAL TO GORE: MOVE FUND-RAISER OR FIRE SANCHEZ

Rep. Loretta Sanchez has been denied the opportunity to speak at the convention next week because of her refusal to cancel the Playboy Mansion fund-raiser scheduled for August 15. Now Democratic officials say they will decide on August 18 whether to remove her from her post as vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee. On this morning's "Today" show, Sanchez said she was going ahead with the event, though she said she would be willing to move it if someone can find a better place.

Catholic League president William Donohue, who asked vice president Al Gore to cancel the Playboy event on July 31, commented as follows:

"If Rep. Sanchez does not move her fund-raiser from the Playboy Mansion, then she should be fired by Vice President Al Gore immediately. To do this on August 18 would be a sham: that would be after the event and after the convention. The time for leadership is now, not later.

"Catholics have every right to object to this event. The Playboy Foundation has written huge checks to Catholics for a Free Choice, a front-group for anti-Catholics trying to get the Vatican kicked out of the U.N. Hugh Hefner has charged Catholic bishops with attempting to establish a theocracy in this country simply because of their opposition to pornography. His publication has consistently portrayed Catholic teaching on sexuality in the most disparaging terms (more recently, he bragged about the 'nice, Catholic' twins he was dating, saying how he believes in 'knocking down the stereotypes of more conservatively bound members of the community'). His daughter, Christie, tried to get a public relations firm to drop the Catholic Church as a client; she

has also accused the Church of teaching that 'women shouldn't be sexual' and other absurdities.

"And to top it off, the event is scheduled to take place on a holy day of obligation for Catholics, the Feast of the Assumption. Now if Clinton-Gore can stop the bombing of a foreign country during Ramadan, Mr. Gore can stop this event from happening. Either fire Sanchez or change the venue."

GORE'S "GORGY" FEST AT PLAYBOY MANSION IS EXPLODING

In an AP story today, Maria Meier, a spokeswoman for Al Gore, contends that the Playboy Mansion Democratic fund-raiser scheduled for August 15 is not controlled by the vice president. However, the *Washington Post* reports today "The Gore campaign has threatened to revoke Rep. Loretta Sanchez's convention privileges and party post if she does not cancel her reception at the Playboy Mansion next week." Indeed, Gore is "also contemplating not supporting Sanchez for reelection this fall."

Catholic League president William Donohue said the league will not yield on this issue:

"If Vice President Al Gore has nothing to do with the Playboy Mansion fund-raiser, then why is Congressman Patrick Kennedy so upset with Gore about this? Why is feminist activist and Democratic Convention platform committee member Gloria Allred so ticked off at Gore about this? And why is Gore threatening to punish the event's organizer, Rep. Loretta Sanchez? Because everyone knows that Gore appointed Sanchez to the post of vice chairman of the DNC.

“No amount of spin by Playboy can stop this event from exploding. Playboy spokesman Bill Farley is trying to do just that by saying, ‘The Playboy Mansion for a political event is not Sodom and Gomorrah. It is in many respects like a five-star hotel.’ Oh, really, then why has Playboy founder Hugh Hefner been quoted as saying of the event, ‘I throw one hell of a party. The Playboy mansion gives you permission to fulfill a lot of fantasies that wouldn’t be acceptable elsewhere.’ Exactly. And no one ever confused the Playboy Mansion with Chuck E. Cheese.

“Once again, we are calling on Vice President Al Gore to cancel the ‘Gorgy.’ August 15, the day of the event, is a holy day of obligation for Catholics, the Feast of the Assumption. And we are still waiting to hear from Senator Joseph Lieberman on this issue as well. One thing’s for sure: the Catholic League is going to dog the Democrats on this issue. We simply won’t let go.”

WHERE IS LIEBERMAN ON PLAYBOY MANSION “GORGY”?

There is a report in today’s on-line edition of the *Hollywood Reporter* about Senator Joseph Lieberman’s “crusade to get Hollywood to clean up its act.” In light of the Democratic fund-raiser scheduled for August 15 at the Playboy Mansion, it would be instructive to know how Senator Lieberman feels about the event.

Addressing this issue is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“Last December, when George W. Bush mentioned his reliance on

Christ during a debate he had with other hopefuls for the Republican presidential nomination, he was the subject of much criticism. But there is comparatively little criticism of Senator Lieberman's embrace of God yesterday in Nashville. The Catholic League defended Bush from his critics last December and now stands ready to defend Lieberman from his critics: both men are free to exercise their First Amendment right to freedom of speech and to recall Americans to their religious roots. The problem here is not with either man, but with the selective indignation that many pundits exhibit.

"Regarding Senator Lieberman, however, we need to know whether his opposition to Hollywood 'sewer' fare (the senator gives out annual 'Silver Sewer' awards for offensive programming) translates into opposition to Vice President Al Gore's decision to stand by idly and watch his appointed vice chairwoman of the DNC, Rep. Loretta Sanchez, organize a Democratic fund-raiser at the Playboy Mansion; it is scheduled for August 15, a holy day of obligation for Catholics (the Feast of the Assumption). In short, does Senator Lieberman oppose the 'Gorgy,' or not? I faxed a letter to him at his Washington office today asking him just that."

GORE'S PLAYBOY MANSION BASH TRIGGERS "WEB WAR"

At yesterday's press conference in New York, Catholic League president William Donohue outlined the league's plan of action regarding the Al Gore Playboy Mansion fund-raiser scheduled for August 15. As part of that effort, the league has placed a half-page ad in today's edition of the Washington D.C. publication, *Roll Call*. The ad is titled, "Catholic League to

Gore: Cancel the Playboy Mansion Fund-Raiser.” The second prong of today’s protest involves the initiation of a “web war.” Donohue explained his strategy today:

“We are contacting all of our friends in the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist communities to join with us in our protest of the Playboy Mansion fund-raiser scheduled for August 15; this is the Feast of the Assumption, a holy day of obligation for Catholics. We will post on our website, catholicleague.org, the phone (202-456-1414) and fax (202-228-2424) numbers of Gore’s office, and his e-mail address (vice.president@whitehouse.gov). We are asking all our allies to jam the lines at the White House and get the message across: we want Gore to cancel the ‘Gorgy.’

“This ‘web war’ is entirely Gore’s doing and no attempt by him to separate himself from this event will work. It is true that Rep. Loretta Sanchez, the vice chairman of the Democratic National Convention, organized the bash, but she was appointed by the vice president to this post and ultimately works with his approval. We will have more to say on this subject tomorrow.”

CATHOLIC LEAGUE PRESS CONFERENCE

When: Sunday, August 6, 1:00 pm

Where: In Front of Playboy Enterprises
730 Fifth Avenue, NY NY
(between 56th and 57th St.)

Issue: Gore’s Playboy Mansion Fund-Raiser

Scheduled for August 15

William Donohue will explain why the Catholic League is protesting the Playboy Mansion event and will outline what the league is doing about it.

Both the venue and the timing of the fund-raiser are troubling: Playboy has long been a foe of Catholicism and the party takes place on the Feast of the Assumption, a holy day of obligation for Catholics. A fact sheet will be made available to the press.

The vice president has been notified of the league's concerns and has been asked to cancel the event. Thus far he has not done so.

CULTURE WAR IGNITES OVER GORE'S PLAYBOY MANSION "GORGY"

The Democratic fund-raiser at the Playboy Mansion, scheduled for August 15, is expected to raise \$3 million for vice president Al Gore's presidential campaign. The Catholic League, which led the fight against George W. Bush for his appearance at Bob Jones University, is now pitted against Al Gore for refusing to cancel this event.

Catholic League president William Donohue explains the similarities and differences between George W. Bush's visit to Bob Jones University and Gore's Playboy Mansion event:

"Before George W. Bush spoke at Bob Jones University last

February, few knew that the school still ascribed to the virulently anti-Catholic views of its founder. Calling Catholicism a 'satanic counterfeit' and the 'Mother of Harlots' is not a matter of legitimate theological dispute: it is Catholic bashing. Once it became known just how bigoted the institution was, the Catholic League demanded that Bush address our concerns squarely. Bush did just that in his letter of February 25 to John Cardinal O'Connor, sending a copy to me. On February 28, I accepted Bush's statement of regret on the 'Today Show.'

"Gore's Playboy Mansion 'Gorgy' now threatens to become the vice president's Bob Jones nightmare. Only worse. Bush took heat mostly from Catholics and had no way of knowing that his appearance at Bob Jones University would trigger such an outcry (most other presidential hopefuls had campaigned there in the past without a problem). Gore, on the other hand, is getting fair warning and is ticking off not only Catholics, but men and women of all religions: hustling money in this den of iniquity sends a message to Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims that the vice president has decided to align himself with Hugh Hefner in the raging culture war. But because this 'Gorgy' Fest is most insulting to Catholics (the event occurs on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption, a holy day of obligation for Catholics), the Catholic League feels especially compelled to lead this fight. We will contact our friends in other faith communities to join with us."

GORE 'S PLAYBOY MANSION

ORGANIZER IS TWO-FACED

On August 15, Rep. Loretta Sanchez is holding a Democratic fund-raiser at the Playboy Mansion; she is vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee, an appointment made by vice president Al Gore. Ironically, Rep. Sanchez, a Catholic, was quite vocal in denouncing George W. Bush's visit to Bob Jones University last winter; yet she is now orchestrating this event on a holy day of obligation for Catholics, the Feast of the Assumption.

On the February 13th edition of the NBC show, "Meet the Press," Sanchez said, "George W. Bush's failure to condemn the anti-Catholic views of Bob Jones University is offensive to Latinos." A week later, Bush's Bob Jones appearance was the subject of another attack by Sanchez: she was quoted in the *Orange County Register* as saying, "I am trying to let Hispanic Catholics understand that George Bush does not represent us well."

Catholic League president William Donohue took note of her hypocrisy:

"The Catholic League did not hesitate to criticize George W. Bush for his visit to Bob Jones University. Rep. Loretta Sanchez, a Catholic herself, had every right to do likewise. But to see her now leading a fund-raiser at the Playboy Mansion on the Feast of the Assumption is sickening: it shows how duplicitous she is and how insincere her objections to Bush really were. In short, she is playing politics with religion.

"On February 25, Bush sent a letter to the late John Cardinal O'Connor (with a copy to me) stating the following: 'On reflection, I should have been more clear in disassociating myself from anti-Catholic sentiments and racial prejudice. It was a missed opportunity, causing needless offense, which I

deeply regret.’ This effectively ended the controversy.

“The controversy that Gore is now caught up in must also be ended, and the way to do it is to cancel the Playboy bash. If Sanchez won’t do it herself, then Gore is obligated to do it for her. No matter, the Catholic League is making this issue a priority the same way we did the Bob Jones affair.”