

75 ORGANIZATIONS ASKED TO JOIN SHOWTIME BOYCOTT

The Catholic League has asked 75 Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Mormon and Buddhist organizations to join us in boycotting Showtime. The boycott is being called because of our dissatisfaction with VIACOM CEO Sumner Redstone's refusal to condemn the Catholic bashing associated with the Showtime film, "Sister Mary Explains It All." It aired Sunday evening.

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following remarks today:

"In March, 1995 the Catholic League was the first organization in the nation to call for a boycott of Disney. We did so because of the anti-Catholic Disney/Miramax film, 'Priest.' We had no illusions of taking down this Goliath but I said at the time that it was our goal to 'blacken up Disney's Snow White image.' This, I believe, was accomplished and in subsequent years Disney was boycotted, for a variety of reasons, by several other organizations. I think it is fair to say that Disney has taken positive measures to improve its reputation in the last six years.

"In 1996-1997, we were the first organization in the nation to successfully use the internet to call for a boycott of a television show's sponsors: by posting the names of the sponsors of each week's ABC-TV show 'Nothing Sacred,' we made it possible to crush the program. We did just that. And in 1999, we got Disney to put the arm on Miramax by dropping the film, 'Dogma'; it was released by an independent film organization.

"We have posted the appeal for the boycott on our website, www.catholicleague.org, and are now asking 75 organizations to join with us in this effort. While no one denies Showtime the

right to insult Catholics, it is also true that the Catholic League will not be denied the right to exercise its First Amendment right in calling for a boycott. They asked for this fight, now let's see if they can take the heat."

FEDERAL APPEALS COURT AFFIRMS STUDENT PRAYER

A federal appeals court today has again ruled that public school students have the right to choose a fellow classmate to give a prayer at a high school graduation; the case involves Duval County in Florida. The ruling makes it clear that school officials have no control over the selection of who is to speak or what the speaker says. Last June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that student-led prayers at public school football games in Santa Fe, Texas, were unconstitutional because they were officially sanctioned. But as far as the 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals is concerned, the Florida and Texas cases are "fundamentally different."

Catholic League president William Donohue today explained the league's position:

"Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected student-led prayers before a public high school football game because it reflected the official policy of a school district. The policy not only allowed students to vote in favor of a prayer before the games, it provided measures to supervise the vote. The result of all this, the high court ruled, was to effectively put the school district on record as endorsing religion. But the situation in the Florida case is different because it is more of a straight free speech issue. No doubt

this decision will be appealed.

“It is the position of the Catholic League that religious speech should not be granted a second-class status by the state. It is well known that the same radical civil libertarian and separation of church and state extremists who maintain that it is constitutionally protected speech to allow a student to use obscenities in a valedictorian address are the same ones howling for censorship whenever a prayer is cited in public. They want to deny students the right to invoke the name of God at a graduation ceremony but would defend to the hilt the right of students to curse God before the same crowd. That, they would say, is free speech. It is our hope that such intellectual dishonesty will not be ratified by the courts.”

BOYCOTT OF SHOWTIME LAUNCHED

In the May 14 edition of *Variety*, the Catholic League ran a full-page ad requesting VIACOM chief Sumner Redstone to condemn the Catholic-bashing film, “Sister Mary Explains It All”; it is scheduled to air on Showtime on May 27. We subsequently issued news releases objecting to the movie and to the anti-Catholic comments made by the film’s director, Marshall Brickman, Showtime CEO Matt Blank and actress Diane Keaton (she plays the malicious nun). On May 15 and May 17, Catholic League president William Donohue wrote to Sumner Redstone asking him to condemn the Catholic bashing associated with the movie.

Showtime released the following statement today: “This does not reflect the opinion of Showtime or VIACOM. ‘Sister Mary Explains It All’ is an award winning play that is clearly a

satire. Both Showtime and VIACOM reject intolerance in all its forms.” William Donohue responded as follows:

“To say that it ‘does not reflect the opinion of Showtime or VIACOM’ to air this movie is to lie: this is not a film that has been previously released—it is a Showtime original based on the viciously anti-Catholic play ‘Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You.’ Moreover, it fails to persuade to say that the movie is based on ‘an award winning play.’ The racist movie, ‘The Birth of a Nation,’ was named by the American Film Institute as one of America’s 100 greatest films. But Showtime would never insult African Americans by airing this ‘award winning’ movie. As for the bit about the movie being a ‘satire,’ if this were true then somebody needs to explain why the ADL, the American Jewish Committee and the National Conference of Christians and Jews blasted the play for its bigotry. And to say that ‘Showtime and VIACOM reject intolerance in all its forms’ is also a lie: Brickman and Blank recently cited their Jewishness as reason why it is okay to dump on Catholics.

“We are launching a boycott of Showtime and will ask our allies in various activist organizations to join with us. Redstone is a fraud.”

SHOWTIME JUSTIFIES CATHOLIC BASHING

Matt Blank, Showtime’s CEO, and Marshall Brickman, the director of the May 27 Showtime movie, “Sister Mary Explains It All,” have justified this anti-Catholic film by citing their Jewishness. The Catholic League has a full-page ad in

the current weekly edition of *Variety* asking the head of Showtime's parent company, Viacom CEO Sumner Redstone, to publicly condemn the movie. In the ad, Brickman is quoted as justifying the Catholic-bashing nature of the film by referencing—and distorting—past episodes of the Church's history.

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue today:

"If I were an entertainment executive responsible for a notoriously anti-Semitic movie, and I expressly gave myself a pass by citing my Catholicism, every Jewish civil rights organization would be coming down my throat. Justifiably so. That is why the Catholic League is so upset with this latest outrageous development attendant to Showtime's film version of the maliciously anti-Catholic play, 'Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You.'

"Columnist Cindy Adams reports in today's *New York Post* that Showtime CEO Matt Blank said of the movie, 'Listen, I'm Jewish. We're into projects that are too political, too religious, too black, too gay. We're a home for wayward movies.' Marshall Brickman, the film's director, is quoted as saying, 'Listen, I'm Jewish. I reserve the right to satirize any minority.'

"Well, guys—Listen, I'm Catholic. And I don't believe that anyone can exculpate himself from bigotry by citing his racial, ethnic or religious roots. In short, you owe Catholics an apology for both your bigoted words and bigoted deeds. We will now ask Sumner Redstone for a second time to condemn all the Catholic bashing that is associated with this production. We will not let go of this issue, especially now that Blank and Brickman have decided to play dirty."

VARIETY AD MAKES APPEAL TO VIACOM'S SUMNER REDSTONE

The May 14 edition of the weekly *Variety* carries a full-page ad (p.13) by the Catholic League asking Viacom chairman Sumner Redstone to condemn an upcoming anti-Catholic movie on Showtime; Viacom owns Showtime. On May 27, Showtime will air a film version of one of the most anti-Catholic plays ever written, "Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You."

The *Variety* ad, written by Catholic League president William Donohue, describes how malicious the play is. He cites several Jewish and interreligious organizations that condemned the play in the 1980s and quotes several theater critics who also ripped the play for its bigotry. Donohue then targets the film's lead actor and director:

"Even worse are the comments made by Diane Keaton, who plays Sister Mary Ignatius in the Showtime movie, and Marshall Brickman, the director. On January 17, 2001, Keaton said of her character, 'Sister Mary is basically living in hell because of what she believes.' Brickman went further, justifying the attack on Catholicism by exclaiming, 'any institution that backed the Inquisition, the Crusades and the Roman position on the Holocaust deserves to be the butt of a couple of jokes.'"

Donohue then asks, "Well, Mr. Redstone, with whom do you stand? With those civil rights organizations and theater critics who have blasted the play for its Catholic bashing? Or with Mr. Brickman who says we Catholics deserve it?" Donohue notes that Mr. Redstone has been recognized for his opposition to anti-Semitism and bigotry in general.

Donohue concedes that Mr. Redstone is not personally responsible “for this cruel commentary.” But it did occur on his watch, and that is why the appeal is being made. The ad ends by saying to the Viacom chairman that “we Catholics want to know whether you will join with us—and with people across faith lines—in condemning ‘Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You.’”

ADL’S CRITICISM OF THE POPE’S “SILENCE” FAILS

In this Sunday’s *New York Times*, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) will post an ad blaming Pope John Paul II for his “silence” in the face of anti-Jewish remarks recently made by Syrian leaders. After quoting the two remarks, the ad says, “Pope John Paul II, we were greatly saddened by your silence.”

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on the ADL’s ad today:

“Anti-Jewish remarks are made in the pope’s company and he doesn’t engage them in a ‘Crossfire’ debate. Now most people would give the Holy Father a pass—and for many good reasons—but for the ADL the pope’s ‘silence’ is tantamount to an endorsement.

“The ‘silent’ label, inaccurately used to describe Pope Pius XII’s reaction to Hitler, is now being used to label Pope John Paul II. Eugene Fisher, the interreligious relations director for the U.S. bishops, says that ‘For Catholics, the phrase ‘the silence of the pope’ has become so encrusted with bitterness and controversy that its use is increasingly perceived by us as an insult motivated by anti-Catholicism.’

“Fisher is absolutely correct. It is time for those who are serious about good Catholic-Jewish relations to stop with the ‘it’s never enough’ refrain and get real. The pope is a world traveler who hears offensive things said all the time—about his religion and that of others. Now according to the ADL’s logic, the pope is guilty of anti-Catholicism for remaining silent when Orthodox priests and monks in Greece recently called him the ‘grotesque, two-horned monster of Rome’ and ‘the anti-Christ.’

“Finally, what about the Holy Father’s voluminous statements, writings and diplomatic efforts condemning anti-Semitism? Does this carry any weight with the ADL? If so, they shouldn’t be so quick to second-guess. If not, why not?”

CHRISTIE’S AND CATTELAN SEEK ANOTHER “SENSATION”

On May 17, Christie’s will auction one of two versions of “The Ninth Hour” by Maurizio Cattelan. The installation depicts Pope John Paul II being crushed by a meteorite while clutching his crozier. The Cattelan sculpture has been the source of controversy when shown in parts of Europe. This was especially true when it was featured in Poland where two members of the Parliament tried to destroy the artwork.

Commenting on this subject is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“Cattelan’s ‘The Ninth Hour’ strikes us as being bizarre, but not necessarily anti-Catholic. What interests us is not so much the installation but all the hoopla surrounding it. We are also interested in the extent to which the artwork acts as

fodder for anti-Catholics.

“For example, it is well-known that Christie’s, which played an integral role sponsoring the anti-Catholic exhibit, ‘Sensation,’ at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1999, has been hyping ‘The Ninth Hour’ in search of another fast buck. That is why Christie’s featured the felled pope on the cover of its spring catalog. As for Cattelan, he admits to being disappointed by the lack of reaction to his work and is now tweaking reporters by saying that ‘The Ninth Hour’ is a ‘little’ anti-Catholic.

“To be sure, Cattelan’s pope is attracting the crazies. Consider Norman Rosenthal, head honcho of England’s Royal Academy. Upon seeing the art, he was moved to blaming the pope for the spread of AIDS. It remains to be seen if the Catholic bashers in New York can top this one.

“In fairness, Christie’s has every reason to be ticked off at the Catholic League. Had we taken their bait and urged Catholics to protest, it might have been a lucrative deal. But now they’re stuck with this pile of junk. Finally, we couldn’t help but noticing that Cattelan’s pope is shown surviving the meteorite. Talk about a bummer for the Christie’s crowd!”

HYPOCRISY MARKS THE FORT WAYNE JOURNAL-GAZETTE

On May 2, the Fort Wayne *Journal-Gazette* ran an editorial on the decision of Indiana University-Purdue University (IPFW) to host the play “Corpus Christi” later this summer. It vigorously supported the position of the school’s chancellor,

Michael Wartell, to defend the play as a matter of academic freedom. The editorial also chastised six state senators from Indiana who raised serious questions regarding the propriety of using public monies to host such an anti-Christian event. The play depicts Christ having sex with the twelve apostles.

But a quick search of editorials recently published in the *Journal-Gazette* shows how hypocritical the editors are. Commenting on this today is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“On April 17, the *Journal-Gazette* ran an editorial saying, ‘It’s time for sports teams to rid themselves of Indian nicknames.’ It then cited as support for its position a report by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission condemning Indian nicknames. Two days later, there was an editorial on the controversial ‘B.C.’ comic strip by Johnny Hart that the newspaper ran on Easter Sunday: the cartoon depicted a menorah turning into a cross, symbolizing the transition from Judaism to Christianity. The *Journal-Gazette* warned that it would never publish such a cartoon again and even went so far as to say that by its definition, ‘anti-Semitic – or racist or anti-Christian or homophobic – comics can’t be ‘art’ except in some antiseptic, ivory tower and thus irrelevant sense.’

“Now how about that. So it’s okay to follow the logic of the Feds in banning Indian nicknames that local high schools adopted long ago, and it’s okay to squash a mere cartoon that offends the sensibilities of the editorial staff, but it’s not okay to object to staging an anti-Christian play at a state-assisted institution. It’s too bad ‘Corpus Christi’ wasn’t a comic strip about a bunch of Indians butchering the white man. Then the sensitivity kings and queens at the *Journal-Gazette* wouldn’t hesitate to reach for their censorial swords. But since it’s just Christ being defiled, this is simply a First Amendment exercise.”

INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY FORT WAYNE HOSTS ANTI-CHRISTIAN PLAY, "CORPUS CHRISTI"

The Terrence McNally play about Jesus having sex with the twelve apostles will be performed this summer at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW). Six state senators from Indiana have raised serious questions regarding the propriety of a state-assisted university hosting an anti-Christian play.

Catholic League president, William Donohue, issued the following news release today:

"Here we go again. Taxpaying Christians are asked to support a school that mocks their religion. It matters not a whit that IPFW is not funding 'Corpus Christi.' What matters is that this public institution is hosting the play. We applaud the six state senators who have raised objections to this abuse of public financing and urge them to continue their fight.

"In its mission statement, IPFW boasts a commitment to multiculturalism. Indeed, it has an office of Multicultural Services 'to serve as a support system for African American, Hispanic, Native American, International [and] Asian' students. In addition, there is an Islamic Student Association on campus and a 'diversity' week that teaches students to be tolerant of homosexuals. While some would say this is an example of inclusiveness, it is not: there are no such programs for Christians. Indeed, the fact that IPFW is

helping to sponsor Christian bashing belies its multicultural commitment.

“Chancellor Michael Wartell sees the play in terms of academic freedom. But part of his academic responsibilities is the promotion of tolerance for everyone, Christians included. That is why I am asking him to personally sit down with those associated with the play and discuss how hurtful this exercise in free expression really is to Christians. After all, IPFW’s mission statement also mandates that the school strive to ‘reinforce ties to the surrounding community.’ That would seem to include Christians.”