

NEW YORK BISHOPS SUE NEW YORK STATE

The Roman Catholic Bishops of New York State filed a lawsuit today against New York State for mandating religious institutions to provide prescription contraceptives for their employees.

Catholic League president William Donohue strongly supports the lawsuit and explains why:

“New York State legislators are to blame for this lawsuit. Had they acceded to the requests of Catholic bishops to allow an exemption for religious institutions that object to prescription contraceptives, no court action would have been necessary. Now it will be up to the judiciary to uphold the First Amendment right of Catholic institutions to exercise their religious liberty options.

“What is driving this issue is not contraception—it’s abortion. The abortion industry has no more use for the Catholic Church than it has for innocent babies. What it wants is for the state to impose the will of abortionists on the Catholic Church. It deplores diversity and has no respect for the First Amendment right to religious liberty. From the beginning, the abortion movement in this country has been expressly anti-Catholic and this latest issue is just one more example of its zealotry.

“The Catholic League stands with the bishops in fighting for the right of Catholic entities to exercise their doctrinal prerogatives free from the heavy hand of the state. Just as it would be wrong for a religious institution to determine health-care standards for state employees, it is equally wrong for the state to decide such standards for religious institutions. We look to the courts to remedy this situation

without delay.”

HATE GROUP CLAIMS TO HAVE CLONED BABY GIRL

Brigitte Boisselier, the head of Clonaid, said today her company is responsible for the world's first cloned human baby; the company is tied to a religious group by the name Raelian.

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed both the cloning issue and the bigotry associated with Raelians:

“A woman who calls herself a Raelian ‘bishop’ holds a press conference alleging that her company has cloned the first human. She will not say where the baby was born and admits she has no evidence to share at this time that would substantiate her claim. Fortunately, not everything about Raelian is a mystery. Here's what we know.

“The central link between the cloning company, Clonaid, and the religious group, Raelian, is Claude Vorilhon. He is both the founder of the company and the head of the group known as Raelians; he goes by the name Rael. He claims that in the 1970s he met with aliens who arrived by way of a UFO. They told him they used genetic engineering to create the universe and he believed them hook, line and sinker. Sounds nuts but I didn't make this up.

“Here's some more info about the Raelians. There is good news for hedonists, African Americans and Jews: Raelians are for free love and oppose racism and anti-Semitism. But there is bad news for Catholics: they hate them.

“Raelians advocate cross burnings to protest Catholicism; they’ve blanketed Canada telling Catholic schoolchildren they must renounce their faith; they’ve posted anti-Catholic signs outside Catholic schools; they’ve appealed to the U.N. to denounce the Holy See; they want the Vatican sued for ‘crimes against humanity’; they’ve mocked Catholics during Gay Pride Parades; and so on.

“In short, Raelians have no respect for the sacredness of human life and treat baby sheep with greater kindness than they do Catholics.”

LONG ISLAND PASTORS NOTIFIED OF NEWSDAY’S DEFENSE OF BRESLIN’S BIGOTRY AND DISTORTIONS

In addition to sending this news release to those on the Catholic League’s media list, this one is being faxed to all 134 Catholic parishes in Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island. Catholic League president William Donohue explained why he is taking this unusual step:

“Jimmy Breslin is out of control and *Newsday* is irresponsible for not firing him. It is one thing to write critically of the Catholic Church, quite another to slander the Church and its leaders. In 2002, Breslin wrote 31 articles mentioning the Catholic Church and all 31 are sprinkled with his venom. Disdain and derision mark his comments about the pope, cardinals, bishops and pastors, and outright falsehoods are relentlessly told about Bishop William Murphy of Rockville

Centre.

“Breslin is so far gone he doesn’t even know the names of those whom he bashes. His latest screed attacking the Catholic Church, which *Newsday* deliberately ran on Christmas Eve, mentions ‘Cardinal John Law.’ But there is no one by that name in the Catholic Church. This is, sadly, emblematic of a deeper problem: for whatever reason, Breslin’s ability to write cogently and to remember basic facts has deteriorated greatly in recent years.

“*Newsday*’s publisher, Raymond Jansen, defends this man by saying, ‘Obviously, Mr. Breslin is angry.’ That is exactly what he told Rev. Msgr. Daniel S. Hamilton of Our Lady of Perpetual Help when Msgr. Hamilton wrote a rational letter of complaint to Jansen. In short, *Newsday* has decided to stand by its man. All Catholics on Long Island need to know this; the Catholic League will get the word out.

“How ironic it is that *Newsday* continues to employ a man whom they had to suspend for two weeks in 1990 because of his sexism and racism. Breslin was suspended for calling a 25 year-old Korean *Newsday* reporter a ‘yellow cur,’ ‘slant-eyed’ ‘c—.’ Breslin can now add anti-Catholic to his resume of racism and sexism. And this is the man *Newsday* defends.”

ATTEMPTS TO SANITIZE CHRISTMAS OCCUR IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS ALIKE

Catholic League president William Donohue today listed recent attempts to sanitize Christmas in both the private and public

sectors:

- Every year on New York's Park Avenue the Helmsley Building nightly features a huge display of lights in the shape of a cross. This is the first year it has been discontinued.
- GAP stores on the East Coast have banned Christmas decorations because they might make some feel "uncomfortable."
- For the first time in 30 years, a Rossmore retirement community in Walnut Creek, California has banned a nativity scene.
- The song "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" has been censored from this year's Old Town School of Folk Music holiday party in Chicago because some Jews labeled it anti-Semitic.
- All religious songs were forbidden by the Los Angeles Unified School District and replaced by tunes about snowballs.
- Teachers in a public school in Sacramento, California have been told they are not allowed to utter the word "Christmas."
- Virginia Tech has issued a memo to all university employees warning that they "do not promote one cultural/religious tradition at the exclusion of another" and that they should "make all students and employees feel included."

Yet it was reported this week that the U.S. Supreme Court refused to erase a stay of Justice John Paul Stevens' ruling that Cincinnati could not ban a menorah from Fountain Square during the holidays. It is because there is so much madness in the land that the Catholic League—after fighting with New York City for over a year—arranged to find a plaintiff for the Thomas More Law Center to sue New York for banning crèches from the public schools while allowing menorahs and crescents and stars.

It is so much bunk to say all religious displays must be banned because some feel excluded or uncomfortable. Christians, who are 86 percent of the population, feel excluded and uncomfortable by this kind of censorship! The answer is respect for diversity and free speech.

DEMOCRATIC HOPEFULS FOR THE PRESIDENCY ASKED TO OPPOSE DNC'S ANTI-CATHOLIC BIGOTRY

Catholic League president William Donohue has written a letter to Democratic hopefuls for the presidency in 2004 asking them to oppose the Democratic National Committee's (DNC) association with an anti-Catholic organization, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC); the DNC provides a link on its website to CFFC. His letter has been sent to the following: Senator Thomas Daschle; Governor Howard Dean; Senator John Edwards; Congressman Richard Gephardt; Senator John Kerry; Senator Joseph Lieberman; and Rev. Al Sharpton.

The closing paragraphs of Donohue's letter are as follows:

The Catholic League is strictly non-partisan. I spoke out against George W. Bush on the Bob Jones matter and went on the "Today Show" to accept his apology. I led the fight against the Republicans when they unfairly treated a Catholic priest in his bid for the House Chaplain post (the priest did not get the job but another one did, thus becoming the first Catholic to hold this position). In short, we are neither Republican nor Democrat at the Catholic League: our job is to fight Catholic bashing whenever and wherever it occurs.

You are in a particularly critical spot to help Catholics. By publicly opposing the DNC's link with Catholics for a Free Choice, you could have a direct impact on its willingness to continue this affiliation. And it would certainly endear yourself to Catholics.

Catholic newspapers all over the country have been following our protest of the DNC-CFFC link and I have garnered the help of many Catholics, Protestants and Jews on this issue. All we want is for the DNC to drop CFFC from its website. In a time when Republican notables are being questioned about their sentiments towards African Americans, it is more important now than ever before that everyone who either holds or seeks positions of high office stand strongly against bigotry of every kind.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE'S NATIVITY SCENE ERECTED IN CENTRAL PARK

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights erected a nativity scene today in New York's Central Park. Every year the Catholic League obtains a permit from the Parks Department of the City of New York allowing us to put up a manger scene on the corner of 59th Street and 5th Avenue. It will be blessed today at 4:00 p.m. by Msgr. John Woolsey, pastor of St. John the Martyr in Manhattan; it will be taken down on December 30.

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following remarks today:

"It is of symbolic importance to erect a crèche in Central Park: it represents an important public statement signifying

the religious roots of Christmas. Those who truly believe in diversity will be pleased with our nativity scene. Those who are aghast at this display need to pray for tolerance.

“Last week the Catholic League helped to arrange a lawsuit by the Thomas More Law Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan, suing New York City for prohibiting the display of a manger scene in the public schools. The lawsuit claims religious discrimination because the City allows the display of Jewish and Islamic religious symbols in the schools (the menorah and the crescent and star). How ironic it is that the Parks Department of New York City allows us to put up a crèche in Central Park and New York’s Department of Education bans it in the schools. It is our hope that the courts will educate New York education officials about the immorality of religious discrimination.”

CARDINAL LAW’S RESIGNATION

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed what Cardinal Bernard Law’s resignation means to most Catholics:

“Most Catholics are greeting the resignation of Cardinal Law with a sigh of relief and sadness. While no one blames Cardinal Law for the entire scandal in the Church, his departure nonetheless represents an important step towards recapturing the trust of the laity. Now the mending process can proceed with alacrity.

“There is a small, but vocal, minority for whom nothing will ever satisfy. SNAP president Barbara Blaine, ex-priest and psychotherapist Richard Sipe and victims’ attorney Mitchell Garabedian are already whining and making new demands. Worse, some are given to reckless charges against the Church. Take, for example, the recent remarks of a radical group called the

Coalition of Catholics and Survivors. They have accused the pope of ordering a coverup of the sex-abuse allegations.

“Their so-called smoking gun theory boils down to this: the pope in 1999 recommended that a defrocked priest ought not return to the area where he committed his offenses. They take this eminently sensible advice and use it as a hammer to bludgeon the pope. Just so everyone understands what’s going on here, what the pope did was to say that a former priest—*someone who had been returned to the status of a layman*—ought to start a new life in a new location. Isn’t this what parole boards recommend to released inmates—that they not return to the neighborhood that nurtured their maladies? Shame on Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly and others for disseminating this mindless charge.

“Finally, some are already beating the war drums going after bishops of other dioceses. This is absurd: everyone knows that no other diocese in the nation was qualitatively or quantitatively comparable to Boston. To suggest otherwise is to play into the hands of Fifth-Column Catholics.”

TERRY McAULIFFE’S SELECTIVE INTEREST IN BIGOTRY

Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chairman Terry McAuliffe is calling on Republican leaders to “denounce” the recent statements made by Senator Trent Lott regarding the record of Senator Strom Thurmond.

Catholic League president William Donohue shot back today:

“There is no question that what Senator Trent Lott said was

inexcusable. But it is the height of arrogance and hypocrisy to hear Terry McAuliffe lecture others on their need to denounce bigotry. This is the same man who refuses to break his ties with anti-Catholic bigotry: the DNC still maintains a link on its website to a professed anti-Catholic organization, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC). As I have repeatedly said, it is the anti-Catholic words and deeds of CFFC president Frances Kissling that the Catholic League, along with the U.S. bishops, condemns.

“Our protest of Kissling’s Catholic bashing has triggered an avalanche of letters and phone calls from Catholics and non-Catholics alike directed at Terry McAuliffe. Yet he stubbornly refuses to break his association with her. Now he has the gall to demand that others condemn Senator Lott for his admittedly irresponsible comments. What Lott did was bad, but it was a one-shot deal for which he has apologized. What McAuliffe has done has now dragged on for six months and he shows no signs of remorse or changes in his conduct.

“What price Senator Lott will pay for his remarks, I do not know. But I know one thing—it is the firm position of the Catholic League that we will hound this issue of the DNC’s support for anti-Catholicism right up to and including the Democratic National Convention. We are busy on many fronts these days but we will not let go of this matter until someone gets McAuliffe to drop CFFC from its website altogether.”

NEW YORK CITY SUED FOR RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

A lawsuit has been filed by the Thomas More Law Center against

the City of New York, Schools Chancellor Joel Klein and another school official challenging the Department of Education's policy regarding "Holiday Displays": the policy allows the display of the Jewish Menorah and the Islamic Star and Crescent while banning the Christian religious holiday symbol, the Nativity Scene. Catholic League president William Donohue helped arrange the lawsuit and issued the following remarks today:

"Last December and January, I wrote several letters to then-Schools Chancellor Harold Levy and Chad Vignola, General Counselor to the Chancellor, protesting the Department of Education's 'Holiday Display' policy. That policy expressly allows the display of 'secular holiday symbol decorations' such as 'Christmas trees, Menorahs and the Star and Crescent.' It was this policy that was used to justify the banning of a Nativity Scene. But it is disingenuous to maintain that the Menorah is not as fully religious in heritage as the Nativity Scene is (the Thomas More brief also asserts the religious nature of the Star and Crescent).

"The disagreement I had with Mr. Vignola on this matter did not result in a lawsuit last year because I did not have time to find a plaintiff that would grant us standing. But we did find someone early this year, Andrea Skoros, a Catholic League member from Queens. I then contacted my friend at the Thomas More Law Center in Michigan, Richard Thompson (the Center's president), to see if he wanted to take the case. He agreed and put attorney Robert Muise on it. So when the Catholic League learned this fall that Mr. Vignola was not going to change the 'Holiday Display' policy, a decision to file suit was made.

"It is outrageous that New York City public school officials allow some religious symbols in the schools every December while banning others. Catholics are sick and tired of being discriminated against by bureaucrats who tell us we should be satisfied with a Christmas tree in the schools. No, we want

the real thing—the manger scene—and will not accept a secular substitute. All we want is parity with Jews and Muslims.”

MENORAH BANNED IN FAIR LAWN, NEW JERSEY; BOGUS RATIONALE OFFERED

Rabbi Levi Neubort’s request to have a menorah placed next to a holiday display in front of Borough Hall in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, has been rejected by the borough council. Borough Attorney Richard Lustgarten said he was following legal precedent. He also said that putting up a menorah would open the doors of Borough Hall to “hate groups such as the neo-Nazis, the Ku Klux Klan, other race supremacists, and other groups that have a non-mainstream theme.”

Catholic League president William Donohue wasn’t buying it:

“No one in public life wants to admit to bigotry, so when bigoted decisions are made, spin follows. It’s amazing—the display of pornographic art will be defended in a public park on the grounds of free speech and the remedy cited to those who are offended is ‘avert your eyes.’ Yet when a religious symbol is placed in the same spot, the First Amendment is thrown to the wind and the remedy of averting your eyes is labeled inadequate.

“One week ago today, U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens declared that the city of Cincinnati could not bar a Jewish organization from displaying a menorah on a downtown plaza during the holidays. Now either the members of the Borough council in Fair Lawn do not read the newspapers or

they are willfully ignorant of the law. In either case, local residents need to remember this at the next election.

“It is so bogus to maintain that if Jews are allowed to put up a menorah, Nazis will be next in line. If this were true, then there would be plenty of precedents: townships across the country that do not practice intolerance have erected menorahs and manger scenes for years without local Hitlerians taking over their parks. Moreover, there is no reason to believe that the Imperial Wizard of the KKK is waiting in the wings in Fair Lawn.

“What is needed is a lawsuit. We hope Rabbi Neubort goes that route.”