

NATIVITY SCENE ERECTED IN CENTRAL PARK

The Catholic League has erected a nativity scene in New York's Central Park. Located on the corner of 59th Street and 5th Avenue, the crèche will be blessed by Monsignor John Woolsey, pastor of St. John the Martyr in Manhattan, at 4:00 pm. It will be up for two weeks.

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following remarks today:

“Contrary to what some lawyers and urban bureaucrats say, it is not illegal to put a nativity scene on public property. We paid for the crèche ourselves and obtained a permit from the Parks Department of New York City to place it in Central Park. Yet the same city that allows Jews to put menorahs in the public schools, and allows Muslims to do the same with the crescent and star, bans nativity scenes from the schools. That is why we arranged for a lawsuit against New York City: we secured a plaintiff, Andrea Skoros, and the Thomas More Law Center is handling the litigation. We are awaiting a decision by Judge Charles Sifton of the Eastern District Court on this matter.

“By putting a nativity scene in Central Park, the Catholic League is sending a message: Christmas trees and Santa are great, but they are no substitute for a crèche. Just as Jews wouldn't be satisfied if they were told they could not put a menorah on public property, but dreidels were acceptable, Catholics and Protestants will not settle for secular symbols—we want a religious display.”

LAURYN HILL FLIPS HER LID

At a Vatican Christmas concert Saturday night, hip-hop artist Lauryn Hill read a lengthy statement blasting the Vatican for the homosexual scandal in the Catholic Church. "God has been a witness to the corruption of his leadership, of the exploitation and abuses...by the clergy," she said. Hill told the audience to seek blessings "from God, not men," adding there was "no acceptable explanation for defending the church."

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

"Last year Lauryn Hill stepped onstage at Carnegie Hall and admitted to the crowd that her life was 'a mess.' Judging from her latest outburst in Vatican City, nothing seems to have changed. Pathologically miserable, Hill has confessed to taking 'some lighter fluid and a match and burned everything I had built because the foundation was wrong.' It is no wonder that in one of her songs, she literally asks God to 'save me from myself.'

"Hill's personal problems do not justify her rants against the Catholic Church. After all, Sinéad O'Connor isn't exactly normal, either, and she justifiably paid a price for her stunt on Saturday Night Live when she ripped up a picture of the pope. We expect Hill's career, already in decline, will continue to head south. Columbia Records should show her the gate."

CENTRAL MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY ISSUES WARNINGS ON CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the way Central Michigan University is handling Christmas celebrations:

“Central Michigan University’s affirmative action office publishes a calendar, available online, that denotes various holidays. In December, it lists Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and Las Posadas. An asterisk next to Christmas reads, ‘Warning of Holiday Decorations.’

“By clicking on the ‘Warning,’ it is possible to access a document titled, ‘How to Celebrate Christmas Without Offense.’ Before going any further, it should be noted that there is no asterisk next to the other three holidays. The absence of any ‘Warning’ suggests that those who celebrate Christmas have found it difficult to do so without offending others. The implication is that Jews and African Americans, as well as Mexican Christians, have been able to celebrate their respective holidays without offending anyone. Perhaps they should be asked to give sensitivity lessons to white Christians.

“The ‘Warning’ document is a gem. ‘During the December Holiday season it is important to realize what may be offensive to others within a place of employment.’ Again, those who celebrate the other holidays are spared the lecture about offending others, the implication being that celebrating Christmas enrages non-Christians. Which, if true, suggests that Jews and Muslims are religious bigots. This is quite a statement coming from an affirmative action office.

“The document proceeds to instruct Christians on what is

permissible: 'It is inappropriate to decorate things with Santa Claus or reindeer or other 'Christmas' decorations.' So if the Multicultural Gestapo remove Santa, what do they do if they stumble on a nativity scene—smash it with their clubs? At any event, the document says, 'Good ideas for decorations during this time are snowflakes, snowpeople, poinsettias to give a feeling of the winter.' Though this was obviously written by an illiterate—or by a dean—it's a solid point. Any school that would allow a snowman is clearly sexist, to say nothing of dissing 'a feeling of the winter.'"

GREETING CARDS EVINCE BIAS AGAINST CHRISTIANS

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to the issue of holiday greeting cards today:

"Comparing Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa e-cards by Hallmark, American Greetings and Yahoo! Greetings, the ones by Hallmark are the most equitable in their treatment of the three holidays. There are some real problems with the other two companies.

"American Greetings has a slew of tasteless Christmas cards. For example, there is one where elves working with Santa's laundry hold up his underwear and exclaim, 'Man! You think that a guy who can deliver toys all over the world in one night could at least learn to wipe himself a bit better!' There is also a 'Risqué' set of cards that show a woman stripping suggestively and displaying S&M gear; at one point she's dressed like an angel, saying, 'Ever make an angel in the snow?' At the end, the animation says, 'Now that I've got

your attention, Merry Christmas!’ There is also a category of ‘Rude’ cards, such as the one that lists all the annoying parts of the holiday season, with the comment, ‘It’s Christmas. Hope yours doesn’t suck.’ What is perhaps most telling about American Greetings is the total absence of tasteless Hanukkah and Kwanzaa cards. Indeed, neither of these two holidays merit a ‘Risqué’ or ‘Rude’ section—that’s reserved only for Christmas.

“Hanukkah is a minor holiday in the Jewish calendar, but it commands the utmost respect from Yahoo! Greetings. Of the 33 Hanukkah cards, 26 display a Star of David or Menorah. Of the 443 Christmas cards, 9 are religious. In other words, 79% of the Hanukkah cards are religious, compared to 2% of the Christmas cards.

“None of this is by accident. For a couple of decades now, there has been a systematic attempt to dilute the sacred message of Christmas while elevating the prominence of Hanukkah and Kwanzaa (a recent secular invention). This is the fruit of multiculturalism. It is also the fruit of bigotry. Unfortunately, the two phenomena are congenitally related.”

VATICAN OFFICIALS GIVE KUDOS TO MEL GIBSON

In what was perhaps the most significant audience to preview the Mel Gibson movie, “The Passion of the Christ,” several top Vatican officials gave their unanimous approval to the film. Members of the Vatican Secretariat of State, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, and the Congregation for

the Doctrine of the Faith (which oversees doctrinal issues), applauded Gibson for his efforts.

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following remarks today regarding the story posted on zenit.org:

“It comes as no surprise that senior-ranking Vatican officials would heartily endorse Mel Gibson’s, ‘The Passion of the Christ.’ Father Augustine Di Noia, undersecretary of the doctrinal congregation, spoke for many when he said, ‘Seeing this film will be an intensely religious experience for many people. It was for me.’ He added, ‘Anyone seeing this film—believer and unbeliever alike—will be forced to confront the central mystery of Christ’s passion, indeed of Christianity itself: If this is the remedy, what must the harm have been?’

“Regarding blame for the crucifixion of Christ, Di Noia says that ‘each of the main characters contributes in some way to Jesus’ fate: Judas betrays him; the Sanhedrin accuses him; the disciples abandon him; Peter denies knowing him; Herod toys with him; Pilate allows him to be condemned; the crowd mocks him; the Roman soldiers scourge, brutalize and finally crucify him; and the devil, somehow, is behind the whole action.’ Only Mary, Di Noia observes, ‘is really blameless.’ When asked point blank whether the movie is anti-Semitic, Di Noia says, ‘There is absolutely nothing anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish about Mel Gibson’s film.’

“This will go a long way to convince the public that what they are about to see is an act of love, not hatred. It may not appease Gibson’s most extreme critics, most of whom have not seen the film, but it certainly makes their job of trying to discredit him that much harder. They are the ones who truly have been discredited.”

INDIANA LAW PROFESSOR CENSORS CHRISTMAS TREE

Indiana University Law Professor Florence Roisman complained about a Christmas tree on campus last week and succeeded in getting it removed. She said the 12-foot tree celebrated Christmas. Roisman, who is Jewish, opined, "To honor one religion and not honor others is exclusionary." The tree had no religious ornaments on it.

The Dean of Students, Tony Tarr, acceded to her demands and had the tree replaced by two smaller trees, along with a sleigh stuffed with red and green poinsettia plants. He declared the first tree to be a "denominational" tree and the new ones to be "a normal Indiana scene." Roisman objects to the new display as well.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today as follows:

"The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the Christmas tree is a secular symbol. Indeed, it has said that religious displays like the nativity scene can be placed on public property by government agencies just so long as they are surrounded by secular items like a Christmas tree. But none of this is good enough to satisfy law professor Florence Roisman. She's offended by Christmas. Ergo, anything that reminds her of Christmas must be censored.

"Professor Roisman has a reputation for protesting discrimination against public housing tenants. She now has a reputation for promoting discrimination against Christians. The fact that she did not seek to have a menorah displayed on the campus is telling: for if she had, she might have been

able to conceal her animus against Christianity. Now we all know she's a bigot.

"As for cowardly dean, Tony Tarr, he belongs in Ripley's Believe It or Not for his discovery of a denominational tree."

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC LAWMAKERS SEEK VICTIM STATUS IN FEUD WITH BISHOP

A Catholic congressman from Wisconsin, and two Catholic state legislators, have received a letter from Bishop Raymond Burke of La Crosse objecting to their voting record on life issues. The bishop, who was named Archbishop of St. Louis this week, said that if the lawmakers continued to vote "anti-life," he would "ask them not to present themselves to receive the sacraments because they would not be Catholics in good standing." The letter has now occasioned a public furor, leading Catholics and non-Catholics alike to criticize Bishop Burke for violating the principle of separation of church and state.

Catholic League president William Donohue defended the bishop today:

"Raymond L. Burke did not lose his right to freedom of speech when he became a bishop. He not only has a First Amendment right to speak his mind, he has a moral obligation to do so on matters of life and death. It is important to note that Bishop Burke did not advise his priests to refuse Communion to anti-life Catholic lawmakers, he simply asked the offending

politicians not to seek Communion.

“If the issue were segregation, not abortion, the critics of Bishop Burke would be praising him. For example, when New Orleans Archbishop Joseph Rummel publicly chastised Catholics in the 1950s for stopping an African American priest from celebrating Mass, he was regarded as a hero. When he excommunicated three Catholic leaders and two public office holders in 1962 for promoting segregation, he was praised by elites. In other words, it’s the issue that matters, not the right of a bishop to censure Catholic politicians.

“Regarding separation of church and state, we have a minister running for president and no one complains. Similarly, no one complained when Senator Joseph Lieberman, an orthodox Jew, opined in 2000 that ‘My religion decides what’s right. And what’s right for me as vice president will be what’s right for America.’* [Now imagine what would happen if Bishop Burke ran for president and said what Lieberman said?](#)”

* We have learned that the *Washington Times* erred in reporting this alleged comment by Senator Lieberman. The Senator actually said, “Each one of us in my religion decides what’s right. And what’s right for me as vice president will be what’s right for America.” (ABC, “Good Morning America,” August 9, 2000).

CATHOLIC MALCONTENTS ATTACK BISHOP MURPHY

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke today to recent attacks on Rockville Centre Bishop William F. Murphy:

“It has become increasingly obvious that there is a band of

active Catholic laypersons and clerics on Long Island who cannot accept change. Ever since the retirement of Bishop John McGann, they have resisted new leadership. Take, for example, Dick Ryan. Ryan is an embittered ex-seminarian who viciously attacked McGann's successors, Bishop James McHugh and Bishop William Murphy, even before they were installed as the new bishop. Both were condemned for being too pro-life.

"Not surprisingly, it was in the pages of *Newsday* that Ryan wrote his screeds. Like Ryan, *Newsday* has had it out for Murphy from the get-go, even though the sexual abuse scandal occurred on McGann's watch—not Murphy's. From the repeated lies told by Jimmy Breslin about Murphy, to its sycophantic coverage of Voice of the Faithful (of which Ryan is an active member), *Newsday* has bared its bias.

"Regarding Voice, it is run by a small stable of dissident Catholics out to unseat Bishop Murphy. Their latest gambit is to blast Murphy for allowing Msgr. Alan Placa to say a few Masses while charges against him are being reviewed. But when Placa said Rudy Giuliani's mother's funeral in 2002, Voice said nothing. Now they've gone ballistic. Yet when one of their supporters, Rev. Charles Papa, admitted to visiting hundreds of porn websites, Voice activists defended him. Indeed, Bob Keeler of *Newsday* savaged Papa's critics.

"And with perfect timing, Laura Ahearn, a social worker who failed to secure a contract from the diocese for her workshops, says she's had it with Murphy. But it's too late—her failure to support Nassau County D.A. Denis Dillon in blanketing all professionals with a mandatory reporting law explodes her credibility. And her denial of the role homosexuals have played in the scandal reveals both her politics and her incompetence.

"In short, this is a well-orchestrated game plan of Catholic malcontents who do not speak for the rank and file."

CONNECTICUT LIBRARY CENSORS JESUS

Officials of Meriden Public Library in Meriden, Connecticut, have banned five images of Jesus from display in the library. The paintings, all of which are reverential, were nonetheless deemed violative of a policy that disallows “inappropriate” and “offensive” fare.

The paintings portray a nativity scene, Jesus carrying the cross, His crucifixion, resurrection and a portrait of Christ with a halo. Children, library officials argued, might be disturbed to see these images. The rest of the exhibit, “Visions, Hopes and Dreams,” was declared acceptable, but artist Mary Morley canceled it when she was told to censor Jesus. Portraits of Pope John Paul II, Mother Teresa, Moses with the Ten Commandments, as well as the prophet Elijah, made the cut.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“In 1996, Meriden Public Library received a \$3,000 grant from the American Library Association (ALA) to fund a five-part book discussion on the values and attitudes that Americans bring to the workplace. One of those values surely is tolerance, yet for some reason this property never took root in the heads of the officials of the Meriden Public Library. In the name of protecting kids from seeing a portrait of Jesus, the censors are busy practicing intolerance. Perhaps they would have been more at home with a portrait of Lucifer.

“I am writing today to Keith Michael Fiels, Executive Director of the ALA in Chicago, to request that the ALA censure the

Meriden Public Library for censoring Jesus. I will also ask that the ALA refrain from giving the library any future grants.

“On a larger scale, what is amazing about this is that for the past several years, public librarians all over the country have furiously objected to any technology that would protect kids from accessing pornography on library computers. But it’s not as though they are value-free—what some of them can’t stomach is an image of Jesus Christ. So they do make value judgments after all.”

CENSORING CHRISTMAS IN THE SCHOOLS

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

“Two years ago, a public school teacher in Queens called the Catholic League to inform us that the principal of her school had issued a memo inviting teachers to bring religious symbols to school that represent the Muslim, Kwanzaa and Jewish religions. Leaving aside the fact that Kwanzaa is not a religion (it is secular holiday invented in 1966), what mattered to the Catholic League was the exclusion of Christian symbols. To make matters worse, the principal of the school had previously ordered a three-foot Christmas tree taken down because it was larger than a cut-out display of a menorah and crescent and star.

“At first we thought this was an anomaly. However, we soon learned that it was the official policy of the New York City

public schools to declare the menorah and crescent and star secular symbols, thus making them analogous to a Christmas tree. When I received no satisfaction from Chad Vignola, the general counsel for the schools, I pledged to find a plaintiff and arrange a lawsuit. In 2002, Andrea Skoros, a Catholic League member from Queens with children in the public schools, agreed to be party to the suit. I then acquired the assistance of the Thomas More Law Center to do the litigating. The lawsuit was filed in federal district court on December 10, 2002. Oral arguments were heard on November 13, 2003. Judge Charles Sifton will soon rule on this case.

“It is time this issue was settled once and for all. In Denver, a Jewish couple is seeking to ban the singing of even ‘Frosty the Snowman’ and ‘Jingle Bells’ from an Elbert County Charter School holiday program. School officials at the Charlestown Elementary School in Malvern, Pennsylvania, are allowing the display of menorahs but not nativity scenes. A lawsuit has been filed against the Balch Elementary School in the Worcester, Massachusetts area seeking to ban crèches, including those accompanied by secular symbols.

“Those who want to censor Christmas are the enemies of Christianity, diversity and tolerance. There is no place in America for cultural fascism.”