

# JUDGES WHO BANNED THE PLEDGE MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE BENCH

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on the decision reached today by the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upholding a challenge to its decision banning the Pledge of Allegiance because of the words "under God." Here are his remarks:

"Two things need to be done immediately: teachers and students should practice civil disobedience and the judges must be impeached.

"It is up to the teachers in the nine western states affected by this decision to break the law: they should instruct their students on the meaning of civil disobedience and then practice it. All they need to do is call the cops and local TV reporters and then recite the Pledge of Allegiance in their presence. It needs to be shown on television all over the world that as the U.S. prepares to go to war to maintain the liberties symbolized in the Pledge, there are brave men, women and children at home who are prepared to fight tyranny on our own soil.

"Iraq's problem is tyranny of the minority. Ironically, that's our problem as well. But the Iraqi people at least stand to be liberated and have their tyrant deposed. We need to do the same with ours, albeit with different means: impeachment proceedings against the two federal judges who made this decision should commence as soon as possible. Make no mistake about it, it is not enough for the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn this ruling. Judicial malpractice has been committed and those responsible must be removed from the bench. They should be removed not because most Americans disagree with

them but because of jurisprudential incompetence.”

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## **LATEST CHURCH SCANDAL: VICTIMIZING INNOCENT PRIESTS**

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the latest scandal to hit the Catholic Church—false charges against priests:

“In June, 2002, Father Ronald Bourgault was removed from priestly ministry pending an investigation that he molested a boy in the mid-1960s. Now he’s back at work at St. Zepherin’s in Wayland, Massachusetts. The reason: his accuser admits he mistakenly identified Father Bourgault as his accuser. The accuser says he doesn’t even remember the name of the priest who allegedly molested him.

“In November, 2002, Father Dan Wetzler was removed from priestly ministry pending an investigation that he molested a boy in the mid-1960s. Now he’s back at work at St. Paschal’s in Spokane, Washington. The reason: a police investigation concluded that the boy was molested by someone else. Furthermore, it has now been determined that the priest and his accuser never even met each other.

“Both of the cases cited are brand new: the priests were exonerated this past week. How many more cases there are like this is something the Catholic League is beginning to investigate.

“It is due to cases like these that the Catholic League strongly objects to any tampering with the laws governing the

statute of limitations. The fundamental reason why we have a statute of limitations provision in law is to safeguard the rights of the accused: memories fade in time and witnesses may have died or cannot be located. Worse, accusers like those who maligned Father Bourgault and Father Wetzler may surface for any host of reasons, none of which is legitimate.

“Guilty priests, like anyone else, must pay. But in this frenzied climate it behooves everyone to be on the alert for steeple-chasing lawyers and their memory-impaired clients. Beware, too, of those whose memories are crystal clear but whose motives are filthy dirty.”

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## **SUPREME COURT AFFIRMS RIGHTS OF ABORTION FOES**

The U.S. Supreme Court in an 8-1 decision ruled today that the federal Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, as well as the Hobbs Act, do not apply to abortion foes who protest outside abortion clinics.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on the decision today:

“This is a major victory for freedom of speech. Not only will abortion protesters be free from the threat of future RICO suits, protesters of all causes will not have to labor under such threats. If there are clear cases of harassment or abuse of women seeking an abortion by abortion protesters, then there are plenty of laws on the books that can be used against

them. But to use a remedy like RICO, or the Hobbs Act, both of which were meant to apply to gangsters engaged in extortion, as a way to protect abortion-seeking women from being intimidated by protesters, is outrageous.

“The real story here is the extraordinary disrespect that the so-called champions of liberty have for free speech. The National Organization for Women, which brought the lawsuit, has proven beyond a doubt that it would use any law available as a weapon to beat down pro-life protesters. NARAL and Planned Parenthood have similarly shown their contempt for the First Amendment by previously supporting the use of RICO against anti-abortion demonstrators; even affiliates of the ACLU have used RICO to stop the free speech of abortion foes. That’s because abortion is their god: they would rather lose our fundamental civil liberties before they would ever lose the right of a woman to abort her baby.

“Pro-life activists, many of whom are Catholic, have a great deal to celebrate today. So do those who are not pro-life but still maintain fidelity to the First Amendment. Most important, for the abortion-rights industry to try to muzzle the free speech of demonstrators by manipulating a law aimed at gangsters shows who the real fanatics are.”

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## **PHIL DONAHUE AND ROSIE O'DONNELL ON DISPLAY**

The February 24 edition of “Donahue” (MSNBC) featured an interview of Rosie O'Donnell by host Phil Donahue. The segment ended with an extended conversation on Catholicism. In discussing the sex abuse scandal in the Church, O'Donnell

said: "And you know what? It needs to be out in the forefront. I really hope that the Catholic Church gets sued until the end of time. Maybe, you know, we can melt down some of the gold toilets in the pope's Vatican and pay off some of the lawsuits because, you know, frankly, the whole tenet of Christianity, of being pious, of living a Christ-like life, has been lost in Catholicism, I believe."

Catholic League president William Donohue replied as follows:

"Well, you know, there is something about two aging and embittered Irish Catholics that is so, well, you know, embarrassing.

"We learned a lot from Rosie last night and none of it was endearing. Here is a grown woman crediting Oprah Winfrey with 'teaching America how to have feelings and how to grieve.' Prior to Oprah we just sulked. Now we all bleed. Then there was the exchange she had with Phil laughing heartily about those times of yesteryear when their parents scrubbed the house before the Monsignor popped by for a visit. Now their houses are a filthy mess as not even a deacon will drop by.

"To hear Rosie proclaim that the Church should not be exempt 'from the laws of nature and God' was quite a treat, especially given that her ideas on the subject strike some as being intrinsically disordered these days. Equally perverse is her comment on the gold toilets in the Vatican: she must be thinking about where she last sat when visiting her grieving friends in Hollywood."

"Well, you know, it's a shame that this close to St. Patrick's Day two deracinated Irish Catholics should find the need to vent on national television. Talk about reality TV—these two are not to be believed."

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# **CATHOLIC LEAGUE'S 2002 ANNUAL REPORT ON ANTI-CATHOLICISM**

The *Catholic League's 2002 Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism* is now available. The report offers evidence of anti-Catholicism drawn from events of 2002. It includes a preface and executive summary by league president William Donohue; the chapters cover various topical areas and there is a sample of offensive cartoons.

The chapters cover anti-Catholicism found in activist organizations, the artistic community, business and the workplace, education, government and the media; a miscellaneous section is also included.

We are mailing complimentary copies to many in the media and other interested parties. Those in the media who do not receive a copy and would like to be put on our list should contact us at (212) 371-3191.

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## **FLORIDA AND MARYLAND TARGET CONFESSIONAL SEAL**

Legislators in Florida and Maryland are following the lead of Kentucky and New Hampshire by targeting the confessional seal. In an attempt to deal with child sexual molestation, legislators in these states are considering bills that would end the priest-penitent privilege: if passed, it would mean

priests would have to report knowledge of abuse learned in the confessional to the authorities.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“Lawmakers in Kentucky and New Hampshire are currently rethinking the wisdom of violating the sanctity of the confessional. Florida and Maryland should do likewise. It is simply a red herring to maintain that children cannot be protected unless the seal of the confessional is broken: there is no evidence to suggest that the problem of sexual abuse could be checked if the priest-penitent privilege were to end.

“Cardinal Theodore McCarrick has courageously said that if the Maryland bill passes, he will instruct all priests in the Archdiocese of Washington to ignore it. Indeed, he has said that he will gladly practice civil disobedience and go to jail. The Catholic League is certain that Cardinal McCarrick means what he says and we commend him for his uncompromising stand.

“I am writing today to every legislator in Florida and Maryland asking that no bill be passed that violates the seal of the confessional. Crime of any sort can be effectively dealt with without attacking the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Those who maintain otherwise carry a big burden: they must demonstrate that unless the confidentiality of the confessional is compromised, the state cannot protect minors. This is an absurd position that cannot stand either legal or logical scrutiny.”

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# WILL ELIOT SPITZER MARCH IN THE ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE?

New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer has been chosen to address the Society of the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick on the evening of St. Patrick's Day, March 17; "NBC Nightly News" anchor Tom Brokaw has also been selected to speak. The dinner, which will be held at the Sheraton, is one of the most celebrated events of the day.

Catholic League president William Donohue found this interesting:

"When Eliot Spitzer was asked three years ago whether he would march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade, he told the *New York Post*, 'No.' When pressed, he replied, 'It's more a scheduling thing than anything else. I'm not going to march in it. I'll just leave it at that.'

"Well, the Catholic League will not just leave it at that, not this year, that's for sure. It is quite obvious that Spitzer has previously refused to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade because parade officials bar gays from having their own contingent (note: gays have never been barred from marching anymore than pro-life Catholics have—it's just that neither group is permitted to have its own unit).

"Louis Giovino, our director of communications, called Spitzer's office to learn whether the Attorney General was planning to march this year. He was told that Spitzer hasn't decided yet and will let us know in a few weeks. In other words, Spitzer hasn't found a way to get himself out of this jam. He knows what his schedule is the night of St. Patrick's Day but he's not sure what he's going to do during the day. Maybe he'll take in a movie.

"So that's why we won't 'just leave it at that.' We want to



know whether Spitzer has the gall to address a major dinner on St. Patrick's Day yet not march in the very parade that honors the patron saint of the Archdiocese of New York. And if he does have thechutzpah to do this, we'd like to hear from the directors of the Friendly Sons how they feel about their hero."

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## **FAITH-BASED CARE ACT DESERVES TO BE PASSED**

The U.S. Senate will soon decide whether to pass the Charity Aid, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act. Co-sponsored by Senator Joseph Lieberman and Senator Rick Santorum, the bill is part of the faith-based initiative that President Bush has been supporting. It would provide incentives to charitable giving and allow some direct aid to social services. When the bill came to the Senate floor on November 14, 2002, it died: those opposed to the bill demanded several new amendments and thus ran out the clock.

Catholic League president William Donohue voiced his approval of the bill today:

"Senator Santorum is absolutely right to say that the CARE Act adds nothing new to the 1996 law on charitable choice that the Clinton administration supported. That is one reason why it should get clear sailing in the Senate; the other being that it helps the dispossessed.

"Catholic Charities and their analogues in other religions have been doing exemplary work for many years addressing the plight of the needy. That their impulse for doing so is grounded in their religious convictions should be a cause of

celebration, not condemnation. Yet there are some who would rather deny counseling to the victims of domestic violence and treatment to those suffering from AIDS before they would ever allow a religious agency to provide the services. Perversely, some of these same persons champion the rights of women and homosexuals.

“The time has come to pass the CARE Act. It is most important that the public know which presidential hopefuls for 2004 side with the 1600 charitable organizations that advocate this legislation. Thus far, we only know the positions of President Bush and Senator Lieberman. We look forward to seeing what the others think, especially those who love to espouse their support for the poor, the disabled, the abused, the handicapped, the homeless and the dying. Those who oppose this legislation should be seen for what they are—religiously challenged.”

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## **ATTORNEY SUING ALBANY DIOCESE GUILTY OF RELIGIOUS PROFILING**

A lawyer with three suits against the Albany Diocese has asked the presiding judge to recuse himself because he is a practicing Catholic. Attorney John Aretakis made the request of State Supreme Court Justice Joseph Teresi on Monday, but the judge refused. When Aretakis commented that Teresi often goes to weekday Mass and is a “deeply religious and spiritual person with a great deal of faith in his Catholic Church,” Teresi said this was pure “hyperbole”; he scoffed at the “deeply religious” claim.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue

today:

“If a judge has a demonstrated inability to render a fair judgment on a particular case—for whatever reason—then he must recuse himself. But to simply hurl a charge of bias against someone because he attends a local house of worship not only fails to meet this test, it itself smacks of bigotry. The Constitution bars any religious test for holding public office, and the contra should hold as well: it is equally unacceptable to bar someone on the basis of religious profiling.

“Nothing Judge Teresi has said or done merits his recusal. The same, however, cannot be said of attorney Aretakis. He should remove himself from this case with dispatch. But before he does, perhaps he can share with the public his rather amazing talent for measuring the depth of someone’s religious faith.”

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## **JIMMY BRESLIN SEEKS TO MALIGN CATHOLIC LEAGUE**

Catholic League president William Donohue today accused *Newsday* columnist Jimmy Breslin of seeking to malign the Catholic League. Breslin called Donohue today making wild accusations. Donohue explains what happened:

“Jimmy Breslin called this morning around 9:30 a.m. asking to see the office of the Catholic League. He said he wanted to know how many members we have and who funds the league. I told him he could check out our website and consult the article by Winnie Hu in the *New York Times* that covered everything he needed to know. When I told him we had thousands of members in

the New York area, it came as no surprise to learn that he never met one of them; league members are practicing Catholics.

“Less than a minute into the conversation, Breslin exploded. Screaming at the top of his lungs, he charged I was no different than Placa; the reference was to Msgr. Alan Placa, the Rockville Centre priest who has been implicated in the sexual abuse scandal.

“For many years now, I have been called by scores of journalists for interviews and have unfailingly honored them. But never has any of them, or anyone else, ever put me in the same category with a man who has had three accusations of sexual abuse made against him by adolescent boys. Breslin is the only person ever to have made such a wild accusation.

“Shortly after Breslin’s outburst, I called *Newsday* editor Anthony Marro. I told him that Breslin would not be welcome in my office because it was obvious that the man was utterly incapable of rendering an objective account. Marro was cordial as usual.

“The Catholic League is open to fair criticism. But what we are not open to is someone whose disdain for all things Catholic has distorted his vision of reality. We only deal with journalists who demonstrate professionalism and sobriety of thought. Breslin is not one of them.”