

OUTLAW D.C. JUDGE CONDONES ILLEGAL PROTEST; LECTURES CATHOLIC CHURCH

On January 30, D.C. Superior Court Judge Mildred M. Edwards convicted three Catholic homosexual activists for unlawful entry and then refused to sentence them. Her decision not to sentence them was based on her expressed sympathy for the activists.

The three were arrested on November 12 for an illegal protest they held in a D.C. hotel. They were protesting a decision made by a priest not to give them Holy Communion the day before at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The priest denied them Communion because he was aware that they belonged to Soulforce, a group that condemns the Church's teachings on sexuality and seeks to legitimize sodomy.

Judge Edwards told the activists that by denying them Communion, the priest had committed "tremendous violence" against them. The judge, who claims to be Catholic, asked the protesters to forgive the Catholic Church and closed her remarks by saying, "Go in peace." Her comments were defended by Chief Judge Rufus King III on free speech grounds.

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following remarks today:

"This is not the first time that Mildred Edwards has acted as an outlaw judge. Previously, she has dropped charges against students for deliberately knocking over headstones in a Catholic cemetery, and has acquitted death penalty protesters for deliberately demonstrating on the steps of the Supreme Court. Now she's at it again.

"It must also be noted that the activists deliberately sought

to receive Communion as an act of protest. Such behavior represents a serious abuse of power on the part of the laity that must be resisted.

“It would be interesting to know how Edwards would react if her critics staged an illegal protest in her own chambers and then had a judge dismiss the charges after lecturing her about her judicial incompetence and theological ignorance.”

HSBC: BEACON OF CORPORATE BIGOTRY

HSBC USA has apologized for altering the religious imagery of a fifth-grader's holiday card submission. Gregory Paladino, a student at Our Mother of Sorrows outside of Rochester, New York, recently won \$1,000 for his school when his card was declared the winner in the HSBC holiday card contest. But the card the student submitted—showing a dove hovering over a village—was declared objectionable by the bank judges because it also showed a church with a steeple and a cross. Instead of rejecting the card because it violated the HSBC policy of prohibiting religious imagery, HSBC decided to print the winning card after they had removed the steeple and cross; by excising the church, it was intentionally made to look like other houses in the scene.

An apology for altering the card was granted earlier this week by Youssef A. Nasr, chief executive of HSBC. He hastened to add that the card should never have been chosen as the winner since it violated the bank's policy regarding religious imagery.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as

follows:

“HSBC doesn’t get it. It made two egregious errors: a) the decision to bar religious imagery and b) the decision to delete it. Responsibility has only been taken for the latter.

“Holiday cards in December do not celebrate Martin Luther King’s birthday any more than they celebrate President’s Day, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day or Thanksgiving. They celebrate Christmas. Everyone knows this but many elites in our society prefer to live in complete denial. They are more interested in protecting the sensibilities of non-Christians than they are in giving due recognition to Christians. In doing so, they unwittingly suggest that all non-Christians are offended by the Christmas holiday. This is itself a bigoted statement aimed at Jews, Muslims and non-believers, most of whom are no more bigoted than are Christians.

“Because we have some traitors in the U.S., look for HSBC to bar patriotic imagery from cards that celebrate the Fourth of July.”

ENEMIES OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ATTACK BUSH

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on how the enemies of religious freedom greeted President Bush’s State of the Union address last night:

“Religious liberty is meaningless unless it can be publicly expressed. It is not persuasive to say that religion can be expressed in houses of worship, but no place else, and still

maintain fidelity to religious liberty. To take another example, if we banned all displays of artistic expression in public—from paintings to music—and relegated them to museums and concert halls, everyone would declare that such a decision bristled with hostility to the arts. That is why it makes sense to see the enemies of the public expression of religion as the enemies of religious liberty, per se.

“Many of the enemies of religious liberty exposed themselves today when they attacked President Bush’s proposal that would give drug addicts a voucher that could be used for treatment in either a secular or religious organization. By doing so they also showed their fear of change and animus to inclusion. Consequently, they would deny addicts a right to choose by excluding them from programs available to the rich.

“Who are these groups? The National Organization for Women, People for the American Way, the ACLU, Americans United for Separation of Church and State—all of them rang their constitutional bells over a proposal that would permit an addict the right to choose a priest, minister, rabbi or imam for help (God forbid that an atheist with an M.S.W. might be passed up!). It should also be mentioned that the Interfaith Alliance, a motley crew of left-wingers, was critical of the plan. But at least they had guts: the National Council of Churches had nothing to say about Bush’s initiative, though it did find time to blast him on Iraq.

“I love it when this crowd says that one of the reasons why they are opposed to Bush’s plan is because religious social programs ‘lack accountability.’ What they mean is that big brother (their real deity) can’t police them the way he can a government monopoly.”

RELIGIOUS GROUPS TO QUALIFY IN FEDERAL EFFORT TO COMBAT DRUG ABUSE

In his State of the Union address tonight, President George W. Bush will make the case that religious organizations ought to be allowed to participate in federal efforts aimed at combating drug abuse. Specifically, President Bush will propose that Congress provide vouchers to addicts that could be used to pay for services in any drug treatment center they choose, including those with a religious orientation.

Catholic League president William Donohue explained today why he supports this plan:

“President Bush has shown once again that he does not suffer from the kind of religiophobia that afflicts so many of his colleagues in Washington. Those who have a phobia against the public presence of religion should themselves be awarded vouchers to rid themselves of this terrible affliction. It would be money well spent.

“We know from the work of Harvard economist Richard Freeman that there is an inverse relationship between churchgoing and deviancy. When his study was replicated many years later by Byron Johnson and David B. Larson, they found that urban black youth were less likely to commit to drugs and delinquency if they were churchgoers. And according to Princeton University professor John DiIulio (who first ran the faith-based programs in the Bush administration), there are more than a dozen studies that confirm this relationship. All the more reason why Bush’s proposal should be welcomed by those concerned about urban problems. Unless, of course, marginalizing the public role of religion is of paramount importance. Then the addicts can just wing it.

“Unfortunately, when it comes to giving people choices that include religious as well as secular approaches, the religiophobes line up single file against school vouchers, faith-based initiatives and the like. Indeed, the only choice they seem to like is the one where the mere exercise of a given choice inexorably results in the loss of someone else’s life. What a perverted concept of liberty this is.”

SEAL OF THE CONFESSIONAL UNDER ATTACK; VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL MEMBER IS RESPONSIBLE

As states deal with the problem of child sexual abuse, some are targeting the traditional priest-penitent privilege that exempts priests from reporting crimes to the authorities. The latest example is New Hampshire: under a new bill the exemption previously afforded would end. But in the state of Washington, legislative efforts to address the issue of sexual abuse continue to respect the priest-penitent privilege.

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue today:

“It is striking that in a state known for its large share of ‘unchurched’ citizens, Washington is showing more respect for the inviolable nature of the seal of the confessional than in church-going New Hampshire. Maybe that’s because Washington doesn’t have an active chapter of Voice of the Faithful.

“Anne Coughlin is the person most responsible for the New

Hampshire bill that attacks the confessional. A Voice of the Faithful member, she is also a master of spin: she says her actions are 'a defense of a Catholic institution.' She admits she has no evidence whatsoever to show that priests in New Hampshire are being told in the confessional of crimes against children: 'I can't prove that ever happened. But I'm absolutely convinced that it has.' And we're absolutely convinced she's an angry, embittered Catholic who is jumping on the let's-get-the-Church bandwagon.

"There are no doubt many well-meaning Catholics who belong to Voice of the Faithful. But it is becoming increasingly clear that the group also has its share of ideologues, activists who are publicly boasting of their membership in the organization. This is unfortunate because people like Ann Coughlin are more of a menace to the Church than the non-observant. It is time the leadership of Voice of the Faithful say whether members like Coughlin accurately represent the group's vision of Catholicism. If she were publicly identified as a Catholic League member, I would have no difficulty in denouncing her."

CATHOLIC CHURCH SCAPEGOATED IN "AMEN"

Greek director Constantin Costa-Gavras' latest movie, "Amen," opened in select theaters today. On January 7, the film was previewed by Catholic League director of communications Louis Giovino; he prepared a report on the movie for Catholic League president William Donohue. The following news release, written by Donohue, is based on Giovino's observations and Donohue's critique of the Catholic Church's response to the

Holocaust:

"The need to find a scapegoat for the Holocaust continues with Costa-Gavras' malicious contribution. The movie posits that there was this Jesuit priest who endlessly lobbied Pope Pius XII to do something about the Holocaust. But this is pure fiction: Costa-Gavras readily admits that he literally made up this character to fit the plot. And the plot is that had Pius XII used his bully pulpit to condemn Hitler, the German people would have risen up against him. That there is not a shred of historical evidence to support this fantastic claim does not seem to matter. What matters is that the Catholic Church be indicted for passivity.

"Those who know this period know that leading American Jews and Jewish organizations were opposed to mass demonstrations against Hitler in American cities because they might agitate the Nazis. It is also true that American Jews worked against immigration reforms that would alleviate the plight of German Jews. But this chapter in history is absent from 'Amen.' To include it might obstruct the film's purpose.

"The film also suggests that only Jewish converts to Catholicism were saved by the Vatican when the Nazis invaded Rome. This is a lie. Indeed, nowhere in Europe were more Jews saved—85 percent—than in Italy. False baptismal certificates were issued; the Vatican was opened to Jews; priests and nuns hid Jews in monasteries and convents; and so on.

"The most disturbing aspect of this movie is the unreflective assumption of many movie-goers that what is being depicted is true. That they have been taken to the cleaners intellectually is something that will forever escape them."

ABC ASKED TO CANCEL PENN & TELLER AT SUPER BOWL; RECENT ANTI-CHRISTIAN ACT CITED

Catholic League president William Donohue delivered the following letter today to ABC Sports director Howard Katz:

Mr. Howard Katz
Executive Director, ABC Sports
ABC Television Network
47 W. 66th Street
New York, NY 10023

Dear Mr. Katz:

I am requesting that you cancel the scheduled performance of Penn & Teller during the pre-game segment of the Super Bowl. The reason I am making this request has to do with the incredibly anti-Christian statement made by these two men on January 16. In front of 400 persons at the World Magic Seminar held at the Las Vegas Riviera, a nearly-naked Teller appeared on stage dressed as Christ on a full-sized cross. Then a midget dressed as an angel performed a simulated sex act on him. Penn unveiled the scene by pulling away a "Shroud of Turin" that covered the cross.

It would be much appreciated if ABC Sports were to now say that such conduct will not be rewarded by ABC and that therefore the scheduled appearance of Penn & Teller at the Super Bowl has been cancelled.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President

WILL THE MEDIA PROBE DEMOCRATS ON ANTI-CATHOLICISM AT NARAL EVENT?

On Tuesday, January 21, the six Democratic contenders for the presidency will appear at a NARAL Pro-Choice America event celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*. The following day, the actual anniversary date of the abortion ruling, NARAL president Kate Michelman and Planned Parenthood president Gloria Feldt will hold a press conference in Washington on abortion rights. One of the participating organizations at the press conference will be Catholics for a Free Choice.

Catholic League president William Donohue explained today why Catholics should be troubled by what is happening:

"One of the founders of NARAL is Dr. Bernard Nathanson. Upon his conversion a number of years ago to the pro-life side, he admitted in great detail the anti-Catholic roots of NARAL: lying about the Church, fabricating data and demonizing Catholicism were an integral part of NARAL's strategy. Over the years NARAL has been more careful about expressing its hostility to the Catholic Church. The same is not true of one of its allies, Frances Kissling's Catholics for a Free Choice.

"Kissling has not shied away from making her anti-Catholicism public. Indeed, she wears it proudly on her sleeve. That is why so many Catholics are outraged by the refusal of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) to drop Kissling's group as a link on its website.

"It is high time responsible voices in the media put the

question directly to the Democratic hopefuls: Catholics want to know whether they approve of the DNC's ties to a profoundly anti-Catholic organization.

"There can be no more room for both Catholics and anti-Catholics in the Democratic party than there can be for both African Americans and white supremacists. That is why the Catholic League will not let go of this issue: the DNC must stop its association with anti-Catholicism and Democratic aspirants to the presidency must address this issue."

KENTUCKY BILL TARGETS THE CONFESSIONAL

A bill was introduced on January 7 in the Kentucky House of Representatives that would end the priest-penitent privilege as it currently exists in the state. Kentucky, like most other states, respects the confidential nature of the confessional by allowing priests and other clergymen an exemption from mandated reporting laws. But the new law would end this exemption when it comes to "communication relating to the neglect or abuse of a minor child"; the law would apply to all religions equally. However, it would continue to respect the exemption that protects attorney-client relationships.

Rep. Susan Westrom, the bill's sponsor, admits that what prompted her to act is the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church. She said the "timing is probably excellent in view of the history of abuse of children we've seen in the last two years...."

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“This bill does not touch tangentially on church-state relations—it cuts to the core. The sanctity of the confessional is one of the most important elements of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Indeed, it is impossible to fathom how the sacrament could operate if the government is permitted to penetrate the privacy of the priest-penitent relationship. At stake is both the religious liberty clause of the First Amendment and the establishment clause.

“The timing of the law is suspect. If it had been established that in Kentucky, and elsewhere, Catholic priests had learned of cases of child sexual molestation in the confessional and did not report them, then at least the motivation behind the legislation would make sense. But no one is making this charge. And with good reason—the cases of child sexual abuse that have come to light have had nothing to do with information learned in the confessional. Now when this reality is acknowledged, and when it is coupled with the fact that the attorney-client privilege is to remain intact, it gives off a foul stench. Catholics and Protestants have pledged to fight this bill and we look forward to their success.”

NEW YORK GAY LEGISLATOR ADVOCATES DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CATHOLIC PRIESTS

Thomas Duane, a gay state senator from New York, declared yesterday that all Catholic priests should be barred from leading a prayer in the legislature.

Duane became angry when Albany Bishop Howard Hubbard delivered

the legislative session's opening prayer. He sent a letter to Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno demanding that no priest should be allowed to pray in the Senate. Duane cited the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church as justification for his request.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"Last month, the New York State legislature passed a bill outlawing discrimination against homosexuals in the state. The leader of that bill was Senator Thomas Duane. But apparently Duane's interest in combating discrimination ends at the Church door: when it comes to Catholic priests, he is all in favor of discrimination.

"Those who think that this bigoted move by Duane is an anomaly are wrong. In April 2002, he objected to the appointment of a Catholic priest as a CUNY trustee simply because he was a Catholic priest.

"Duane is lucky that his counterpart—anti-gays—are not members of the New York State legislature. Because if there were anti-gays in the legislature, they might demand that Duane be barred from participation in legislative sessions because of his homosexuality. They could cite—following Duane's bigoted rationale—the homosexual contribution to AIDS and other preventable diseases as justification.

"Duane knows that his liberal, ever-tolerant, supremely inclusive, drunk-with-diversity constituency in Manhattan will not punish him at the polls for being anti-Catholic. Indeed, they will probably reward him: nowhere is Catholic bashing more fashionable these days than in elite circles."