

LONG ISLAND PARISHES WILL NOT JOIN PETITION DRIVE

Catholic League president William Donohue learned today about the request by Bishop William F. Murphy not to involve Long Island parishes in the dispute between Voice of the Faithful and the Catholic League.

Voice of the Faithful wants Bishop Murphy to resign. In response, the Catholic League has begun a petition drive in support of him. On July 29, Donohue sent a letter to all the pastors in the Diocese of Rockville Centre requesting that they ask parishioners to sign the petition. But today Bishop Murphy sent a letter asking the pastors to stay out of it.

Accordingly, William Donohue revised the league's position as follows:

"The Catholic League is deeply appreciative of the kind words that Bishop Murphy has written about our support for him. Regarding our petition drive involving the parishes, his instincts are right on target: this is a dispute between lay Catholics that should not involve the parishes. Indeed, to do so would unnecessarily politicize matters. That is why we are now faxing and mailing a letter to every pastor requesting he accede to Bishop Murphy's request. 'I fully understand his reservations,' I said, 'and respectfully second his call to keep the parishes out of this conflict.'

"In my letter to the pastors I added, 'The Catholic League is a team player that will never do anything to undermine the Church, and that is why Bishop Murphy's request will gladly be honored.' I concluded by saying, 'Unlike some other organizations, we do not have a hidden agenda.'

"Board members of the Long Island chapter of the Catholic League are holding an emergency meeting tonight to discuss

various methods by which the petition can be distributed. I am delighted by their energy and commitment to this important cause. Regarding Catholic League members on Long Island, they will be mailed the petition tomorrow and should receive it some time next week.”

VATICAN ISSUES PRO-MARRIAGE STATEMENT

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a statement today that addresses the question of same-sex marriage. Commenting on it is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“In one sense, what the Vatican did today is nothing new. For two thousand years, the Catholic Church has maintained that marriage is an institution reserved only for men and women. Indeed, there is no world religion—in either Eastern or Western civilization—that sanctions marriage between people of the same sex. But because of an aggressive gay-rights movement that seeks to normalize homosexual unions, the Vatican decided the time was ripe to issue a reality check to Catholics.

“The media are already spinning this as ‘an anti-gay campaign.’ It is not. ‘Moral conscience requires that, in every occasion,’ the document says, ‘Christians give witness to the whole moral truth, which is contradicted both by approval of homosexual acts and unjust discrimination against homosexual persons.’ In short, the Catholic Church opposes attempts to deprive heterosexual marriage of its privileged status, as well as gay bashing.

“Marriage and the family are the constitutive elements of society. Given their unique status, any effort that seeks to put alternative lifestyles on an equal plane must be resisted. This would include giving societal and state sanction to heterosexuals who practice cohabitation. Ditto for gays.

“The Catholic League is particularly delighted that this strong statement in favor of marriage, as it has been traditionally understood all over the world and throughout all of time, comes in the wake of the sex abuse scandal in the Church. It sends an unmistakable message that just because a tiny few in the priesthood have embarrassed the Church by having sex—mostly with men!—this does not mean that the Church will silence its voice on matters sexual.

“The Vatican’s statement is particularly aimed at Catholic politicians. We hope they get the message.”

CATHOLICS RALLY TO SUPPORT BISHOP MURPHY

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following remarks today regarding the league’s petition drive in support of Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre:

“The initial reaction to the Catholic League’s campaign in support of Bishop Murphy has been overwhelming. Leaders of the Knights of Columbus on Long Island have pledged to join the petition drive, and such Long Island notables as Nassau County District Attorney Denis Dillon are also backing the campaign. The petition, which is available at our website, catholicleague.org, is being sent to every pastor on Long

Island and to every Catholic League member in Nassau and Suffolk. In addition, the Long Island chapter of the Catholic League, led by Jim Krug, is holding an emergency meeting Thursday evening to discuss ways in which the petition can be circulated.

“The petition makes clear that Voice of the Faithful has committed a serious error in judgment by attempting to take down Bishop Murphy. He will win and they will lose. He will win because Catholics on Long Island have had it with the lies that Jimmy Breslin of *Newsday* has spread about Bishop Murphy and because they are fed up with Catholic malcontents who seek to prolong the scandal to advance their agenda. Most important, Bishop Murphy will prevail because he is innocent of wrongdoing.

“To attack someone on the basis of guilt by association—which is what is happening here (Bishop Murphy served in Boston, ergo he is guilty)—has long been labeled by the Left as McCarthyism. This is exactly what is going on now.

“The Catholic League has both the resources and the resolve to win this campaign. Bet on it.”

“THE MAGDALENE SISTERS”: ANTI-CATHOLIC PROPAGANDA

“The Magdalene Sisters,” a film about the alleged abuse of wayward girls by nuns in Ireland, opens at theaters Friday. It is the creation of director Peter Mullan and it is being distributed by Miramax, a company run by Harvey and Bob Weinstein.

Louis Giovino, director of communications for the Catholic League, has seen the movie and has provided Catholic League president William Donohue with a report on the film. Here is what Donohue said today:

“It was not coincidental that Peter Mullan and the Weinstein brothers should join forces by delivering ‘The Magdalene Sisters.’ It was destined to happen. Mullan has admitted that his movie ‘encapsulates everything that is bad about the Catholic Church’; so much so that he compares the Church to the murderous Taliban. His honesty is appreciated. Less candid are the Weinstein brothers: they still maintain they are not anti-Catholic even though they have given Catholics such gems as ‘Priest,’ ‘Butcher Boy,’ ‘Dogma’ and ‘40 Days and 40 Nights.’ Now they have given Catholics their new prize, ‘The Magdalene Sisters.’

“If someone were to do a movie called ‘The Weinstein Brothers,’ one that focused on their legacy of anti-Catholicism, and sold it as being representative of how Hollywood views Catholics, it would be dishonest. This is exactly what Mullan and the Weinsteins have done in ‘The Magdalene Sisters.’ They have focused on cruel nuns, who surely were atypical, and presented them as being prototypical. That is the gravamen of the Catholic League’s complaint. This is a game that can be played with any demographic group and with any institution. Just gather all the dirty laundry, pack it tightly, and present it as if it were reality.

“When the film was first released, two members of the board of directors of the Venice Film Festival called it anti-Catholic propaganda. They were right.”

PETITION DRIVE TO SUPPORT BISHOP MURPHY BEGINS

Catholic League president William Donohue issued the following news release regarding Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre:

“The decision by Voice of the Faithful demanding that Bishop Murphy resign has now ignited a battle with the Catholic League. We will now commence a petition drive in support of Bishop Murphy that will settle the issue of who really speaks for Long Island Catholics. The Catholic League has approximately 15,000 members in Nassau and Suffolk, a number that represents half of Voice of the Faithful’s numbers nationwide.

“The report issued by Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly was specific regarding the culpability of some bishops who worked in the Boston Archdiocese. Not included in that list is Bishop Murphy. Less than two pages of the report even mention Bishop Murphy and the worst that can be said about him is that he ‘supervised’ the infamous John Geoghan. What the report did not say is that Bishop Murphy supervised his dismissal from ministry and ultimately from the priesthood. Not mentioning this smacks of corruption.

“No one has ever charged Bishop Murphy with moving molesting priests from parish to parish or anything like that. That is why the report has nothing incriminating to say about him. If, in fact, he were guilty, the Catholic League would not defend him.

“It is tempting for activist organizations that are angry at the Church to steamroll their way to justice. But justice demands that innocent people not be run over. This is what is happening to Bishop Murphy. Just because he served in Boston

he is considered, ipso facto, guilty. This represents a collapse of discernment that is despicable.

“Voice of the Faithful will not succeed in its demagogic attempt to silence Bishop Murphy. They are in over their heads on this one.”

CAN CATHOLICS BE ELECTED TO THE FEDERAL BENCH?

Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor was voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee on July 23 by a vote of 10-9, along party lines. One of the issues surrounding his nomination to the federal appeals court in Atlanta is whether his critics are anti-Catholic. Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue today:

“To charge a sitting Senator as being anti-Catholic is serious business. I make no such charge. But this does not empty the issue.

“Bill Pryor is being subjected to a *de facto* religious test; his Catholicism has indeed become a factor in his nomination. How? Pryor’s deeply held opposition to abortion as a moral issue, as well as his deeply held opposition to the jurisprudential reasoning as evidenced in *Roe v. Wade*, have made him a lightning rod for abortion-rights advocates. In other words, it is precisely Pryor’s religious convictions that are being scrutinized. Given the cast of mind of some of his critics, it makes it virtually impossible for practicing Catholics to ascend to the federal bench.

“The rejoinder as provided by Senator Richard Durbin is

disingenuous. Being a Catholic himself, Senator Durbin holds that he would certainly not reject a Catholic nominee because of his Catholicism. So far so good. But it's not that simple. Senator Durbin argues that there is no one proper position on abortion for Catholics to take, so how could Pryor's Catholicism be the problem? Durbin is dead wrong.

"Catholic teaching on abortion is unequivocal: it is gravely sinful. This is not a matter of dispute—it is a matter of doctrine that all Catholics are expected to uphold. Especially public officials.

"In short, Senator Durbin's riposte fails miserably. Bill Pryor is, in fact, being vetted for his religious convictions, however indirectly. This is outrageous and that is why I have written to every Senator asking that such a litmus test be jettisoned."

GANGING UP ON BISHOP MURPHY

Catholic League president William Donohue today addressed references in the report issued on the Boston Archdiocese by Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly regarding Rockville Centre Bishop William F. Murphy:

"Some New Yorkers are ganging up on Bishop Murphy. There is almost nothing said about him in the report—it totals less than two pages—and what is said is hardly incriminating. 'During his eight-year tenure as second-in-command, Bishop Murphy supervised the response to many sexual abuse cases,' the report says. It then mentions the infamous ex-priest John Geoghan as well as four others. The operative word in the quote from the report is 'supervised.' Curiously, the report does not say what Murphy's role was in supervising people like

Geoghan.

“For the record, Bishop Murphy had absolutely no role in vetting allegations against priests charged with sexual molestation. Nor was he ever involved in moving such priests to another parish. What he did do was to pressure Geoghan to resign from ministry. When Geoghan refused, Murphy removed him against his will. Murphy then worked with Cardinal Law to get Geoghan thrown out of the priesthood. But no one would ever know this by reading the report.

“Bishop Murphy is also cited for allowing settlements to proceed that contained provisions for confidentiality and for not contacting law enforcement authorities, save for one occasion. But I hasten to add that such settlements were entirely voluntary—this is what the victim and his family wanted. In short, no one put a gun to the head of these victims—they wanted the money and they walked away.

“In any rate, up until very recently, no member of the clergy—from any religion—has ever been required in Massachusetts to report sex crimes to the police. Does anyone really believe that Catholic priests have acted in a manner different from ministers or rabbis? How about a report on other clergymen? Let’s get the public school teachers as well. How about journalists....”

**MASSACHUSETTS ATTORNEY
GENERAL DELIVERS HIS STARR**

REPORT

Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly concluded a 16-month investigation of the Archdiocese of Boston by issuing no indictments. Catholic League president William Donohue commented on it today:

“Attorney General Thomas Reilly has finally issued his Starr Report. To be fair, however, at least Ken Starr had a shot at bringing down the Clinton administration—Reilly had no chance of bringing down the Boston Archdiocese.

“After wasting a colossal amount of public funds in a wild-goose chase effort to prosecute molesting priests, Reilly has concluded there will be no indictments. As if he didn’t know this when he commenced the investigation.

“There is something in law called a statute of limitations that, believe it or not, applies to priests as well as plumbers. There is also a provision in Massachusetts law that demands prosecutors prove that bishops who transferred molesting priests did so with the intent of causing harm to children. Even the most outraged victims never made such a charge.

“Molesting priests and their enabling bishops are a disgrace to the Catholic Church. Moreover, they should have the book thrown at them. But it should be the same book thrown at everyone else. To be specific, if the book doesn’t contain provisions to punish crimes committed long ago—or if the book demands that intent-to-harm be proven (when everyone knows it can’t)—then it is a waste of public monies to drag any person or institution through the mud. Whenever the outcome is preordained, prosecutors should back off and not let their greed for PR get the best of them.

“Move over Ken Starr—Thomas Reilly has outdone you.”

THE NEW REPUBLIC LIBELS MEL GIBSON

In the July 28-August 4 edition of *The New Republic*, Paula Fredriksen has a lengthy article on the controversy surrounding the Mel Gibson movie, "The Passion." Commenting on it today is Catholic League president William Donohue:

"Working with an unauthorized script of 'The Passion,' Paula Fredriksen has declared the movie to be anti-Semitic. Neither she, nor any of her friends who read an early draft of the screenplay, have seen the movie. Nor have they explained how they obtained the purloined script. But that doesn't matter—what matters is that she has libeled Mel Gibson.

"Fredriksen maintains there are historical inaccuracies in the script. Having seen the film, it would be more honest to say that 'The Passion,' like other renditions of the last twelve hours of Jesus' life, has elements in it that some scholars might question. But this is not her point. Her point is that Gibson has not acceded to her request to 'revise his script substantially.' As if he should. Her arrogance is evident again when she says that she and her colleagues 'functioned with a naiveté that is peculiar to educators: the belief that, once an error is made plain, a person will prefer the truth.' How reassuring it must be for Mel to know that if he wants the truth, all he has to do is give Paula a ring.

"Fredriksen is a demagogue. For only a demagogue would write, 'When violence breaks out, Mel Gibson will have a much higher authority than professors and bishops to answer to.' Note she does not say *if* violence breaks out, but *when*. How disappointed she will be when none occurs. For the record,

James Shapiro, in his work, *Oberammergau: The Troubling Story of the World's Most Famous Play*, has written that the Passion play has never been directly linked to anti-Semitic violence. Never.

“I would agree with Jesuit Father William J. Fulco, a professor of ancient Mediterranean studies and translator of the movie into Aramaic and Latin, that ‘there is no hint of deicide’ in the film. But this will obviously not do for those bent on discrediting it: they will ‘find’ anti-Semitism. They don’t even have to see it to hate it—they have truth on their side.”

LEGION OF CHRIST UNFAIRLY MALIGNED IN CHICAGO

The Legion of Christ, an order of Catholic priests, is staging a big conference this weekend in Chicago. As reported yesterday in the *Chicago Tribune*, some of the locals are not too happy about the event.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

“Devotees of diversity should roll out the red carpet in Chicago for the Legion of Christ. After all, what the Legionaries represent is unwavering fidelity to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. But, of course, this is not happening: the high priests of tolerance are once again expressing their intolerance for—you guessed—diversity.

“It is precisely because the Legion of Christ has decisively rejected the thinking of Catholic malcontents that they are

the source of so much calumny these days. Having met many Legionaries, I can honestly say they are among the most inspiring young priests I have ever met. For the record, it is also true that some of the best priests I have ever met are Jesuits and they, too, are often unfairly maligned. As in any group, there will always be some who are an embarrassment, but they are the exception, not the rule.

“It is time to get beyond the stereotypes and the caricatures. It is also time to get beyond those who, for whatever reason, hold grudges and espouse an agenda. The Legion of Christ is an exemplary order of priests who should truly be welcomed by all Chicagoans.”