

HOW ABOUT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FOR CATHOLICS IN MARVEL COMIC BOOKS?

The July edition of the Marvel Comic series, "The X-Men," tells the tale of good and evil by using Catholicism as a backdrop to the story. Along the way, many teachings of the Catholic Church are ridiculed. Among them are the Church's pro-life position and its belief in the Eucharist as the Body and Blood of Christ. At one point, the pope is revealed as the Antichrist; at another, a former Catholic nun who was raped by a priest is cast as the pope.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

"Catholics are liked so much these days that our friends can't resist addressing us in comic books. Even more fascinating is this: 'Bigotry,' said a 2000 article in the *Los Angeles Times*, 'was a theme of the 'The X-Men' from the first issue in 1963.' Here we are 40 years later and the prohibition has been lifted. Just for Catholics.

"The *Nation* magazine offers even greater insight into the mindset of Marvel's writers. In its May 12 edition, there is a review of three books on Marvel Comics. So sensitive is the company to bigotry that it has reworked Captain America as black. That's right, this red-blooded American killer of the Nazis is now an African American. Another hero, known as 'The Thing,' resurfaces as a Jew. Gays are nicely represented as well—they can now claim the Rawhide Kid, a good-ole American cowboy.

"Blacks, Jews and gays. Aren't these the very groups the Catholic League always says get special treatment? Maybe it's time we had an affirmative action system for Catholics so we

can catch up with everyone else. Just don't award us 20 points—the Supreme Court likes its preferences veiled.”

SUPREME COURT DELIVERS A BLOW TO STEEPLE-CHASING ATTORNEYS

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled today, 5-4, that a California law that changed the statute of limitations for some sex offenses was unconstitutional. The high court ruled that a 72 year-old man who had been charged with committing child sexual molestation almost 50 years ago could not be prosecuted. At stake were the ex post facto and due process provisions of the Constitution. Commenting on the decision is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“The only surprise in today’s decision is the fact that four Supreme Court judges thought it constitutional to retroactively change the statute of limitations. Were this to happen, it is not certain how fundamental due process rights could ever be safeguarded. Sex crimes against children are abhorrent and should be aggressively pursued. Moreover, the guilty should be severely punished. But none of this justifies the suspension of elementary civil liberties.

“Innocent until proven guilty carries with it certain predicates, one of which is that claims made decades after an alleged offense can never be settled in a satisfactory manner. Thus, the court must err on the side of the accused. What the high court did today was to restore the clock to the criminal justice system.

“The implications for the Catholic Church, especially in California, are grave. This now means the Church will

properly be safeguarded from steeple-chasing lawyers and their Johnny-come-lately clients. While some of the clients may have indeed been victimized by a priest, others are obviously playing the 'repressed memory' game. No matter, the Catholic Church is not an open cash register that stays in business for an indefinite period of time. It, too, has closing hours."

ELITES PROMOTE TWISTED SENSE OF MORALITY

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the treatment afforded child porn collectors and how the issue impacts on the clergy abuse scandal in the Catholic Church:

"Earlier this month, a defrocked Catholic priest from Missouri was sentenced to nearly five years in prison on charges he possessed child pornography. Earlier this week, a former New York Law professor was sentenced to six months in jail for collecting 150,000 pictures of the most cruel and obscene portrayals of child pornography (the judge said she struggled over whether to send Professor Edward Samuels to jail). In the latter case, the professor was kept on the payroll by New York Law School for nearly a year after he was turned in by two technical staff members; the two who reported Samuels were instantly fired.

"Yesterday, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that if public libraries want to continue receiving federal funding, they must install filters on computer terminals that prevent children from accessing pornography. The American Library Association quickly denounced the decision for interfering with freedom of speech and so did the *New York Times*.

“Is anyone noticing what’s going on here? Our cultural elites are outraged over priests who collect child porn but not when the guilty is one of their own. Furthermore, secular elites defend unlimited access to pornography of the worst sort and get exercised only when told they must restrict access to kids.

“This is one more example where those who are shouting the loudest that the Catholic Church has gone soft on abusing priests are playing politics. They are nowhere to be seen calling for the head of guys like Samuels and they are everywhere to be seen calling for the head of those who would block kids from accessing porn. To say this is a twisted sense of morality is an understatement.”

ADL ATTACKS MEL GIBSON

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) yesterday issued another attack on Mel Gibson for his yet unseen movie, “The Passion.” Catholic League president William Donohue answered the ADL as follows:

“In its news release of June 24, the ADL seriously misrepresented the position of the Catholic bishops regarding ‘The Passion.’ It said that it had ‘joined with the Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in April, 2003 to assemble Jewish and Catholic scholars to evaluate an early version of the movie’s screenplay.’ It then said it welcomed the remarks by the Catholic scholars. But what it didn’t say is telling.

“The ADL did not say that the Catholic panel was unauthorized by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

Nor did it say that the USCCB has since apologized to Mel Gibson for reviewing a movie it hasn't seen. Nor did it say that the script was stolen. Nor did it say that both the ADL and the USCCB have returned the stolen screenplay to Gibson's Icon Productions.

"One person who has seen the movie, and has translated it into Aramaic and Latin, is Jesuit Father William J. Fulco, a National Endowment for the Humanities professor of ancient Mediterranean studies at Loyola Marymount University. He not only insists that the ADL has nothing to worry about—'there is no hint of deicide'—he also says that the specific concerns raised by the ADL are baseless. Is there brutality in the film? Yes. Indeed, it would be historically dishonest to portray the crucifixion in a non-violent manner.

"Every Sunday Catholics recite the 1,700 year-old Nicene Creed, and every time they do they mention that Jesus was 'crucified under Pontius Pilate.' They do not say Jesus was killed by the Romans. Nor do they say He was killed by the Jews. They individualize the guilt. That anti-Semitic Christians have sought to blame 'the Jews' deserves condemnation. But fairness dictates that Gibson not be put in that camp. As he has said, 'Neither I nor my film is anti-Semitic.' That's good enough for the Catholic League and, we trust, for fair-minded Americans of every religion."

BISHOPS NEED NO LECTURES FROM CONSERVATIVE LEGAL GROUP

Judicial Watch, a conservative legal organization, is upset with the current composition of the National Review Board that

has been appointed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to monitor clergy sexual abuse. Citing the resignation of Frank Keating as the head of the panel, Judicial Watch objects to having Robert S. Bennett and Leon Panetta as board members.

The objection centers on Bennett's role as personal legal counsel to former President Bill Clinton and Panetta's job as White House Chief of Staff. In a news release dated June 23, Bennett and Panetta are referred to as follows: "Two Board Members Facilitated & Defended President Clinton's Sex Crimes." Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton went further accusing them of qualifying as "a 'who's who' of cover-up experts, not for membership on the bishops' National Review Board for combating sexual abuse, or maybe that's the point?"

Catholic League president William Donohue wasn't amused:

"Judicial Watch must be lost. It describes itself as 'the public interest group that investigates and prosecutes government corruption and abuse.' Why, then, the sudden interest in the affairs of the Catholic Church? Is there no more corruption and abuse left in Washington?"

"Though this may come as a surprise to Judicial Watch, Bob Bennett and Leon Panetta were appointed to the National Review Board a year ago. They work for the bishops, not the federal government. Thus it is no more the business of Judicial Watch to lecture Catholic bishops about the composition of its own watchdog group than it is for them to lecture the clergy of any religion about its internal affairs.

"One more point: we don't need any snide remarks about the 'cover-up' qualifications for membership on the panel."

CARDINAL GEORGE IS RIGHT: MAJOR PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on what happened yesterday at the conference of U.S. bishops in St. Louis:

“Cardinal Francis George of Chicago said it best when he said, ‘What we promised to do a year ago, we’ve done.’ He added, ‘The facts are, the bishops have moved—and they’ve moved dramatically. To come along and say that nothing has been done is an outrageous statement. It’s totally unjust and doesn’t bear any relationship to the facts.’ Just as important, Cardinal George compared the progress made by the bishops to that of other groups in countering sexual abuse: ‘I don’t know of any group that’s done that’; he was referring to teachers, journalists, sports directors, et al.

“His Eminence’s remarks ring true. Abusive priests have either been removed from ministry or they have left the priesthood. Cooperation between local prosecutors and the dioceses has never been better. Indeed, those who say no progress has been made are the very same people for whom no amount of progress—short of a radical remaking of the Catholic Church—would ever be considered satisfactory.

“Cardinal George is also right to put the matter of sexual abuse in context. Compared to other groups, the Catholic Church comes out on top. For example, the level of sexual abuse in the public schools is startling. It is estimated that 15 percent of students nationwide are victimized by school employees. In New York City schools alone, it is estimated that one student per day is molested at school. Even worse, in

Pennsylvania and Texas there are no laws governing sexual abuse by teachers. And in every state, tenure protects molesting teachers.

“There is, of course, much more that needs to be done. The fact that almost all the cases of sexual abuse have been committed by homosexuals is something the bishops must ultimately face.”

APPEAL TO CATHOLIC CONGRESSMEN: BLOCK RELIGIOUS PROFILING OF BILL PRYOR

On June 11, the Senate Judiciary Committee held hearings on the nomination of Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. On June 26, the committee will decide whether his nomination should be forwarded to the Senate for a vote. Catholic League president William Donohue raised some concerns over the process today:

“The U.S. Constitution specifically prohibits a religious test for public office, but this stricture does not empty the issue. There are still ways to screen for religion that do not technically violate the law, and that is what is happening to Bill Pryor. To be frank, he is the subject of religious profiling by abortion-rights Democrats.

“During the Senate Judiciary Committee’s hearing on June 11, Pryor was repeatedly asked about his ‘deeply held personal beliefs’ on abortion. How could he be objective about the topic given his ‘deeply held personal beliefs’ against it? Never mind that Pryor has already demonstrated that pro-life

legislation does not merit a blank pass (he advised state lawmakers not to enforce a badly written piece of legislation on partial-birth abortion), what is really at issue is the underlining meaning of such questions. Quite simply, asking him about his 'deeply held personal beliefs' is code for questioning him about his 'deeply held *religious* beliefs' [read: his Roman Catholicism].

"This little tap dance around the Constitution is morally objectionable and legally questionable. That is why I have written today to every Catholic member of the House and Senate requesting that they scrutinize the Pryor vote very carefully. Indeed, given the gravity of this issue, they really need to be on high alert against any trace of religious profiling that might take place on June 26. What is most offensive about all this is the fact that dissident Catholics—those who reject the Church's teachings on abortion—are not only found suitable for the federal bench, they are heralded for being so open-minded. This is a prejudice that must be rooted out and it is the obligation of Catholic congressmen to do so."

AMA BACKS RESEARCH CLONING

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the decision by the American Medical Association (AMA) to allow research cloning:

"What is the purpose of allowing research cloning if not to allow reproductive cloning? There is no way to gently open the door to therapeutic cloning without opening the door to wholesale abuse. At a time when the House of Representatives has already banned both types of cloning, and the Senate has

yet to vote, it strikes us as if the 'Doctor Knows Best' syndrome has once again struck the AMA. To intentionally create human life—which is what a human embryo is—only to destroy it is immoral. That others might benefit does not justify such a crass manipulation of the human species.

“Dr. Leon Kass, chairman of President Bush’s Council on Bioethics, has said that all human cloning involves ‘the expanded power to manipulate nascent human life and thus to master the very technique that will make cloning to produce children possible.’ He then perceptively noted, ‘Were this danger better understood, opposition to the practice would mount.’

“That is why today’s decision by the AMA should be condemned: it seeks to bypass a national conversation on the subject by imposing elite opinion on a still uncertain public. We went through this once before when nine judges discovered a constitutional right to abortion, and the results have been anything but sanguine.

“It is our hope that the Senate will ratify the decision of the House and stop all stages of human cloning. The AMA is an important body but it is no substitute for a democratic airing of life and death issues. Religious leaders, among others, deserve a place at the table.”

FRANK KEATING RESIGNS

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the pending resignation of Frank Keating as Chairman of the National Review Board; the panel was appointed to address sex abuse by priests and diocesan reforms. Here is the text of Donohue’s remarks:

“Frank Keating’s motives are sincere but his incendiary language has impaired the credibility of the panel. Had he simply said that some bishops have been stonewalling, there would have been no public outcry. But by using invective—comparing some bishops to the Mafia—Keating undermined his objectivity. His colleagues on the panel are understandably upset: once they become the focus of attention, their oversight abilities are considerably weakened. Thus, Frank Keating was left with no other choice but to resign.”

BISHOPS TO MEET IN ST. LOUIS: LESSONS LEARNED SINCE DALLAS CONFERENCE

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops will hold its semi-annual meeting in St. Louis, June 19-21. Among the items on the agenda is the sex abuse scandal and how the dioceses are addressing this issue. Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on some lessons learned since the Dallas meeting a year ago:

“The first lesson learned is that the conventional wisdom regarding the scale of the scandal is wrong. To be specific, although about 1,000 new people have come forward in the past year with accusations against priests, *dead and alive*, less than one percent of the 46,000 priests in the U.S. have been accused; this fraction would be lower if we did not count the deceased. It would also be lower if some states did not suspend the statute of limitations. The conventional wisdom is further flawed when we consider the fact that the *majority of reported cases* involve alleged incidents more than 20 years

ago. Now contrast this with what the Catholic League found regarding reported instances of sex abuse committed by teachers: from news accounts of the past year, we were able to determine that 83 percent of these cases involve incidents committed within the past three years; 2 percent of the cases go back further than 1980. In short, the problem in the Church is significantly exaggerated and is unfairly compared to other professions.

“The second lesson learned is that the conventional wisdom regarding the nature of the abuses is also wrong. Most people think of sex abuse as rape, but what passes as sex abuse charges against priests includes everything from rape to inappropriate touching to an unwelcome kiss to ‘ignoring warnings about suspicious behavior.’

“The third lesson learned is that the conventional wisdom regarding the veracity of the charges is wrong. Most people tend to believe alleged victims. While many are sincere, it is also true that many are not: there is a game being played by greedy lawyers (some of whom have made tens of millions off the scandal) and their ‘repressed memory’ clients. Add to this the fact that hundreds of claims are being made by persons who previously settled with the Church, and the game gets bigger.”