

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION SHOWS ITS HOSTILITY TO CATHOLICISM

The constitutionality of voting in churches will be put on trial this week in a federal court. A Jewish attorney is challenging the practice as being a violation of separation of church and state. In support of this position is Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-founder of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. "Asking a feminist to vote in a Roman Catholic Church is like asking a black man to vote in a KKK hall," said Gaylor.

This provoked Catholic League president William Donohue to comment as follows:

"Gaylor's remarks are helpful because they clarify matters. There can no longer be any doubt regarding her motives: it is not fidelity to the First Amendment that drives the Freedom From Religion Foundation, it's bigotry. And at the top of her list is Roman Catholicism. Because the Catholic Church opposes child abuse in the womb, Gaylor sees fit to compare it to the Klan. This is the way she thinks.

"It is theoretically possible to be an atheist and friendly toward Catholicism. But it becomes more difficult when one is an activist in behalf of atheism. It has certainly been my experience that such persons are almost always anti-Catholic bigots. In any event, we at the Catholic League are grateful that Gaylor has come out of the closet. We urge her ilk elsewhere to follow suit: honesty is the best policy."

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# ANTI-WAR CROWD EXPLOITS THE POPE

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke today on how the pope's words on the war are being exploited by anti-war activists:

"It comes as no surprise that the pope is viscerally anti-war. But he is also no pacifist. Pope John Paul II has said repeatedly that war cannot be decided upon 'except as the very last option.' What he has not said, though such words have been attributed to him, is that there is no legal or moral justification for the war. In any event, it is striking how many new friends the Pontiff has these days.

"Jessica Lange is anti-war and pro-abortion. The NARAL enthusiast is now praising the pope for his position on the war. What she fails to mention is that when the pope told a gathering of world leaders to say 'No To War' on January 13, he began by admonishing them to say 'No To Death'; he specifically cited 'the incomparable dignity of every human being, beginning with that of unborn children.' Hear that Jessica?

"Michael Moore is quoted today saying, 'The pope even came right out and said it: This war in Iraq is not a just war and, thus, it is a sin.' But the pope never said this is not a just war, never mind a sinful exercise.

"The reaction of Catholic dissidents and anti-Catholics who are part of the anti-war crowd to the pope is even more comical. The *National Catholic Reporter* is a Catholic weekly that never tires of railing against papal authority; ditto for Call the Action, an organization of Catholic malcontents. Yet both are now lauding the pope for his leadership on the war. Even that inveterate Catholic basher Frances Kissling is now

speaking of the 'humanitarian' vision of the Vatican and the 'religious authority of the pope.' Maybe she'll convert to Catholicism yet.

"We'll call these people sincere when they stop exploiting the pope's words on the war and start showing real and consistent respect for his teachings on all subjects."

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## **PROTECTING THE KIDS OR GETTING THE PRIESTS? NEW YORK STATE SENATORS CHOOSE THE LATTER**

A bill requiring members of the clergy to report cases of suspected child abuse to the authorities passed in the New York State Senate yesterday. A similar bill is expected to pass the New York State Assembly next week. Both bills are now almost totally identical, thus making the outcome predictable.

Catholic League president William Donohue accused lawmakers of succumbing to pressure from the abortion lobby:

"It is now crystal clear—New York State lawmakers are more interested in getting the priests than in protecting the kids. Here's what happened.

"In June, 2002, a bill that would require all adults to report to the authorities cases of suspected child abuse was withdrawn from the New York State legislature after a protest mounted by Family Planning Advocates (the lobbying arm of

Planned Parenthood) and the New York Civil Liberties Union. They argued that only the clergy should be added to the list of professionals required by law to report instances of suspected child abuse. In no uncertain terms, they contended that if all adults were blanketed, it would mean that abortion providers would have to report cases of statutory rape. The bill was then put on hold.

“The bill that just passed explicitly targets clergy and ‘anyone in a position of trust.’ Senator Stephen Saland, bowing to pressure from the abortion industry, has admitted that his bill will exempt family planning counselors (a.k.a. abortion providers) from coverage. In other words, since Gloria Feldt, the president of Planned Parenthood, is in a position of trust, she would have to report cases of suspected child abuse. But this is a ruse: it is her counselors on staff that learn of these cases—not her—and none of them will have to report instances of child rape to the cops.

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## **CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC SCHOLARS TO CONVENE AT NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

An assembly of some of the most prominent Catholic scholars in the nation will meet at Nassau Community College in Garden City, New York, on March 28 and 29. The conference is being sponsored by the Nassau County Center for Catholic Studies and the New York Chapter of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists. All events will take place in the College Center Building and are being arranged by Dr. Joseph Varacalli, the Center’s founder and director.

The conference is based on the initial entries submitted for a forthcoming encyclopedia to be published by Scarecrow Press; the volume is three years away from publication but is expected to contain 500 entries. Many sessions will occur throughout the two-day event.

There will also be four plenary sessions. On March 28, Dr. Candace de Russey, Trustee of the S.U.N.Y. system will speak on "The State of Higher Education in the U.S.: A Catholic Critique." Also speaking that day will be Professor Gerard Bradley of the University of Notre Dame Law School; he will speak on "Providing and Securing a Catholic Higher Education Today: Some Suggestions."

On March 29, Catholic League president Dr. William Donohue will discuss "The Contemporary Importance of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights." The conference will end with an address by Bishop William Murphy of the Diocese of Rockville Centre; he will speak on "The Contemporary Relevance of *Rerum Novarum*."

For more information, contact Dr. Joseph Varacalli, Department of Sociology, Nassau Community College, at (516) 572-7454.

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## **BILL O'REILLY IMPLIES POPE IS SOFT ON SADDAM**

Fox News Network talk show host Bill O'Reilly last night criticized Pope John Paul II for not having "a position on Saddam [Hussein]." After commenting on the brutality of Saddam Hussein's regime, O'Reilly said, "And then the pope sits in Rome and says, gee, this is terrible, but does not throw his moral authority behind removing this dictator."

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on O'Reilly's remarks as follows:

"Bill O'Reilly has made no secret about his contempt for Pope John Paul II. On his radio show on March 5 he explicitly said, 'I have never liked this pope. I have always felt he was an autocrat who had no vision about how people live in the real world.' Now he is implying that the Holy Father is giving a wink and a nod to Saddam Hussein.

"O'Reilly's ramblings about the pope do not make him an anti-Catholic. But it does make him an ignoramus. The pope does not have a 'position' on Saddam Hussein anymore than he has one on George W. Bush. But he does have a position on the culture of death and all that it represents. Indeed, there is no one in the world who has more forthrightly addressed issues like genocide, torture, abortion and the like than Pope John Paul II. For O'Reilly to suggest that the pope is soft on Saddam is scurrilous.

"Just last Saturday Fidel Castro presided over the inauguration of a new convent of nuns in Cuba. He did so as a fitting tribute to the fifth anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba. Now it will no doubt come as a tremendous shock to Bill O'Reilly to learn that the pope was able to accomplish this without ever having a position on Fidel Castro. Come to think of it, the pope never had a position on any of the Soviet Union's officials, yet even Gorbachev credited the Holy Father with bringing about the implosion of the U.S.S.R.

"It's time O'Reilly took a deep breath and stopped with the hyperbole. It's also time he learned a little more about his own religion."

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# LONG ISLAND JUDGE OVERSTEPS HIS AUTHORITY

At yesterday's sentencing of a Catholic priest convicted of sexual abuse, Nassau County Judge Donald DeRiggi said, "The Catholic Church is so vehement in its stand against fornication and homosexuality and adultery, how someone in the church can violate those things is hard to understand." DeRiggi, a Catholic, added that priests who can't keep their vow of celibacy should leave. He also raised questions about celibacy itself: "Maybe the assumptions we have about priests have to be reevaluated."

Here's what Catholic League president William Donohue had to say about DeRiggi's remarks:

"Maybe the assumptions we have about judges have to be reevaluated. After all, I did not think it was the job of a judge to pontificate from the bench about the wisdom of the Catholic Church's teachings. Not only was DeRiggi out of bounds by making these comments, he also showed his ignorance. It obviously came as a blockbuster surprise for DeRiggi to learn that the same religion that teaches against sin has sinners in its own ranks, including its teachers. Just wait until someone tells him the pope goes to confession. He'll no doubt want the person to undergo a lie detector test.

"Whether the discipline of celibacy should be revoked or reinforced is something for the Magisterium to decide. But it is not a matter for a sitting judge to lecture on from the bench. For his penance, I suggest DeRiggi reevaluate his vocation."

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# SPITZER STIFFS CATHOLICS

New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer will not march in New York City's St. Patrick's Day Parade on Monday. Catholic League president William Donohue explains why he sees Spitzer's decision as an insult to Catholics:

"Last month, Eliot Spitzer was invited by the Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick to give an address at their annual St. Patrick's Day dinner. But then the Friendly Sons revoked the invitation after scores of Catholics, many of whom are members of the organization, protested the decision; ever since Spitzer tried to shut down the crisis pregnancy centers in the state, he has not been popular with practicing Catholics. But there is more to the story than this.

"On February 24, before Spitzer's invitation was revoked, we called his office wanting to know whether he was planning to march in the parade; he has never marched before. We were told that he hadn't decided yet and will let us know in a few weeks. We thought this odd: will the New York State Attorney General not march in the St. Patrick's Day parade when he is going to deliver an address that evening before the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick? Is he that crass? Is he that wedded to the self-absorbed agenda of radical homosexuals?

"In any event, we called today to see if Spitzer is marching. And guess what? We were told the event was never on his schedule. In other words, he had every intention of going to the dinner but not marching in the parade. Which means he's decided to stiff Catholics.

"One more item of interest: when we called the Friendly Sons after Spitzer's invitation was pulled and asked why he wasn't



speaking, we were told he was never scheduled to speak in the first place. This, of course, is a lie. We have a copy of the invitation.

“So there is a lot of blame to go around. We hope all Catholics, especially Irish Catholics, take note of all the players.”

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## NEVADA BILL WOULD BREAK CONFESSIONAL SEAL

On Monday, Nevada State Minority Leader Dina Titus introduced a bill that would end the exemption currently afforded in Nevada law shielding priests from reporting crimes of child sexual abuse heard in the confessional. Titus is responding to a plea by the Nevada Coalition Against Sexual Violence that says its goal is “keeping our kids safe.”

Catholic League president William Donohue explained the league’s reaction today:

“Nevada lawmakers would be wise not to waste the taxpayers’ money discussing a bill that is patently unconstitutional. It is not likely the courts would permit such an extravagant abuse of power by the state, no matter how noble the cause. Separation of church and state has no meaning if the state is allowed to trump the doctrinal prerogatives of a religion, and this is especially true *when there is no evidence to suggest that the only way an important state objective can be realized is by allowing the state to encroach on religion.*

“A similar bill died a quick death in Maryland last week and the one introduced in Kentucky is dead for this session. A

wiser course of action was chosen by Arizona legislators when they explicitly chose not to tamper with the confessional seal.

“If the goal is really to protect children, then this can certainly be accomplished without fiddling with the priest-penitent privilege. And if this is the goal, why do lawmakers like Titus not demand that all professionals who learn of cases of child sexual abuse report them to the authorities? Why, for example, is there no talk of making teachers and abortion providers report such cases?

“Following precedent established in like cases, I will now write to every member of the Nevada legislature requesting that this bill be shelved immediately.”