

WHO WANTS CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS? THE DIOCESES OR THE VICTIMS?

There is a story in today's *New York Times* about an attorney who defended the Diocese of Galveston-Houston against those who filed suits alleging clergy sexual abuse. "It was always the church, [Robert P. Scamardo] said, that insisted on inserting confidentiality clauses in the settlements—never the victims, as many bishops have contended."

Yesterday, AP reported on a new twist in the ongoing story of the Diocese of Portland, Maine, which is being sued by the owners of the *Portland Press Herald* on the grounds that the state's Freedom of Access law permits it to access the names of dead priests charged with sexual misconduct. The diocese opined that alleged victims may want to protect their anonymity by joining the fight. To which Paul Kendrick, co-founder of the Maine chapter of Voice of the Faithful, replied, "In my mind, the church is the abuser here, and for the diocese to contact the victims is totally inappropriate. For the same institution that covered up these crimes to ask for help keeping these secrets sounds almost like witness tampering."

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"It is nothing if not preposterous to assert that it is the bishops who *always* push for confidentiality clauses in settlements. Not only does this fly in the face of the testimony of many victims, even those victims who are now spokesmen for victims' groups deny the validity of this claim. It would be more accurate to say that in most instances it was the victim's parents who sought to protect

the privacy of their son. And with good reason—they sought to spare him further damage.

“It is also striking to note that none other than Paul Kendrick has argued that the names of victims should not be disclosed in the Portland case. Yet he has the audacity to attribute malice to the diocese for merely seeking to rally the victims so as to protect their anonymity.

“It is a sick sign of the times when celebrities charged with molesting boys are cheered while even dead priests are being slammed in public.”

WANTED: ABERCROMBIE & FITCH MODELS WHO WEAR PANTS

Catholic League president William Donohue sounded off today on Abercrombie & Fitch’s (A&F) new Christmas catalog:

“Over the past few years, the Catholic League has blasted A&F for taking gratuitous shots at Catholicism in its catalogs. This year’s catalog is much improved, though it was wholly unnecessary to highlight a foul remark by some guy named Mark Millar. Millar is a comic book writer who’s glad he no longer has to abide by the restraints imposed on him by Marvel and DC comics. Now he’s free to create ‘an adolescent Jesus pontificating whether or not he should masturbate and that kind of thing.’ Sounds to us like this guy’s found a way to cash in on his infantilism.

“On p. 234 of the catalog there is a spoof about ‘The Regular Churchgoer’ that we found amusing. Listed as an ‘Identifying characteristic,’ is the following: ‘Rosary beads welded to

hands; loudly exclaiming 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' when people's cell phones go off; license to kill issued by the Catholic League.' This is a real slight—we don't issue licenses.

"Then there is the opening statement in the catalog, penned as a 'Dear Santa' letter: 'If you'd be so kind, please offer our apologies to the Catholic League....' Apology rejected: we don't accept intermediaries.

"And, of course, no comment on A&F's Christmas volume would be complete without addressing the lack of dressing in its catalog. Models for clothiers typically wear clothes, but not the ones who work for A&F. Indeed, the photos more closely resemble an ad for a nudist colony. It is not clear how these kids will list their gig at A&F on their resume, much less explain to prospective employers their aversion to pants. But if it's true that clothes make the man, then these guys are finished."

"BAD SANTA" BLACKENS DISNEY'S SNOW WHITE IMAGE

"Bad Santa," a movie distributed by the Disney subsidiary Miramax, opens November 26. Louis Giovino, the league's director of communications, attended a screening of the movie on November 19 in New York; Miramax acceded to the league's request for an opportunity to preview it.

The following commentary, written by Catholic League president William Donohue, is based on Giovino's report on the film:

"In a word association game, the mere mention of Santa to kids

begets comments like 'kind,' 'cheerful,' and 'loving.' But the Santa in 'Bad Santa' is anything but: he is a chain-smoking, drunken, foul-mouthed, suicidal, sexual predator. He is shown soiling himself in Santa's chair, vomiting in alleys, having sex with a woman bartender in a car, and performing anal sex on a huge woman in a dressing room. And his commentary in front of kids is replete with the 'F-word.'

"This is a movie put out by Harvey and Bob Weinstein, directed by Terry Zwigoff and produced by Joel and Ethan Coen. Michael Eisner, Disney's chief executive, is said to be disturbed by the movie. But we don't believe him. Miramax has produced a slew of movies that thrash Christianity, and have blackened Disney's Snow White image. Yet he does nothing about it. While this film is not blasphemous, per se, it is nonetheless offensive.

"It says something about our society that some movie reviewers welcome attacks on Christmas. For example, George M. Thomas of the *Akron Beacon Journal* says, 'The trailer shows this as an anti-holiday film and it could be the much-needed antidote to that good-will-to-man feeling that permeates the season.' Thomas does not say why it is always a Christian holiday that deserves to be bashed, but it is not hard to figure out why.

"The movie will be a hit with college drop-outs, toilet-humor buffs and those who think like the Weinstein brothers."

**FORD FOUNDATION STOPS FUNDING
ANTI-SEMITISM; CONTINUES TO**

FUND ANTI-CATHOLICISM

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has announced that it has successfully persuaded the Ford Foundation to stop funding anti-Semitic organizations. The Ford Foundation had sponsored many of the most vile anti-Jewish groups that had assembled at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa. Now Ford Foundation President Susan V. Berresford has agreed to develop “a series of measures to ensure that no future grants would go to organizations that in any way support terrorism, bigotry, or the delegitimization of Israel.”

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“Congratulations to the ADL. There is no legitimate role in a democratic society for tax-exempt foundations to fund bigotry. Unfortunately, the Ford Foundation’s record in this area is still not clean.

“The Ford Foundation is the largest single donor in the U.S. to one of the nation’s most virulently anti-Catholic organizations, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC). The CFFC is not a critic of the Catholic Church—it is its expressed enemy. For years it has worked to trash the teachings of the Catholic Church, mock the pope, and oust the Vatican from the U.N.

“Ford Foundation President Susan Berresford says she is opposed to funding anti-Semitic bigotry and the delegitimization of Israel. Yet under her tutelage, munificent grants are awarded annually to an organization that promotes anti-Catholic bigotry and the delegitimization of the Vatican nation-state. I wrote to her when she was appointed president in 1996 about this matter, but she made it clear that the Ford Foundation was quite comfortable with the status

quo.

“In short, despite its recent pledge to stop funding anti-Semitism, the Ford Foundation continues to underwrite anti-Catholicism at an alarming rate. Its ties to bigotry, then, continue to mar its reputation.”

MASSACHUSETTS HIGH COURT OPENS DOOR TO GAY AND INCESTUOUS MARRIAGES

By a vote of 4-3, the Massachusetts Supreme Court voted today to strike down the state's ban on homosexual marriage. Though the court said homosexuals were entitled to marry, it stopped short of allowing them to obtain a license to do so. Instead, it gave the state legislature 180 days to find a solution.

Commenting on this development is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“According to Chief Justice Margaret Marshall, ‘The exclusive commitment of two individuals to each other nurtures love and mutual support.’ In making this ruling, Judge Marshall has, however unwittingly, sanctioned marriage between two brothers. Whether it would extend to an incestuous marriage between heterosexuals—brother and sister, mother-son, father-daughter, is uncertain—but clearly two sisters would be covered by her logic. What it comes down to is this: if love is the *sine qua non* of marriage, then all incestuous relationships qualify. But if the ruling applies only to homosexual couples who challenge the state's ban, then only brother-brother, sister-sister, marriages pass muster.

"Polygamists have every right to sue. After all, who is Judge Marshall to limit marriage to two people? Her ruling explicitly discriminates against Tom, Dick and Harry marrying. In effect, she is saying that one of them must be left out—Tom can marry Dick, but not Dick *and* Harry? But why not be inclusive? This is hardly the kind of ruling that respects real diversity.

"If there is one saving grace in this ruling, it is the decision to force state legislators to do what they hate to do—make a decision about an issue they would prefer judges to make for them."

DEMOCRATS TO STAGE PRAYER FEST WITH MUSLIMS

On November 12, several Democratic congressmen will join American Muslim leaders in holding a Ramadan iftar, or fast breaking dinner, in the House Judiciary Committee Hearing Room. According to a news release by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, "The Capitol Hill iftar will include breaking of the fast with water and dates, *the call to prayer (adhan), the Islamic sunset prayer (maghrib), an ecumenical prayer by a Muslim religious leader, and remarks by the congressional hosts.*" (Emphasis added.)

Catholic League president William Donohue couldn't wait to sound off:

"Practicing Catholic aspirants to the federal bench like Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor are denied a vote by Democrats in the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing room, but their colleagues in the House can stage a prayer fest with

Muslims in the House Judiciary Committee Room. Anyone who sings 'Silent Night' next month in a public school is likely to be either reprimanded or arrested, and allowing kids to utter the dreaded words 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance is deemed so threatening to our freedoms that the U.S. Supreme Court must intervene. But our elected officials—the very ones who promote censorship of religious speech for Christians—are now going to pray with Muslims in the Rayburn House Office Building.

“Needless to say, the Catholic League has no problem with public celebrations of Ramadan, and we certainly wish Muslims well. No, our problem is with these hypocritical public officials—the way things are going we may soon need an affirmative action program for Christians so they can catch up with their newly arrived Islamic brothers.”

DEMOCRATS LINKED TO CATHOLIC BASHING

A group allied with the Democratic Party has just released a public statement branding all Catholic bishops liars. The group, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), made the charge in a news release today: “Congress, AIDS advocates, and public urged to protest Catholic cardinals’ and bishops’ lying about condoms’ effectiveness to fight AIDS.”

The statement comes as the bishops are meeting in Washington this week for their annual meeting. The Democratic National Committee (DNC) provides a link on its website to CFFC and has resisted calls to end its relationship with the anti-Catholic organization.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

“The Democrats are now in a bind: they can either dump Catholics for a Free Choice or explain why they shouldn’t. The Democrats, in their eagerness to support abortion rights, have needlessly sided with an anti-Catholic group. For the party of compassion and civil rights to associate with a group that is publicly flaunting its contempt for Catholicism is astonishing. It is also suicidal.

“Do the Democratic candidates running for president believe the Catholic bishops are a bunch of liars? If not, will they say the time has finally come to break off all relations with these bigots? Surely the Democrats have more to lose than gain by sticking with those who seek to alienate millions of Catholics.”

BISHOPS CONVENE AMIDST GOOD NEWS

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will meet November 10-13 in Washington, D.C. for their annual meeting. They will do so amidst good news from two surveys of Roman Catholics.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

“The latest Gallup survey, reported today in the *New York Times*, shows that forty-nine percent of Catholics say they feel the bishops are doing a good job; this is up from 35

percent a year ago. In a related story in today's *Washington Post*, we learn from a study done by researchers at Georgetown University that Catholics were more generous in their donations in 2002 than they were the previous year. The 5 percent increase was substantial—it was twice the rate of inflation. And considering that 2002 was the year that news of the scandal broke, and the market went south, the results are startling. With the Church on the mend, and the market picking up, it looks like 2003 will be an even better year for the Church.

“The good news comes at a time when the bishops need to take a serious look at who their real friends are. Meeting today for three days in Milwaukee is the radical reform group Call to Action. This is the same group that holds funds in escrow for members in parishes unhappy with church operations. The same group has taken out ads in secular newspapers calling for a boycott of dioceses it doesn't like.

“Then there is Voice of the Faithful. On November 10, it will hold a press conference across the street from where the bishops will be meeting to list its demands for financial accountability. This is the same group that holds hundreds of thousands of dollars in escrow from parishioners who are unhappy with diocesan operations. It is the same group that collects money from Catholics to be given to the local diocese on the condition that the local Ordinary spend the money according to its dictates. And they are lecturing the bishops on financial accountability!

“In essence, the surveys indicate that lay Catholics are coming back to the fold, save for those who seek to control the Church.”

DNC TRIES TO PLAY ITS CATHOLIC CARD

Jenny Backus, a Democratic consultant who has helped organize the Democratic National Committee (DNC) debates, is quoted today about the alleged diversity of the Democratic candidates for president. Here's what she said: "We've got everybody from a preacher to a general, from the leader of the House to leaders in the Senate, north to south, Jewish, Catholic, Baptist."

Here's how Catholic League president William Donohue reacted today:

"Jenny Backus is right—there are Catholics running for president on the Democratic ticket. In fact, four of the nine candidates are Catholic: Carol Moseley Braun, Wesley Clark, John Kerry and Dennis Kucinich are all Roman Catholics. Unfortunately, they all carry the same baggage, and that is why it is not smart for the DNC to try to play its Catholic card.

"None of these Catholics has yet to speak out against the outrageous association between the DNC and Catholics for a Free Choice, the nation's most notoriously anti-Catholic organization. To this day, despite repeated requests, the DNC maintains a link on its website to this despicable group. Though all the candidates have been contacted about this issue, none has yet shown the courage to address it.

"Some opponents of the Democratic party have questioned whether certain Catholic candidates for public office are Catholics in good standing. The Catholic League is not an opponent of the Democratic party, and it is not interested in pursuing this issue. But we are an opponent of bigotry, and of anti-Catholicism, in particular. This explains our

interest in the nexus between the DNC and Catholics for a Free Choice.

“We have been educating Catholics about this unseemly relationship for over a year now. Once they find out what’s going on, they’re amazed. We will continue our education campaign for as long as necessary.”

ADL TO HOST ATTACK ON MEL GIBSON

On November 6, the Anti-Defamation League will convene its 90th Annual National Meeting at New York’s Plaza Hotel. One of the sessions will explore the controversy over the Mel Gibson film, “The Passion of Christ.” Speaking to the issue will be Paula Fredriksen, professor of theology at Boston University; Sister Mary C. Boys, professor of Judeo-Christian Studies, Union Theological Seminary; and Abraham H. Foxman, the ADL’s national director.

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed the event today:

“The ADL session on Mel Gibson will reveal no surprises. All three of the participants have already demonized the man and none has seen the movie. Paula Fredriksen has even charged Gibson with sponsoring violence, saying ‘When violence breaks out, Mel Gibson will have a much higher authority than professors and bishops to answer to’; she has also said she has no intention of seeing the film. Sister Mary Boys has

gone so far as to say that the movie 'could be one of the great crises in Christian-Jewish relations,' even though the closest she has come to seeing the film has been to read an early draft of a stolen script. Abe Foxman has accused Gibson of being anti-Semitic, and has then had to take back his charge when confronted by reporters. (Our website, catholicleague.org, has a new section on Gibson's movie.)

"Rabbi Daniel Lapin, who heads an organization called Toward Tradition, has made it his life ambition to build good relations between Christians and Jews. He regards these blind protests against 'The Passion of Christ' as 'morally indefensible.' He is right. There is not one scene in the movie that blames all Jews for the death of Christ—either then or now. And if it did, the Catholic League would condemn it.

"The Catholic League congratulates the ADL on its 90th anniversary. Notwithstanding our sharp disagreement with the organization on this issue, we commend the ADL for its brilliant track record in combating anti-Semitism and other expressions of bigotry."