

MAKE CHURCHES “CAMPAIGN-FREE ZONES”

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the need to make churches “campaign-free zones”:

“For many years now, Republican and Democratic candidates for public office have exploited houses of worship for political capital. Time and again they have brought their campaigns into churches, synagogues and other houses of worship, turning religious services into political rallies. To be sure, they could not have succeeded in doing so without the blessings of the clergy, but this is no excuse: the onus is on the candidates to respect the spirit of the law that governs separation of church and state.

“In the current issue of *Time* magazine, there is a story about John Kerry’s Catholicism. It quotes Kerry saying on Saturday, ‘We have a separation of church and state in this country.’ Also on Saturday Kerry said, ‘There is nothing conservative or mainstream about crossing the line between church and state.’ Yet the very next day Kerry took a stab at President Bush when he spoke at New Northside Baptist Church in St. Louis, quoting Scripture: ‘It is not enough, my brother, to say you have faith, when there are no deeds.’ Evidently this is now part of Kerry’s stump speech when he campaigns in churches. For example, on March 7, in a Mississippi church, Kerry again quoted James 2:14, ‘What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?’

“Kerry needs to be careful. His voting record is diametrically opposed to the teachings of the Catholic Church on virtually every public policy issue. From abortion and stem cell research, to gay marriage and school vouchers, Kerry disagrees with the Church. Catholics might rightly want to know why his deeds (voting record) are at odds with his faith

(the Church's teachings).

"Bush and Kerry, along with all other candidates for public office, should pledge to keep churches 'campaign-free zones.' The crass use of houses of worship for political capital is not only unethical, it is contemptuous of the religious sensibilities of Americans. It is time for a moratorium."

DRESS-UP JESUS PULLED AFTER PROTEST

Urban Outfitters, a Philadelphia company that sells T-shirts and an array of merchandise targeted at young people, has decided not to carry its magnetized figure of Jesus on the cross anymore; the figure of Jesus wearing underwear could be altered by putting various clothing items on it (e.g. a devil's outfit and a hula skirt).

Catholic League president William Donohue was pleased by the news:

"On January 13, I wrote to Richard A. Hayne, chairman of Urban Outfitters, Inc., commending him for pulling an offensive shirt that the Anti-Defamation League had protested. The shirt read, 'EVERYONE LOVES A JEWISH GIRL,' and was surrounded by dollar signs. But I also requested that his company discontinue several items that are offensive to Christians, including those that featured Jesus. It sure took him long enough to do so, but at least he got the message and has now decided to pull this item. Perhaps my blasting the company on the MSNBC TV show, 'Scarborough Country,' had something to do with the decision.

“But we’re not satisfied. That’s because the company is still selling some T-shirts of Jesus and Mary that are offensive. Thus, we will keep the heat on Urban Outfitters until it starts treating Christians as the equal of Jews and pulls all these T-shirts. It is quite interesting to learn that the guy who created the dress-up Jesus, Bob Smith, went to see ‘The Passion of the Christ’ dressed as Satan. His complaint that someone threw a cup of soda at him strikes us as a whine. Did he expect a handshake?”

ONE MONTH AFTER “THE PASSION”: BODY COUNT—ZERO

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the absence of violence that marks the one month anniversary of the opening of “The Passion of the Christ”:

“Last summer, Boston University professor Paula Fredriksen predicted, with no uncertainty, that ‘when violence breaks out’ (following the opening of ‘The Passion of the Christ’) Mel Gibson will have some explaining to do. She was not alone in predicting violence, though no one was as cocksure as she was.

“Now that the movie has been out for a month, there have been no reports of violence, no pogroms of any sort. There have been a few spectacular stories about people who have died on the way to the theater, or in the theater itself, but no one believes for a moment that they would have lived had they chosen to dine at the Red Lobster instead. It seems only fair, then, that those demagogues who waved a bloody flag at the movie should now repent for acting so irresponsibly. They

can begin by apologizing to Mel Gibson.

“And by the way, had some Germans been mugged after the opening of ‘Schindler’s List,’ would anyone in his right mind have blamed Steven Spielberg?”

VATICAN SPOKESMAN: “THE PASSION” IS NOT ANTI-SEMITIC

Joaquín Navarro-Valls, the Director of the Holy See’s Press Office, said yesterday that “The Passion of the Christ” was “a cinematographic transcription of the Gospels. If it were anti-Semitic, the Gospels would also be so.” He added that the pope would have criticized the movie if it were bigoted against Jews, but, he declared, there is “nothing anti-Semitic about it.” The Vatican spokesman made his comments in reply to Riccardo Di Segni, chief rabbi of Rome, who had asked the Vatican to formally condemn the Mel Gibson movie.

Catholic League president William Donohue was pleased:

“This will now settle the issue for most Catholics—the movie is not anti-Semitic. Naturally, there will always be some, most especially dissident theologians, nuns and priests, who will reject the Vatican’s understanding of the film. But then again they have a long track record of rejecting lots of things the Vatican says. It would be a mistake for the millions of Catholics who have embraced this movie to allow the dissidents to distract them from the beauty of the film.

“For some Jews, this may not sit too well. That would be unfortunate, because the last thing Catholics want is bad relations with Jews. Those Jews who find the movie

problematic should be treated with respect. Given what has happened to Jews throughout history, including at the hands of many Christians, it is not surprising that many Jews today would be wary of any movie that deals with the death of Jesus. But an honest dialogue between Catholics and Jews cannot proceed if Catholics—convinced the movie is a spiritual exercise absent anti-Semitism—are to pretend there isn't an honest disagreement about the movie.

“At the end of the day, however, disagreements between Catholics and Jews need not take on any greater significance than the ordinary family quarrel. It is up to the major players on both sides to see to it that our common friendship transcends any discord about this matter.”

SEXUAL ABUSE OF STUDENTS EXPLODES; PUBLIC OFFICIALS ASKED TO RESPOND

In the March 10 edition of *Education Week*, there is an article by Caroline Hendrie, “Sexual Abuse by Educators is Scrutinized,” that suggests that the degree of sexual abuse in the public schools is at a crisis level. Hofstra University professor Charol Shakeshaft was commissioned by the Bush administration to do a literature search of existing studies on this subject; this was to be the groundwork upon which a national study would be launched. She concluded that “the physical sexual abuse of students in schools is likely more than 100 times the abuse by priests.” The article also says that there are no plans at this time to conduct the national study. Responding to this is Catholic League president

William Donohue:

"I have written U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige urging him to authorize a national study of the problem of sexual abuse in the public schools. I have also asked him to put Professor Charol Shakeshaft in charge of the study. The provision in the No Child Left Behind program that mandated such a study should not be dismissed by education department officials who would prefer not to deal with this issue. I have also recommended to Secretary Paige the establishment of a national database on the sexual abuse of students.

"I have also written to all the state attorneys general. 'Given that many attorneys general throughout the U.S. were impelled to subpoena the personnel files of priests,' I said, 'it is only just that the personnel files of teachers be subpoenaed as well. Not to do so would smack of selective indignation—even prejudice—and that is not something the citizenry would approve.'

"Where is the media in all this? Isn't it news that the number of public school students who have been abused by a school employee is more than 100 times greater than the number of minors who have been abused by priests? All those reporters, columnists, talking heads, attorneys general, D.A.'s, psychologists and victims groups who were so quick on the draw to get priests have a moral obligation to pursue this issue to the max. If they don't, they're a fraud."

BROOKLYN BISHOP OFFERS

STRAIGHT TALK ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Cardinal Edward Egan and several other high-ranking Catholic clerics appeared in Albany yesterday to lobby against same-sex marriage. Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio spoke bluntly about the Church's opposition to gay marriage on Fred Dicker's talk-radio show. Noting the absurdity of permitting two people of the same sex to marry, Bishop DiMarzio questioned the wisdom of allowing three people to marry. But what really drew the ire of homosexuals was his comment, "Why can't we have marriages between people and pets?"

Immediately, the Brooklyn bishop was criticized by New York State Senator Thomas Duane and Kevin Cathcart, executive director of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. Catholic League president William Donohue rose to Bishop DiMarzio's defense today:

"Tom Duane brands Bishop DiMarzio's comment about marriages between people and pets 'nonsensical,' and Kevin Cathcart labels it 'absurd.' But neither offers a principled reason why—if two men can marry—we can't allow Fred to marry Fido. Nor can they make a principled argument against allowing Tom, Dick and Harry to marry. After all, if it's discriminatory not to allow Tom to marry Dick, why isn't it a matter of discrimination to stop Tom and Dick from adding Harry to their marriage? Why should poor Harry be excluded?"

"If love is the sole basis for marriage, then what gives society the right to deny a marriage license to Fred and Fido? Or, for that matter, to Sam and Sally, a brother-sister couple who—like in the movie 'The Dreamers'—love each other in a way most people find unnatural? Surely it is irrational to forbid incest! After all, we once made it illegal for whites to marry blacks, didn't we? So isn't it the same to deny Fred

and Fido; Tom, Dick and Harry; and Sam and Sally? Wouldn't it be intolerant to say no to this happy trio of lovers? Isn't this what makes America great—equal rights for those who commit bestiality, polygamy, sodomy and incest?

“Thank God we have bishops like Nick DiMarzio. It's about time we forced the crazies to defend their logic.”

CRITICS OF “THE PASSION” CRACKUP

Catholic League president William Donohue notes today how critics of “The Passion of the Christ” continue to rant:

“In a Knight Ridder column, Rev. John Pawlikowski, director of the Catholic-Jewish Studies Program at the Catholic Theological Union, wrote the following: ‘Christians who react favorably to Gibson’s film are shamefully evading their religious responsibility.’ Thus did he indict Pope John Paul II; Cardinal Dario Castrillón Hoyos, Prefect of the Congregation for Clergy; Most Reverend John Foley, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications; Reverend Augustine Di Noia, Undersecretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago; Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia; Most Reverend Charles Chaput, Archbishop of Denver; Most Reverend John Donoghue, Archbishop of Atlanta; Most Reverend Robert C. Morlino, Bishop of Madison, Wisconsin; Reverend Richard John Neuhaus, Editor-in-Chief, *First Things*; Reverend Thomas Rosica, CEO, Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation; theologian Michael Novak; and scores of Protestant leaders from virtually every denomination.

"Yesterday, *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich labeled 'The Passion' a 'porn movie,' noting 'its laborious build-up to its orgasmic spurtings of blood and other bodily fluids.' He also said that when Mel Gibson was speaking of his critics in his interview with Diane Sawyer, Mel must have been referring to him: 'But Ms. Sawyer never identified me as Jewish, thereby sanitizing Mr. Gibson's rant of its truculent meaning. (She did show a picture of me, though, perhaps assuming that my nose might give me away.)' How observant.

"On August 3, 2003, Rich said, 'it's hard to imagine the movie being anything other than a flop in America.' It must break his heart to know the film has well surpassed the \$200 million mark.

"In short, Christians who don't agree with Pawlikowski are acting irresponsibly, and those who criticize Rich are anti-Semitic. Thus does the crackup continue."

CRITICS SEE PORN AND S&M IN "THE PASSION"

The following quotes are from the critics of "The Passion of the Christ":

—Rev. Andrew Greeley calls it "sodomasochistic and pornographic."

—Christopher Hitchens dubs it "an exercise in lurid sadomasochism."

—Ex-priest John Dominic Crossan labels it "pornographic."

- David Edelstein of *Slate* finds it an “exercise in sadomasochism.”
- Rabbi James Rudin brands it “a sadomasochistic film.”
- David Denby of *The New Yorker* opines “It’s extremely sadistic.”
- Jonathan Foreman of the *New York Post* says it’s “pornographic.”
- A.O. Scott of the *New York Times* sees it as “high-minded sadomasochism.”
- Andrew Sullivan was shocked to find it “pornographic.”
- Rev. Michael Coffey, a Lutheran minister, says it’s “pornographic.”
- David Ansen of *Newsweek* screams “It’s the sadism” that’s troubling.
- Jamie Bernard of the *Daily News* notes it “would horrify the regulars at an S&M club.”
- Ex-priest James Carroll sees the film as nothing but “pornographic.”
- Leon Wieseltier of the *New Republic* dubs it “a repulsive masochistic fantasy, a sacred snuff film.”
- Harvard professor Daniel Jonah Goldhagen was aghast at the “sadomasochistic, orgiastic display” and its “unremitting sadism.”
- Charles Krauthammer of the *Washington Post* calls it “the most unremitting sadism in the history of film.”
- Bill Safire in the *New York Times* complains of its “sustained sadism.”

—Al Neuharth of *USA TODAY* calls it a “wasted exercise in sadomasochism.”

Catholic League president William Donohue responds as follows:

“Christians need to take note of this mental goose-stepping, but they should also note that none of these savants found ‘Schindler’s List’ to be pornographic. What they find pornographic is the scourging and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. No doubt for some of them, the New Testament classifies as pornography as well. Indeed that is exactly what a Brooklyn rabbi told me to my face. At least now it’s out in the open.”

PAT ROBERTSON LECTURES CATHOLIC CHURCH

On “The 700 Club” today, TV evangelist Pat Robertson ran a segment on celibacy in the Catholic Church. Invited to appear with Robertson was therapist A.W. Richard Sipe. Sipe used the occasion of the latest report on sexual abuse by priests to challenge the wisdom of celibacy. Responding to what was said is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“With great delight did the embittered ex-priest, Richard Sipe, inform his new friend Pat Robertson that the Catholic Church was more corrupt today than at any time since the Reformation. Enthralled by the figure of 4 percent of priests accused of molesting minors since 1950, Sipe failed to mention the results of national surveys taken by Christian Ministry Resources in 2002. The *Christian Science Monitor* summed up

the surveys' conclusion as follows: 'Despite headlines focusing on the priest pedophile problem in the Roman Catholic Church, most American churches being hit with child sexual-abuse allegations are Protestant....' But don't look for the founder of the Christian Coalition to do a show on these findings.

"According to Sipe, only 10 percent of priests are celibate. How did he arrive at this figure? Sipe, who calls his work 'guerrilla research' (meaning he uses anecdotes given to him in his role as shrink), defines violations of celibacy to include 'sexual thoughts and desires.' The wonder is why there are as many as 10 percent of priests who have never experienced such desires. And what is going to happen to the 90 percent who are guilty? They're going straight to Hell: 'You see,' Sipe says, 'one thing about the Catholic teaching is that every sexual thought, or desire, or action, is mortally sinful. Every action, no matter how small, no matter how nuanced, will send a person directly to Hell.' This suggests either profound ignorance of Catholicism or calculated malice. By the way, Robertson's gullibility on this matter is truly revealing.

"Robertson closes with, 'We're not trying to point any fingers, obviously, but it's something that we'd like our Catholic brothers and sisters to do something about for their own good.' For his own good, Robertson ought to stop with the lectures and start fixing the problems in his own house. Not that we're trying to point any fingers. Obviously!"

ADL “PASSION” GUIDE FOR TEENS IS FLAWED

The ADL has issued an online guide, *Things Teens Should Know about Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ.”* Most of it is fair enough, but not when it comes to the issue of whether the film accurately reflects Church teachings. Of the Gibson movie, the guide says, “His film does not adhere to these [Vatican II’s] guidelines.”

Catholic League president William Donohue disagrees:

“The ADL has failed in a) altering the movie’s script b) getting the Vatican to denounce the movie c) getting the U.S. bishops to denounce the film, and d) getting a postscript. Now it is instructing the public that ‘The Passion of the Christ’ contravenes Church teachings. We’re getting used to the chutzpah, but the ADL’s latest salvo deserves an answer.

“The movie has been heralded by such Catholic heavyweights as Pope John Paul II (yes, he did say, ‘It is as it was’); Cardinal Dario Castrillón Hoyos, Prefect of the Congregation for Clergy; Most Reverend John Foley, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications; Reverend Augustine Di Noia, Undersecretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago; Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia; Most Reverend Charles Chaput, Archbishop of Denver; Most Reverend John Donoghue, Archbishop of Atlanta; Reverend Richard John Neuhaus, Editor-in-Chief, *First Things*; Reverend Thomas Rosica, CEO, Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation; and theologian Michael Novak.

“According to the ADL, all these authorities are wrong. Do those at the ADL really think anyone will believe them?

“Finally, let’s put one thing to rest: 1965 *was not* the first

time the Catholic Church condemned collective guilt of the Jews for the death of Christ. Indeed, the *Catechism* that the ADL so likes on this subject quotes a passage from the Council of Trent that also condemns collective guilt. And it was written in the mid-1500s!"