

# **BISHOP GREGORY SHOWS COURAGE: PRIESTS HAVE RIGHTS, TOO**

Bishop Wilton Gregory, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has refused to release the mental health records of a retired priest accused of sexual abuse. The alleged acts occurred in the 1970s in the Illinois Diocese of Belleville; the diocese is now led by Bishop Gregory. As a result of his decision, the Belleville diocese is being cited for contempt of court.

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"Not surprisingly, some are now condemning Bishop Gregory. Their interest in the cause of victims has apparently blinded them from the cause of justice. No priest should have his rights sacrificed simply because of past injustices committed by church officials. Indeed, he is entitled to the same

aggressive defense that is routinely afforded celebrities accused of a crime. To suggest otherwise is to embrace a double standard that smacks of anti-Catholicism.

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## **AMERICANS UNITED ATTEMPTS TO SILENCE BISHOPS**

Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State sent a letter to the IRS today asking the agency to investigate what he terms “electioneering” by the Diocese of Colorado Springs. Referring to Bishop Michael Sheridan’s recent pastoral letter about politicians receiving Communion, Lynn accuses the letter of using “code language that says ‘Re-elect Bush and vote Republican.’” Lynn also alleges Bishop Sheridan’s actions are “part of a larger trend among some members of the Catholic hierarchy to influence Catholic voters in this election year,” citing the bishops of New Jersey and Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis.

Catholic League president William Donohue responded today:

“It is disingenuous of Lynn to accuse Bishop Sheridan of ‘religious blackmail to steer votes toward the GOP.’ Sheridan never mentions any candidate or political party in his letter. He makes his judgment based on moral issues, on which members of both political parties can come up short. As

Sheridan wrote, 'The Church never directs citizens to vote for any specific candidate. The Church does, however, have the right and the obligation to teach clearly and fully the objective truth about the dignity and rights of the human person.' Lynn conveniently omits this part of the pastoral letter.

"Lynn joins a growing group of those who cry 'separation of church and state' when Catholic bishops venture to speak on public issues. It is hard to take these critics seriously when, with very few exceptions, they wink at campaigning and even political endorsements of candidates by name in some Protestant churches.

"Lynn's remark that Bishop Sheridan's actions are part of a 'larger trend' among some in the Catholic hierarchy is an attempt to intimidate the bishops into silence. And he has shown he is not averse to using the power of the state—the IRS—to do so. So much for separation of church and state."

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## **CARDINAL GEORGE REBUKES GAY ACTIVISTS**

Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago, has notified all his pastors not to give Communion on Sunday to gay members of the Rainbow Sash Movement. Members of the group, who publicly reject the teachings of the Catholic Church on homosexuality and same-sex marriage, are planning to wear rainbow sashes on Pentecost Sunday at many churches in Chicago, as well as in other parts of the country.

Catholic League president William Donohue remarked as follows:

“Anyone who politicizes the Mass, for whatever cause, has placed himself outside the community of faith. In doing so, such persons show nothing but contempt for the Church’s greatest prayer—the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Thus do they leave bishops and priests with little choice but to ostracize them from fully participating in the Mass.

“This is not the first time this band of homosexual extremists has sought to upend the Mass. For example, they’ve been known to stage protests at the Mass attended by U.S. bishops at their annual meeting in Washington; for this they have been turned away at Communion. Now they’re back, ready to disrupt the Mass again. Their preferred tactic upon being denied the Eucharist is to return to their pew and remain standing.

“Cardinal George is not politicizing the Mass—the Rainbow Sash fanatics are. Their goal is to exploit the Mass by turning it into a forum of dissent. That is why they have left Cardinal George with no alternative, and they know it.

“Some pundits will inevitably compare this to the decision of some bishops to deny Communion to pro-abortion politicians. But this is all the more egregious because it constitutes nothing less than a shakedown of the Catholic Church. Nothing can justify a sacrilegious mutiny, and that is exactly what this demonstration is all about.”

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## **“SAVED!” IS A BOMB IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE**

The MGM movie “Saved!” opens at select theaters on May 28. It is billed as a “sweetly subversive comedy” about an evangelical Christian high school. The film features a

Christian teenager who gets pregnant while attempting to reorient her homosexual friend; this follows a vision she has of Jesus who appealed to her to "do everything you can to help him." The girl's mother has an affair with Pastor Skip, the school's principal, and many experience a crisis of faith.

Louis Giovino, the league's director of communications, saw the movie on May 21. Catholic League president William Donohue wrote the following news release based on Giovino's report:

"Peter Adeo, president of worldwide marketing at MGM, has said, 'I love the movie, but it is so hard to figure out who the audience is.' He is correct. What he failed to say is this is why it will bomb.

"Not every movie with a religious theme has to be of the serious nature that 'The Passion of the Christ' is in order to succeed. 'Sister Act,' for example, succeeded as light comedy because it made people laugh without ever evincing an agenda. Not only is 'Saved!' not funny, the statement it makes about Christianity is strained and mildly offensive. To be specific, all the Christians are presented as good-natured but hopelessly narrow-minded persons who can't negotiate life. On the other hand, the non-Christians are portrayed as tolerant and wise. And crude: the lone Jew remarks of Jesus on the cross, 'Now that is what I call hung on a cross!' She also comments that instead of seeking to be 'born again,' she has decided 'not to serve Jesus after all, but to serve Satan.'

"MGM publicists have said the film was not made to offend Christians. But if this is true we would expect it to do very well in the Bible Belt. Not only will it not open there, if it bombs in places like New York and Los Angeles (not exactly religion-friendly environs), it'll never see the light of day elsewhere. Our guess is that the South will be 'Saved' from having to endure this flick."

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# CATHOLIC DEMOCRATS REBUKE BISHOPS

Forty-eight Democratic congressmen have signed a letter to Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Archbishop of Washington, D.C., taking issue with those bishops who have said that Catholic lawmakers should be denied Communion if they champion abortion rights.

Catholic League president William Donohue weighed in today:

“The Democratic congressmen who signed the letter, almost all of whom are pro-abortion, are admonishing the nation’s bishops not to ‘revive latent anti-Catholic prejudice’ by threatening to deny them Communion. This is a classic example of ‘blaming the victim.’ Bishops who call upon Catholic legislators to protect the rights of the unborn lest they jeopardize their Catholic standing are simply exercising their episcopal authority. To suggest that in doing so these bishops are promoting anti-Catholic bigotry is to exculpate the guilty and blame the innocent. If the issue were segregation, would these Catholic Democrats rebuke those bishops who endorsed sanctions against pro-segregation lawmakers? Would they be counseling the bishops to shut up lest they spark Catholic bashing?

“The letter also questions why the bishops have not sought sanctions against Catholic politicians who voted for the war in Iraq or who are in favor of the death penalty. In doing so, these lawmakers evince a profound ignorance: the pope’s position on the war was that it could be resorted to only ‘as the very last option,’ thus allowing room for a legitimate debate on whether that time had arrived. Regarding the death

penalty, the Holy Father has never taken an absolutist position against it; he argues that for the most part it is no longer necessary to defend society. In short, war and capital punishment, while never desirable, may sometimes be necessary. By contrast, abortion is *intrinsically evil*.

“Both the bishops and the Catholic lawmakers have a free speech right to say what they want. But if the latter seeks to cry ‘separation of church and state’ against the former, then it must be equally wrong for Catholic agents of the state to tell the bishops what to do.”

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## **PRIVATE BELIEFS, PUBLIC CHOICES: CHURCH AND STATE IMPLICATIONS**

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on Catholic politicians who claim to personally agree with a teaching of the Catholic Church, yet feel obligated not to vote that way:

“Senator John Kerry, the likely Democratic contender for the White House, addressed the issue of same-sex marriage yesterday: ‘I personally believe that marriage is between a man and a woman.’ He made it clear that his personal beliefs, which are identical to the position of the Catholic Church on this subject, would determine his public position. Put differently, Kerry does not believe that his opposition to same-sex marriage, which mirrors the teachings of the Catholic Church, creates a church and state dilemma for him.

“But when the subject switches to reproductive rights, Kerry

maintains that he cannot allow his personal opposition to abortion to determine his voting record on the subject. Why? Because then he would be imposing his Catholic beliefs on others. So as to skirt an alleged church and state dilemma, Kerry opts for abortion rights. Or so he says.

“This begs the question: Why is it acceptable for a Catholic politician to ratify the Church’s teaching on marriage but not abortion? Alternatively, why is it possible to avoid a church-state dilemma when voting to affirm the Church’s teaching on one public policy issue, but not another?

“As long as the issue is a public policy concern, and not a peculiarly sectarian interest (e.g. dietary laws), lawmakers of faith can easily reconcile their personal beliefs—grounded in an informed religious conscience—with the votes they cast. Thus, the mere invocation of a church and state dilemma does not reflexively settle the issue. What may be at play is pure politics, having nothing to do with any alleged constitutional question.”

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## **AIR                      AMERICA                      BASHES CATHOLICISM**

In today’s New York *Daily News*, there is an article by Michael Goodwin that is critical of Air America, the liberal radio venture. Goodwin says that on May 10, various hosts took the opportunity to slam Catholicism.

Louis Giovino, the Catholic League’s director of



communications, spoke to Goodwin today to learn more about the Catholic-bashing remarks. He learned of a flip comment comparing the “pulling out” of American troops from Iraq to the Catholic Church’s teaching on pre-marital sex; this was made on both the “Morning Sedition” and the “Unfiltered” shows. In the same vein, on “Morning Sedition” it was said that “the Catholic Church has secretly been encouraging oral sex for years.” Al Franken chimed in by imitating a priest giving Communion to a pedophile priest, saying, “Body of Christ,” while denying a pro-abortion politician the Host.

Here’s how Catholic League president William Donohue saw it:

“Having recently discussed Catholicism on Air America with Janeane Garofalo and Sam Seder, I was unhappy to learn that the tenor of my conversation was not duplicated on the programming that aired Monday. I had my light moments with Garofalo and Seder, but they were always good humored and never insulting. Not so for some of the other hosts.

“Cracking jokes about Catholicism and sex is a staple in the world of comedy, and many are unobjectionable; there is a difference between good old-fashioned American humor and a cheap shot. But when it comes to the Eucharist, the fun stops. Now it may be that those who are not Catholic are unaware that such jokes are, by definition, highly offensive. Nonetheless, they are obligated to become more sensitive.

“If it is to succeed, Air America will have to capture the attention of the 25 percent of Americans who are Catholic. They won’t be able to do this if they persist in bashing them.”

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# BISHOPS BEWARE OF LAY CLERICALISM

Several leading newspapers ran a story today on a dispute that has emerged between Anne Burke, interim chairman of the National Review Board, and some bishops over the authority and longevity of the panel. Burke, who said she will resign from the panel at the end of June, maintains that the bishops have “manipulated” the group by seeking to block further implementation of another round of diocesan audits. But some bishops have alleged that the panel is inappropriately expanding its autonomy; others object to imputations of ill motive.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“The National Review Board’s audit of the dioceses, and the John Jay Report that was issued on priestly sexual abuse, were done in compliance with the ‘Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People’ that was authorized by the bishops in 2002. Most fair-minded Catholics agree that both entities did a commendable job. The question now, however, is whether there is an end line to this process, or whether the National Review Board will be instituted in perpetuity.

“It has been firmly established that the majority of cases involved in the scandal took place more than two decades ago. A consensus also exists regarding the condition of the seminaries: beginning over a decade ago, serious steps were taken in most dioceses to improve the seminaries. In other words, while no one maintains that progress can’t be made, it is a mistake to suggest that the problems that came to light

in recent times are still with us to the same extent.

“Therefore, the bishops are right to be wary of any attempt on the part of laypersons to institutionalize their authority. The sociological literature on organizational behavior is replete with case examples of committees that seek to drop anchor once the assigned task has been completed. More to the point, there is nothing in the ‘Charter’ that gives the National Review Board any degree of permanence. In short, the clericalism that helped to create the scandal will not be corrected by adopting a lay clerical bureaucracy.”

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## **CATHOLIC POLITICIANS AND ABORTION**

New Jersey Governor James McGreevey announced yesterday that he would no longer receive Holy Communion at Mass.

McGreevey’s decision follows comments made by Archbishop John Myers of Newark that Catholic elected officials who support abortion rights should not present themselves for Communion. In addition, Bishop John Smith of Trenton has explicitly criticized McGreevey for his record on abortion, and Bishop Joseph Galante of Camden has said he would not give the governor Communion because McGreevey did not receive an annulment of his first marriage before remarrying.

Here’s how Catholic League president William Donohue sees it:

“The Catholic League takes no position on the question of whether a bishop ought to deny Holy Communion to a Catholic public official who supports abortion rights; it is none of our business. But we do support the right of any bishop to do

so if he wishes. And we take great umbrage at those Catholic politicians who continually misrepresent Church teachings on this and related issues.

“McGreevey did the right thing by saying he would no longer receive Communion. But he was wrong to say, ‘I believe it’s a false choice in America between one’s faith and constitutional obligation.’ It is the dichotomy he presents that is false. Indeed, it’s pure propaganda.

“There is nothing inconsistent about a person of faith, in an elected position, voting on a public issue in a way that conforms to the teachings of his religion. In fact, Catholics like John Kerry, Protestants like Hillary Clinton and Jews like Joseph Lieberman do so all the time: all of them vote to prohibit murder, theft and rape. Just because Christians and Jews believe something is sinful doesn’t necessarily mean they shouldn’t also declare it to be illegal. After all, no one is proposing that we make all Americans abstain from eating meat during Lent on Fridays, or prohibit the eating of pork. The issue is whether the law should protect the unborn. That’s not a religious issue, it’s a matter of Biology 101.”

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