

HIGH COURT UPHOLDS PRISONERS' RIGHTS

In a unanimous decision, the U.S. Supreme Court today upheld the religious liberty rights of prisoners. Catholic League president William Donohue applauded the ruling:

"The Catholic League frequently receives complaints from Catholic prisoners who maintain that their religious-liberty rights have been violated. We probe each case separately seeking to verify the authenticity of the complaint. In some cases, we have been successful in restoring rights that have been abridged. In other cases, we have determined that the complaint is without merit. And there are times when we have not been able to decide whether it is the inmate or the warden who is spinning the truth. In any event, we applaud this decision by the Supreme Court, not simply because it underscores prisoners' First Amendment rights, but because it sustains a larger issue—the issue of religious liberty in general.

"In today's ruling, the high court overturned the Sixth Circuit's decision to nix the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). This law is an important piece of federal legislation designed to protect religious rights from being invalidated by a distorted interpretation of the so-called establishment clause of the First Amendment. Had RLUIPA been declared unconstitutional, much more than prisoners' rights would have been jeopardized. [RLUIPA was passed in 2000 after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). Both RLUIPA and RFRA speak to the issue of whether there is a compelling state interest in denying a religious exemption; the high court said the Congress overreached its authority in passing RFRA.]

“As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, RLUIPA was not written ‘to elevate accommodation of religious observances over an institution’s need to maintain order and safety.’ Moreover, by overturning the Sixth Circuit’s decision, the high court rejected the notion that RLUIPA gives religious prisoners ‘a preferred status in the prison community.’ It does nothing of the sort—it merely secures their right to religious liberty.”

BILL DONOHUE’S LETTER TO SUMNER REDSTONE

Mr. Sumner Redstone

CEO, Viacom

1515 Broadway

New York, New York 10036-5794

Dear Mr. Redstone:

“Mother F—king Teresa.” [In the letter, the full word was spelled.] That’s what Showtime’s Penn and Teller called Mother Teresa on shows that aired May 23, 24 and 27. From beginning to end, the episode, “Holier Than Thou,” derided Mother Teresa, her Missionaries of Charity nuns and the Catholic Church. This was not humor—not even irreverent humor. It was hate speech.

Nothing I have seen in 12 years as president of the Catholic League has been this bad. And it occurred on your watch. Therefore, while you no doubt did not conceive this episode, it is your responsibility to hold those who did accountable. You can begin with the producer* who lied to me last October:

she asked me to appear on the show, which I agreed to do, saying it would not be an attack on Mother Teresa; Showtime was simply interested, she said, in showing "both sides." You may also want to consult with Matthew Blank, who, after all, should know something about this hit job on Catholicism.

The film crew came to my office on October 27, 2004. They were quite professional. One of the men read questions that were prepared for him, and none was offensive. When it was over, any concerns I had were relieved. But not for long: a few weeks later, the producer called to say that there were technical difficulties with the tape that they shot and therefore they wanted to do it again. About the same time, I was contacted by someone (whose name will remain anonymous) who told me that he knew from the inside that Showtime was going to hammer Mother Teresa. So I declined the request to do it over again.

The producer lied—again. As we now know, there was nothing wrong with the tape. But there is something wrong with her, and with Viacom.

If you choose to do nothing about this, that is your choice. But believe me, Mr. Redstone, if that is your decision, you are making a big mistake. I will not let go of this issue. Already, I have sent an excerpt of this show to hundreds of influential persons across the nation, including the bishops of every diocese. This is just the beginning. But it could also be the end: If you decide to forthrightly address this issue, I will be fair, and would certainly agree to discuss this with anyone on your staff.

***Update:** On July 18, the producer called Bill Donohue to apologize for the show. She was the person who wrote the questions that were asked of Donohue by the technical crew that did the actual interview (none of which, Donohue said, were inappropriate). She had nothing to do with the editing of the Penn and Teller show. The producer said that a

decision has been made to never again show the particular episode we protested.

Donohue welcomed her call, found her to be sincere, and accepted her apology; he also was persuaded that she had legitimate reasons for wanting to tape the show a second time. He is still waiting to hear from someone at Viacom, CBS or Showtime, and thus does not consider this matter closed.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE PRESS CONFERENCE

On May 26, the Catholic League will hold a press conference at 1:30 p.m. outside the Marriott Marquis Hotel on Broadway and 46th Street in New York City. The press conference will address the vile assault on Mother Teresa that Showtime aired this week in its "Holier Than Thou" episode of Penn and Teller; Showtime is owned by Viacom.

The timing and venue of the press conference is intentional: at 2:00 p.m., the 2005 Annual Meeting of Stockholders of Viacom will begin.

Catholic League president William Donohue wrote a news release today that explains the seriousness of this issue. A tape of select portions of this Nazi-like assault on Catholicism, and on the person the show calls "Mother F-king Teresa," will be sent to many interested parties throughout the nation, including the bishops of every diocese in the United States.

Donohue, who will be joined by some Catholic League staff members, will answer any questions following a few remarks. Copies of today's Catholic League news release on this

subject, "Mother F-king Teresa-Courtesy of Viacom," will be distributed to Viacom shareholders as they enter the hotel. We have notified the police of this event.

"MOTHER F-KING TERESA" COURTESY OF VIACOM

Catholic League president William Donohue wrote the following today:

"In the 12 years that I have been president of the Catholic League, I have never witnessed a more vicious attack on Catholicism than what appeared this week on the Showtime program, 'Penn and Teller.' The episode, 'Holier Than Thou,' was a frontal assault on Mother Teresa and her order of nuns, Missionaries of Charity (as well as Gandhi and the Dali Lama).

"Like most Americans, I like parodies and have no problem, per se, with irreverent humor. But when humor becomes insult, that is a different story. And that is what happens here: comedy quickly morphs to vitriol. Indeed, as the show progresses, the level of anger becomes palpable and the degree of distortion becomes mindboggling. This is no comedy—it is Nazi propaganda right out of the Leni Riefenstahl school of filmmaking.

"The Mother Teresa that the world has come to love and revere is made to look like a cruel, exploitative, self-serving nun who ripped off the poor. We are told that Mother Teresa intentionally let the poor suffer, providing neither beds nor bathroom facilities. 'She had the f-king coin and pissed it away on nunneries,' says Penn. As for the nuns who worked with Mother Teresa, they are referred to as 'f-king c-ts.'

“It does not bother me when they call me ‘Catholic Boy’ on the show (though the term ‘Jew Boy’ would never cross their lips), nor does it concern me when they talk about ‘f—kers like Bill Donohue [who] only see good in her.’ But when they mock the Catholic Church’s teaching on the meaning of suffering, and when they say of the poor that ‘They had to suffer so that Mother F—king Teresa could be enlightened,’ then they are behaving like monsters.

“We will mail a tape of select portions of this broadcast to many interested parties, including the bishops. And we will hold a press conference tomorrow outside the hotel where Viacom is holding its annual stockholders meeting. They haven’t heard the end of this yet.”

STEM CELL BILL SKIRTS REAL ISSUE

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the passage yesterday of a House bill authorizing an expansion of federal funds for new embryonic stem cell research:

“Those who voted for the bill sponsored by Reps. Mike Castle and Diana DeGette are quick to emphasize that the legislation is tightly drawn: it will only affect some human embryos that would have been discarded had the donor couple not consented to having them used for research. Sounds reasonable. Embryos are not being created for the purpose of destroying them (which is what happens in stem cell research); the embryos would have been discarded anyway; written permission must be given by the donor couple; and some who are ill may be helped enormously by such research.

“So what’s wrong with the bill? What is wrong is that this piece of legislation allows lawmakers to once again skirt the only issue that really matters—the moral status of the human embryo. If the human embryo is nascent life, a self-directing organism that has the potential to develop into a full-grown person, then it is morally outrageous for anyone to kill it. If this is not true, then why are those who voted for the Castle-DeGette bill not taking a cavalier attitude? Why are they emphasizing that the bill is tightly written? In short, what is the source of their caution, if human life is not at stake? If they can’t answer this, then there is something terribly frightening at work.

“We went down this road before when Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun said it was not the job of the high court to decide the question of when life begins. But, in fact, in legalizing abortion, Blackmun and his six colleagues made it their job to declare children in their mother’s womb to be less than human. That is why it is imperative to get all federal lawmakers to state with precision their understanding of when life begins. Until this is done, all stem cell bills should be tabled.”

LOS ANGELES TIMES WRITER SPEWS HATE

Catholic League president William Donohue wrote the following news release in response to columnist Robert Scheer’s latest piece:

“In today’s article, *Los Angeles Times* op-ed page writer Robert Scheer manages to mangle the facts and distort the

truth about both the Catholic Church and homosexuals. He does so because he is full of hate.

"He dubs the Catholic Church 'one of the most sexually repressed institutions in human history' that is responsible for a 'horrific drumbeat of child molestation revelations' led by a new pope who is 'a longtime leader of vicious church attacks on 'evil' gays'; Pope Benedict XVI is also accused of scapegoating the media. Scheer is wrong on all counts.

"It is not the Catholic Church's emphasis on sexual reticence that gave us the scandal, it was morally delinquent priests who jettisoned the Church's teachings on sexuality. The 'drumbeat of child molestation revelations' is pure myth: 81 percent of the victims were male—the majority being postpubescent—and 100 percent of the victimizers were male, thus making this a homosexual scandal (not a pedophilia scandal). But don't look for Scheer to mention this: He will protect gays at all costs and he will slander the Catholic Church at any expense.

"The pope never called gays 'evil' and Scheer knows it. What the pope said when he was a cardinal is that homosexual behavior is 'intrinsically evil,' thus reiterating Church teaching. So what? This is hardly a unique position: None of the world's religions—Christianity, Judaism, Islam (as well as the Eastern religions)—accepts homosexuality. And who is Scheer, a non-Catholic, to stick his nose into internal religious matters anyway?

"Not only has the pope not scapegoated the media, but as recently as Good Friday he drew attention to the 'filth there is in the Church, and even among those who, in the priesthood, ought to belong entirely' to God. Now if only the *Los Angeles Times* would rid itself of its own rot."

GEORGE SOROS BASHES CATHOLICS

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the slanderous attack by MoveOn.org against Catholics:

“The PAC arm of MoveOn.org, the Internet-based organization funded by George Soros, made a despicable statement on its website yesterday against the pope and American Roman Catholics (it has since been removed). As part of its campaign protesting Republican efforts to change the filibuster rules governing federal court appointees, MoveOnPac.org posted a picture of a smiling Pope Benedict XVI holding a gavel outside the U.S. Supreme Court. Above the picture was the following inscription:

God Already has a Job....

He does not need one on the Supreme Court

Protect the Supreme Court Rules

“So this is the way George Soros operates. Of all the anti-Catholic canards ever expounded in American history, none is more infamous than the one that accuses the Vatican of steering U.S. public policy. And this is exactly what Soros is doing now. Simply because Catholics and Protestants have come together to protest *de facto* discrimination against Christian pro-life judges by some Democrats, Soros thinks he has a right to fan the flames of anti-Catholic bigotry.

“When I joined with evangelicals last month in the ‘Justice Sunday’ rally, a reporter asked me why I would join hands with some who have expressed sharp disagreement with Catholicism.

I said as long as the tone is civil and the discord is confined to theological matters, I have no problem forging an alliance in the culture war. Indeed, the latest attack by Soros shows that my decision to participate in 'Justice Sunday' was the right one. It is not evangelicals who worry Catholics—it is fat-cat, left-wing bigots like George Soros who concern us.”

WHY WE WILL NOT SUE SAN FRANCISCO

Catholic League president William Donohue explained today why the Catholic League has decided not to sue the city of San Francisco:

“On May 10, the San Francisco board of supervisors unanimously passed a gag rule that violates the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech. Aaron Peskin, one of the board members who advocates banning free speech, spoke for the other 10 censors when he said, ‘The intent of this resolution is to make a clear statement that discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, religion, color, ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, weight, height or place of birth will not be tolerated in San Francisco city government.’ As the *San Francisco Chronicle* said on May 11, the wording of the resolution is targeted at speech.

“On May 15, the gag rule was violated. During the Bay to Breakers footrace in San Francisco, there were several runners dressed as the pope. One of the ‘Holy Fathers,’ as the *San Francisco Chronicle* put it, ‘lifted what looked like a bottle of Bud between the bosoms of two female freak dancers.’ One

of the pope's guards said of the dancer dressed as a Catholic schoolgirl, 'She puts the Ho in Holy.'

"The Catholic League could sue the city of San Francisco over this incident. All we would have to do is cite the city's newly passed censorship ordinance, and then maintain that the 'pope' incident qualifies as religious harassment. And we wouldn't have to worry about the ACLU: it has said nothing about the attempt to muzzle free speech in the land of anything goes (the fact that many men ran naked in the race is what we would expect from San Francisco). But unlike the left-wing fascists who run the city, we at the Catholic League believe in free speech. Which is why we will not legally protest this outburst of anti-Catholic bigotry."

GAYS TO PROTEST AT MASS

On May 15, Pentecost Sunday, a group of radical gay activists plan to enter various Catholic churches across the nation during Mass to stage a protest. The group, Rainbow Sash, has done this in the past and is planning to do so again this Sunday.

They have instructed their members to put the rainbow sash over their left shoulder and pin it to their right hip while the priest is processing to the altar. They are then told to go to Holy Communion and, if refused, to return to their seats in the pew and stand while everyone else is kneeling. The sash, they readily admit, is worn as a symbol of protest against the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“Last year, Cardinal McCarrick of Washington, D.C. and Cardinal George of Chicago banned Rainbow Sash members from receiving the Eucharist. Cardinal Mahony of Los Angeles, Archbishop Flynn of St. Paul and Minneapolis and Bishop Clark of Rochester, New York did not ban them. This year Archbishop Flynn has told Rainbow Sash that they will be banned. He explicitly said that ‘the Vatican has communicated to me that it does indeed consider the wearing of the Rainbow Sash during reception of Communion to be unacceptable, a directive I believe all Bishops will adhere to.’

“This year, Rainbow Sash has upped the ante. In its May 2 press release, it said that the purpose of their presence is to ‘counter the lies that Pope Benedict XVI is promoting about our community’; it also said that to many gays and lesbians the new pope is an ‘aggressive homophobe.’

“By calling the pope a liar and a homophobe, Rainbow Sash has finally taken off its mask. We look for them to get what they want—to be denied Communion. We also hope the cops are standing by. To exploit the Mass for political purposes is obscene, but it is what we have come to expect from the likes of Rainbow Sash.”

ALASKA RIGHT TO LIFE BECOMES INTRUSIVE

For the past two years, a non-Catholic pro-life group, Alaska Right to Life, has become increasingly critical of Providence Alaska Medical Center, a Catholic hospital that is under the tutelage of Anchorage Archbishop Roger Schwietz; it has also become quite critical of the archbishop. Alaska Right to Life

contends that Providence permits abortions, something the hospital and the archbishop deny.

In 2003, when Archbishop Schwietz was told by Alaska Right to Life that a procedure called early induction of labor was being performed at Providence, and that it was a form of abortion, he immediately declared a halt to it. After he concluded that Catholic ethical principles were not being compromised, he lifted the moratorium. He then asked officials at Providence to work with the National Catholic Bioethics Center to make sure that its guidelines were air tight. The Catholic community was satisfied, but it did nothing to satisfy Alaska Right to Life.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“It is patently untrue, and grossly unfair, to say that Providence Alaska Medical Center performs abortions and that Archbishop Roger Schwietz approves of them. To his credit, Archbishop Schwietz sought the counsel of Dr. John Haas, one of the nation’s leading Catholic bioethicists; he is a person I know and trust. Dr. Haas helped the hospital revise its guidelines, which are constantly being updated, so that there would never be any loopholes.

“Alaska Right to Life stands for a noble cause, but its intrusive manner—lecturing the Catholic community on what the Catholic Catechism says—has turned off the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Daughters of America. Add the Catholic League to this list. The final straw for us was the April edition of its newsletter wherein it asked its members to appeal to the Vatican to intervene in this issue. This crosses the line—a secular group like Alaska Right to Life ought to learn to mind its own business. Its reputation as a meddler does not help its cause.”