

VERMONT RESORT'S IDEA OF HUMOR

On February 28, J.J. Toland, communications manager for Vermont's Sugarbush Resort, sent an e-mail to his mailing list that offended many Catholics. Titled "March Snow is on the Way," Toland's letter ended with remarks about current skiing conditions, things to do, etc. But it opened with the following two paragraphs:

There are a lot of downsides to attending Catholic school. For starters, there's a dress code. Being made to wear a tie with a shirt whose top button creates a hermetic seal around the wearer's neck is the equivalent of water boarding to a teenager. Secondly, there is the discipline. Slightings to authority, real or perceived, were not met with anything as passé as a ruler to the wrist. (The Augustinian Order prides itself on creativity.) Rather, punishments skewed to the psychological. Evildoers were often made to write out in reverse entire textbook chapters or gawk at an analog clock for hours on end. (If you think your life is moving too fast, just try staring at a sweep hand for two hours.)

But the most chafing of all torments was their masochistic use of biblically inspired maxims. Try denying a crime? You got, "A leopard cannot change its spots. "Bomb a test?" "Don't you know knowledge is power," was hissed as the paper was spiked down football-like on your desk. The most excruciating platitude, however, was the one that was taunted during the clock-staring showdowns. "Good things come to those who wait, Mr. Toland. And wait you will."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue addressed this issue as follows:

"At one level, this kind of screed may be dismissed as

juvenile scribble. But what makes it offensive is a) its wholly gratuitous nature and b) the fact that a noted business establishment would post these remarks in an e-mail. In any event, we are contacting the owners of Sugarbush Resort, the Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce (listed as a 'Friend' of the company), the six members of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce's Executive Staff, the Diocese of Burlington and many media outlets in Vermont. We believe in free advertisement."

ADDENDUM: Within minutes of the Catholic League sending out this news release, both J.J. Toland and Win Smith, Sugarbush's owner and president, phoned the league to extend their apologies. We accepted their apologies and consider this matter closed.

PREPPING FOR THE "TITANIC FRAUD"

Catholic League president Bill Donohue addressed James Cameron's documentary on Jesus' tomb that will be shown on the Discovery Channel this Sunday:

"Before watching 'The Lost Tomb of Jesus,' we urge viewers to learn how Christianity has been treated by members of the cultural elite during the Lenten season in recent times. By clicking [here](#), it is possible to access a short review of books, articles and television programs that have appeared since 1990 on this subject. Keep in mind that no other religion is subjected to such intense scrutiny as Christianity. Moreover, it is not a matter of coincidence that the chosen time for such questioning is almost always during Lent, right in time for Easter.

“Prior to 1990, there is no evidence that Christianity was microexamined the way it is today. To be sure, the Jesus Seminar was founded in 1985, and its contributors are partly responsible for the current practice of sowing seeds of doubt about Christianity during Lent. Three years later, Martin Scorsese gave us ‘The Last Temptation of Christ,’ but it wasn’t until the 90s that Christianity was routinely put on the firing line.

“Just as every Christmas season Christians have to fight attempts to neuter the meaning of Christmas, every Lenten season Christians have to endure another round of wild-eyed speculation about their religion. None of this is by accident—it’s all by design. The time has come for Catholics and Protestants to respond to the assaults that take place during Lent with the same vigor they have shown in recent years fighting the cultural fascists at Christmastime. They should keep in mind, however, that the ones responsible for this onslaught tend to come from inside their own ranks. There aren’t enough non-Christians to pull this off by themselves.

“If the professional religious skeptics don’t have an animus against Christianity, they can prove me wrong by subjecting Islam to the same kind of relentless and intrusive questioning during Ramadan. One piece of advice: know how to dial 911.”