

DEMOCRATS REACH OUT TO CATHOLICS

Two evangelical leaders, Rev. Jim Wallis and Rev. Tony Campolo, have pledged to reach out to Catholics and evangelicals by pushing the Democratic Party to change its Party Platform on abortion. Wallis told ABC News that "Abortion reduction should be a central Democratic Party plank in this election." But he also stressed that no legal restrictions need to be embraced.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

"Rev. Wallis and Rev. Campolo are to be commended for at least triggering a discussion within the Democratic Party on the subject of abortion. But by explicitly ruling out any legal restrictions, practicing Catholics are not likely to support them.

"After the Democrats lost in 2004, Paul Begala and James Carville wrote a book, *Take It Back*, admonishing their fellow Democrats to oppose partial-birth abortion and support parental consent laws. Such policy modifications were necessary, they said, because the public wants abortion restrictions. Evidently, Wallis and Campolo disagree.

"Two months after the Democrats lost in 2004, Sen. Hillary Clinton angered a pro-abortion crowd when she said abortion was a 'sad, even tragic, choice.' They didn't want to hear it then, and they don't want to hear it now. The most they are willing to accept is what Howard Dean told them at the time: no need to change positions, but 'we can change our vocabulary.' There's the rub: This is the politics of deceit.

"Wallis and Campolo have a bigger problem this time around. The presumptive Democratic nominee, Sen. Barack Obama, has voted to legalize selective infanticide. So how can the

Democrats amend their Party Platform on abortion and reach out to Catholics when their man—who says he supports universal health care—thinks it is okay for a baby who survives an abortion to be denied medical treatment? Sorry, but it will take more than linguistic acrobatics to persuade the faithful. They should have listened to Begala and Carville.”

SALLY QUINN’S NARCISSISM

The funeral Mass for Tim Russert was held at Trinity Church in Georgetown a week ago today. Attending was Sally Quinn. She is a *Washington Post* journalist and founder and co-moderator of On Faith, a *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* blog.

Quinn, who was an atheist most of her life, posted on Monday why she decided to go to Communion: “Last Wednesday I was determined to take it [the Eucharist] for Tim, transubstantiation notwithstanding. I’m so glad I did. It made me feel closer to him. And it was worth it just to imagine how he would have loved it.”

Quinn also admitted the following: “I had only taken communion once in my life, at an evangelical church. It was soon after I had started ‘On Faith’ and I wanted to see what it was like. Oddly I had a slightly nauseated sensation after I took it, knowing that in some way it represented the body and blood of Jesus Christ.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue had this to say:

“Just reading what Sally Quinn said is enough to give any Christian, especially Catholics, more than a ‘slightly nauseating sensation.’ In her privileged world, life is all about experiences and feelings.

“Moreover, Quinn’s statement not only reeks of narcissism, it shows a profound disrespect for Catholics and the beliefs they hold dear. If she really wanted to get close to Tim Russert, she should have found a way to do so without trampling on Catholic sensibilities. Like praying for him—that’s what Catholics do.”

LGBT PRAYER SERVICE NIXED IN MINNEAPOLIS

For the past several years, there has been a prayer service for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Catholics at St. Joan of Arc in Minneapolis prior to the annual Twin Cities Pride Celebration. But not this year. The prayer service, scheduled for tonight, will instead be a “peace” service; there will be no mention of rights for the LGBT community. St. Paul and Minneapolis Archbishop John Nienstedt recently made the policy change.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue supports Archbishop Nienstedt:

“The annual prayer service at St. Joan of Arc was never held to honor gays as equal members of the Catholic community, rather it was held to celebrate the LGBT lifestyle. That’s not a small difference. The Catholic Church welcomes people of all sexual orientations, but it is not obligated to celebrate sodomy anymore than it is obligated to celebrate fornication.

“The attacks on Archbishop Nienstedt are vicious. One local gay Catholic leader, David McCaffrey, has said that Nienstedt is guilty of ‘yet another volley of dehumanizing spiritual violence directed at LGBT persons and their families under

[his] reign of homophobic hatred.’ This is a remarkable comment given that Nienstedt didn’t take over as archbishop until last month.

“Even before Nienstedt took command of the archdiocese, radical gay Catholics were gunning for him. Just over a week before he assumed his new duties, he was blasted by Catholic Rainbow Parents for giving ‘license to hatred and violence against all of us.’ Lucky for people like them that American libel laws are not as loose as they are in England, otherwise they could have been prosecuted.

“It would be so refreshing if gay pride celebrations weren’t so different from other heritage celebrations. Sadly, they are. In New York City, the organizers of this weekend’s Heritage of Pride parade have instructed participating groups that ‘New York State has a law against public nudity below the waist and the police enforce it.’ Why gays are the only group that has to be told to keep their pants on while marching is revealing.”

COMEDIANS GIVE MUSLIMS A PASS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments today on the most glaring double standard among comedians:

“Lewis Black’s new book, *Me of Little Faith*, has a chapter titled, ‘Islam. All I’m Saying Is, I Got Nothing to Say.’ The chapter is three paragraphs long, beginning with the following: ‘I have nothing to say. Nothing. And let’s leave it that way.’ But Black has plenty to say about Orthodox Jews, the Catholic Church and Mormonism. Indeed, his references are replete with vulgarities.

“Black’s book was endorsed by George Carlin, who died yesterday. Carlin trashed religion for decades, but like Black he had no stomach for bashing Islam. Indeed, he justified Muslim violence. He readily admitted that ‘when all those beheadings started in Iraq it didn’t bother me.’ In fact, the beheadings were easy to explain: ‘You strap on a gun and go struttin’ around some other men’s country you better be ready for some action Jack.’ Catholics, however, were never the victims in Carlin’s playbook—they were always the victimizers.

“Bill Maher takes it a step further by understanding the difference between Muslim violence and Islam: ‘I don’t think the hate that comes from the Muslim world comes from religion.’ But don’t look for Maher to cut Catholics a break when they act irresponsibly—their behavior is *caused* by their religion.

“Most sickening of all is the spectacle of pundits congratulating these comedians for ‘pushing the envelope’ and being countercultural. There is nothing courageous about pushing buttons that everyone knows are safe.”

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS FOR GITMO MUSLIMS?

The McClatchy Company, which owns 30 daily newspapers, just completed a five-day series on the living conditions of suspected terrorists held at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; the reporting was based on an eight-month investigation. It painted a negative picture.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue took issue with the series:

“Among the things that troubles McClatchy is ‘the Americans’ ignorance of Islamic customs and a pattern of interrupting prayers, shaving off prisoners’ beards and searching their copies of the Quran.’ Now this complaint would strike us as legitimate if it were coming from a source that was known for its sensitivity to religious liberty issues. But such is not the case. All of the following are from McClatchy outlets.

“A few months ago, a *Miami Herald* editorial opined against a proposal that would rid the Florida Constitution of its bigoted Blaine amendment provision barring public monies to religious schools. Five years earlier, in the *Star Telegram*, one of its feature writers feared that if the Supreme Court allowed vouchers, it would ‘demolish whatever is left of the wall separating church and state.’

“In April, an editorial in the *Sun-Sentinel* said that a proposed ‘I Believe’ license plate ‘thoroughly demolishes the church-state wall.’ Last year, an editorial in the *Roanoke Times* cited church and state concerns when it commented that ‘Candidates prostrate themselves before the terrestrial thrones of Christian leaders seeking their blessings.’ This same newspaper ran an editorial in 2006 on ‘Christian Bullies’ fighting the ‘War on Christmas.’ In the same year, the *Buffalo News* called the Catholic League ‘fascist’ for fighting back.

“So when it comes to Christians, McClatchy trembles over the collapsing church and state wall. But when it comes to suspected Muslim terrorists, it wants to make sure their prayers aren’t uninterrupted. Never mind that their prayer books—and the prayer rugs they kneel on—are paid for by the American taxpayers. Just don’t interrupt them!”

SEN. LEAHY STALLS ON JUDGE CONRAD

Today in Washington, Sen. Arlen Specter, the ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, will lead a press conference urging Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Sen. Patrick Leahy to schedule a hearing on the nomination of Judge Robert Conrad to the Fourth Circuit.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue explains why he supports Sen. Specter in this effort:

“On May 21, I wrote to Sen. Leahy imploring him to schedule a vote on the merits of Judge Conrad’s qualifications for a seat on the Fourth Circuit. No one from his staff has replied.

“My reason for writing has to do with the entirely spurious accusation against Judge Conrad that he is anti-Catholic. It is not anti-Catholic for a Catholic, such as Judge Conrad, to merely criticize another Catholic. His criticism of Sister Helen Prejean in 1999 was hardly a bigoted attack—it was an opinion, fairly expressed, about her depiction of the clergy. We at the Catholic League have long distinguished between disagreement and disparagement about matters Catholic; only the latter is a problem. Believe me, if we thought that Judge Conrad had crossed the line, we would have said so long ago. But he has not.

“Sen. Leahy should be particularly careful when he buys into the charge that Judge Conrad is anti-Catholic. Just last year when he was asked to comment on Pope Benedict XVI’s criticism of Brazilian Catholic pro-abortion politicians, the Catholic Democrat said, ‘I’ve always thought also that those bishops and archbishops who for decades hid pederasts and are now being protected by the Vatican should be indicted.’

“This is not only an odd segue to the issue Sen. Leahy was

asked to address, it reveals an ugly animus. Yet I hasten to add that the Catholic League did not charge Sen. Leahy with being anti-Catholic for making this untoward remark. Ergo, he should apply our standard to Judge Conrad. It's time to give Judge Conrad the hearing he deserves."

HOLOCAUST-SURVIVING JEWS THANK POPE

Today, Pope Benedict XVI is welcoming a group of Jewish Holocaust survivors. Arranged by the Pave the Way Foundation, the group will personally thank the pope for the Catholic Church's intervention in saving their lives in Italy during World War II.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue addressed this event today:

"Despite attempts by embittered ex-priests and seminarians, and others, to discredit Pope Pius XII's heroic efforts in rescuing Jews during the Holocaust (as many as 860,000 were saved), the evidence is mounting that Pius was a 'Righteous Gentile.' What is happening in the Vatican today is another reminder of just how great a man he was.

"October 9 marks the 50th anniversary of Pius' death. To mark this important event, the Vatican announced yesterday that a convention will be held November 6-8 to honor his work; a photo exhibit will be on display in the colonnade of St. Peter's Square from October 21-January 6. Millions of Catholics hope that eventually Pius will be beatified and then canonized. The Catholic League certainly supports this process.

“Those who disagree with this assessment have a lot of explaining to do. For example, the true test of the Catholic Church’s role in rescuing Jews was in Italy, and nowhere in Europe were more Jews saved—fully 85 percent—than in Italy. Also, the chief rabbi in Rome during the German occupation, Emilio Zolli, once said that ‘no hero in all of history was more militant, more fought against, none more heroic, than Pius XII.’ Indeed, Zolli was so moved by Pius’ work that he became a Catholic after the war, taking the pope’s name as his baptismal name.

“Finally, today’s meeting of Jewish Holocaust survivors thanking the pope for what the Church did to save their lives says it all. No amount of revisionism can change that.”

VATICAN SHOWS RON HOWARD THE GATE

A movie adaptation of Dan Brown’s book, *Angels and Demons*, is now in production; it is the prequel to the film, “The Da Vinci Code.” There are reports today that the Vatican has banned those associated with “Angels and Demons” from shooting in Catholic churches in Rome or in the Vatican itself. This is important because there are scenes in the movie that are supposed to take place in the Vatican and in two churches in Rome.

“Angels and Demons” stars Tom Hanks in his role as Robert Langdon, the symbologist. This time he is trying to unravel a plot by a secret society, the Illuminati, to blow up the Vatican during a papal conclave.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue defended the Vatican

today:

"We are delighted that Ron Howard and his Hollywood minions have been denied the opportunity to exploit the Catholic Church again. Any movie about Catholicism which draws on the specious work of Dan Brown is bound to offend Catholic sensibilities, so it was only fitting that Howard was shown the gate.

"According to Brown, his latest effort purports to reveal 'a lot of inside information about the Vatican' that is 'unflattering.' Right away we know he's playing fast and loose: How would he have access to 'inside information about the Vatican'? Moreover, it goes without saying that anything he writes about the Catholic Church would be 'unflattering,' so much so that it explains his defensiveness. 'It's certainly not an anti-Catholic book,' he says. Could it be pro-Catholic?

"Just as revealing is Brown's comment that 'Separating Illuminati fact from fiction can be difficult on account of the massive quantities of misinformation that has been generated about the brotherhood.' This is vintage Brown: mix fact and fiction together, stir well, and throw the stew on the screen. Then hope the gullible bite.

"In any event, Howard will now have to drop a few dimes to find some other churches to rip off."

BISHOPS RESTATE PREEMINENCE OF LIFE ISSUES

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops today reaffirmed its rejection of embryonic stem cell research and

human cloning.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue called on Catholics to support the vote that was taken today in Florida:

“It is important for all Catholics to acknowledge that the first and most important issues affecting public policy are the life issues. To maintain that other issues are the moral equivalent of matters like abortion, embryonic stem cell research, human cloning and direct euthanasia, is to denigrate the privileged position that the life issues have in Catholic teachings.

“The bishops referred to the harvesting of embryonic stem cells as ‘the deliberate killing of innocent human beings, a gravely immoral act.’ They also said that ‘Human cloning is intrinsically evil,’ something which ‘shows disrespect for human life in the very act of generating it.’ These words were chosen carefully, and they reflect the sentiments of Pope Benedict XVI who recently said abortion was a ‘non-negotiable’ issue for Catholics.

“The life issues, then, are of preeminent importance to Catholics. To discuss social justice, for example, while being dismissive of the life issues is profoundly un-Catholic.

DEMOCRACY THREATENED IN FLORIDA

In November, Floridians are slated to vote on two amendments to their state’s constitution that would, if approved, allow for school vouchers. But today an array of groups filed suit asking the Second Circuit to block the vote.

Commenting on this is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

"The Florida Constitution contains provisions of what was once known as the Blaine Amendment. Those provisions, which also appear in the constitutions of 36 other states, were written to prohibit Catholic schools in the 19th century from receiving state aid. Ironically, Catholic schools were founded in direct response to the anti-Catholic bigotry found in the public schools. No matter, when parochial schools asked for state assistance, they were met with amendments to state constitutions that followed the lead of Senator James Blaine, a virulent anti-Catholic. It is precisely the Blaine amendment provisions to the Florida constitution that the electorate wants to vote on in November. But now the anti-religious forces want to disenfranchise them.

"The following organizations favor disenfranchising Floridians: ACLU, ADL, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and People for the American Way; various teachers unions, at the national and state level, have joined with them in filing suit.

"All of these groups have a long record of opposing religious liberty, as well as any kind of choice issue (save for killing kids in the womb). Now they are trying to stop the people from deciding what kind of education system they want.

"In the 1960s, the slogan 'Power to the People' rolled out of every radical's mouth. Now that they've aged, they've done a 180—nothing bothers them more than letting the people decide how they want to be governed. Which explains their fondness for judicial tyranny."