

# “SLATE” HIJACKS VIRGIN MARY IN MUSLIM STORY

On June 10, the *Wall Street Journal* ran a story about Muslim women in France who have lost their virginity and have then elected to have their hymens surgically reattached; Muslim men expect their brides to be virgins and do not look kindly on those who are not. The next day, the *New York Times* ran a similar story. It was followed the same day by an opinion piece about the two news stories written by *Slate* correspondent William Saletan.

On the home page of *Slate*'s website, Saletan's column is flagged by a picture of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; below the photo is the inscription, "A Defense of Virginity-Restoration Surgery."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented on what happened:

"Once again, in a story that has absolutely nothing to do with Roman Catholicism, we see a gratuitous attack on Catholics. Are there not suitable Muslim photos that *Slate* could use to draw attention to Saletan's article? The fact that they didn't choose Islamic iconography suggests not a lack of interest, but will: They don't have the guts to offend Muslims."

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## WILL McCAIN AND OBAMA RESPECT

# CHURCHES?

In a major survey released this week by the Paul B. Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics at Calvin College, it was reported that 57 percent of Americans believe that religious leaders should not support political candidates during worship services.

Commenting on this today is Catholic League president Bill Donohue:

“The findings of this poll have grave implications for those running for public office. Sen. John McCain and Sen. Barack Obama should set an example by pledging never to attend a church service that is a front for a political rally. Too often, clergy have abused their office by making veiled endorsements—and in some cases explicit endorsements—of candidates for public office at a church service. Just as bad has been the practice of the candidates themselves making a pitch to the congregation from the pulpit.

“In the Henry survey, not a single demographic category could marshal majority support for the proposition that ‘Clergy should be permitted to endorse political candidates during worship services.’ The categories included the following: Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants, Latino Protestants, Black Protestants, Catholics, Latino Catholics, Other Christians, Other Faiths, Jews and Unaffiliated; subcategories were listed in some instances. Of all the groups, none had a better record of rejecting the proposition than Catholics and Jews.

“In this regard, the Catholic Church is a model for all other religions. While it is not uncommon for Protestant churches (especially African American ones) and Jewish synagogues to be used as a political forum, it is almost non-existent in the Catholic community. Moreover, unlike others, the Catholic

clergy are barred from holding public office. In 1980, Pope John Paul II mandated that all priests withdraw from electoral politics; this stricture is recognized in Canon Law.

“If McCain and Obama continue the practice of turning houses of worship into political playing fields, they should be roundly criticized for doing so.”

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## **OBAMA’S CATHOLIC ADVISORY COUNCIL: HAS IT BEEN DISSOLVED?**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments today on Sen. Barack Obama’s Catholic National Advisory Council:

“On May 2, I issued a news release calling on Sen. Obama to dissolve his Catholic National Advisory Council. My principal reason for doing so was his selection of dissident Catholics to advise him: for example, most of the public officials are so pro-abortion that they had a 100 percent NARAL record. On May 8, most members of the Advisory Council faxed me a letter defending themselves; I answered the same day taking them to task for their lame defense. But it now appears that my initial recommendation—to dissolve the group—may have been accepted.

“There is no mention anywhere on the Obama website of the Catholic National Advisory Council. On Friday, we placed three phone calls to his campaign: two to media relations and one to Mark Linton, Obama’s National Catholic Outreach Coordinator. We were told each time that someone would get back to us, but no one did. I then personally e-mailed Linton informing him of

the three phone calls, requesting that he respond to my question: 'I would like to know whether the Catholic National Advisory Council for Sen. Obama is still operative.' He has not replied.

"It would appear, then, that the group no longer exists. It is not hard to understand why. After being criticized by the Catholic League, Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City rebuked one of Obama's Catholic advisors, Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius: she was instructed not to present herself for Holy Communion (she is a rabid defender of abortion). At about the same time, radical Chicago priest Rev. Michael Pfleger bailed on Obama by withdrawing his name from the Advisory Council. Now we find that there is no listing for the group on the Obama website.

"Looks like the Obama campaign's decision to quietly drop its Advisory Council didn't work. We found out, and we've never been accused of being quiet.

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## **COOPER UNION'S IDEA OF GREAT ART**

New York's Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art is currently hosting an exhibition of student art; it began May 27 and ends June 10. Not all student contributions, however, are being shown. The school's website says, "The School of Art faculty have selected major pieces by students representing 'the best of' each discipline ranging from sculpture, graphic design and painting to video installations."

One of the selections is a series of paintings by Felipe

Baeza. In one of the them, he shows a man with his pants pulled down with a crucifix extended from his rectum. Under the painting it says, "el dia que me converti catolico," or "The day I became a Catholic." There is a similar piece which substitutes a Rosary for the crucifix; another shows a man with his pants down and an angel holding two Rosaries with a penis attached to each of them; there is also a halo hovering over a naked man with an erection.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue offered his comments today:

"Surely there is a difference between art, traditionally understood as conveying beauty, and junk. Admittedly there is so much junk that passes as art these days that the public can be forgiven if it is no longer capable of making critical distinctions. But we should expect more from the art faculty at a distinguished institution of higher education.

"That the works of this student should be deemed 'major,' representing the 'best' of the student contributions does not speak well for Cooper Union. On the other hand, I have the sneaking suspicion that these paintings made the cut precisely because they were an assault on Catholic sensibilities. No, I can't prove what the motive was, but I can be deadly certain that if even a reverential portrait of Muhammad had been offered, it would have been rejected. I hasten to add that if a reverential portrait of Jesus had been submitted, it too would have been rejected, but for entirely different reasons."