

# HERE COMES THE POPE: HERE'S WHAT THE PUNDITS WILL SAY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented today on Pope Benedict XVI's trip to the United States, which begins two weeks from tomorrow:

"Look for Pope Benedict XVI to be compared unfavorably to his predecessor, John Paul II. All of a sudden, those who had no use for Pope John Paul II will now anoint him a positive force, the purpose of which is to discredit Benedict. Here's what they will say.

"The theme will be interfaith dialogue. Unlike his predecessor, they will say, this pope has set back relations with Protestants, Jews and Muslims. He will be castigated for restating Catholic teaching on salvation and for challenging theological relativism. The green light given to the Latin Mass will be seen as another step backwards. And calling attention to the human rights deficit that marks Islam will be the subject of more aspersions. In short, he will be blamed for turning back the clock.

"Silly surveys which lump non-practicing Catholics with practicing Catholics will show that many Catholics would not resist married priests or women priests. What will not be reported is that almost none of them care one way or the other—their allegiance to Catholicism does not turn on such matters. Some will try to slam the pope for the sex abuse scandal, as if he somehow approved it (he actually used some of the most condemnatory language of anyone when he called molesting priests 'filth'). What will not be reported is the fact that for the year 2007, .01 percent of the more than 40,000 priests in the U.S. had an allegation made against them for violating someone under the age of 18 (want to compare that with public school teachers anyone?).

“Catholics should be proud that they have an intellectual heavyweight in Pope Benedict XVI, one who could run circles around his most vociferous critics.”

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## POPE STILL BEING BASHED FOR BAPTISM

Ever since Pope Benedict XVI baptized a Muslim-born journalist at the Easter Vigil, he has been highly criticized for doing so. Magdi Allam was one of seven adults baptized during the vigil, but because he has been an outspoken critic of Islamic extremism, his conversion set off a firestorm. Here's a sample:

- *“I cannot understand the Vatican's motivation. Why with preparations for dialogue underway...would the pope revive antagonism this way.” [Shelia Musaji, founding editor, The American Muslim]*
- *“What amazes me is the high profile the Vatican has given this conversion. Why couldn't he have done this in his local parish?” [Yaha Sergio Yahe Pallavicini, VP of Italian Islamic Religious Community]*
- *“The problem lies in the vindictive atmosphere surrounding the conversion ceremony.” [Palestinian journalist Khalid Amayreh]*
- *The baptism was a “deliberate and provocative act...made into a triumphalist tool for scoring points.” [Aref Ali Nayed, head of Jordan's Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre]*
- *“A new provocation for the Islamic world.” [Mohamed Yatim,*

*commentator for the Moroccan daily Attajdid]*

• *“The Vatican’s act seems unnecessarily incendiary and irresponsible.” [Calgary Herald editorial]*

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

“This kind of incredibly defensive posture underscores the need for Muslims to embrace religious liberty. People convert from Catholicism, Protestantism and Judaism every day, and no one blinks an eye. In any event, kudos to the *Jerusalem Post* for its analysis: ‘Allam was not a practicing Muslim, was educated in a Catholic school as a teenager, has been married for years to an Italian Catholic, and credits Pope Benedict for having influenced his decision...[and] he has been living under police protection for years, primarily because of his criticism of Islamic terrorism and defense of Israel—which, of course, is the real story here.’”

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## **POPE’S GIFT: SURVEY OF NON-PRACTICING CATHOLICS**

Just in time for the pope’s visit, *The Journal News* has decided to conduct an online survey of non-Catholics. The newspaper, which covers the Lower Hudson New York counties of Westchester, Rockland and Putnam, posted the following online survey on March 25 and March 26:

- *Are you a lapsed Catholic? As part of The Journal News’ coverage of Pope Benedict XVI’s visit to New York next month, we’re hoping to interview Roman Catholics who consider themselves lapsed or non-practicing on their*

views about the pope's visit. If you're willing to be interviewed please contact Ernie Garcia at [elgarcia@lohud.com](mailto:elgarcia@lohud.com)

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

"This is a gift the pope will surely cherish—knowing how ex-Catholics feel about their former religion. We'd like to return the favor and that is why we have secured the e-mails of 134 *Journal News* employees, ranging from the Publisher, Michael J. Fisch, to the Gardening & Horticultural Editor, Gayle Williams (sorry, Gayle, but someone has to be last). We are sending them the following survey:

*Protestants: Given that no religious group switches denominations more than Protestants, can you tell us what it feels like to bounce around from one contiguous neighborhood to another in search of the ideal church.*

*Jews: Given that the vast majority of Jews do not attend synagogue and that 52 percent of them intermarry, can you tell us what it feels like to be a non-Jewish Jew.*

*Muslims: Given that Muslims who convert may be murdered, can you tell us if you've at least fantasized about converting.*

"Please vet your remarks by first reporting to Ernie Garcia. We have appointed Ernie *The Journal News* liaison to the Catholic League."

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## **BIN LADEN LASHES OUT AT POPE**

According to several news reports, al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden has released a statement accusing Pope Benedict XVI of triggering a "new Crusade" against Muslims. The accusation

comes amidst the recent republishing of the Danish cartoons that inflamed Muslims in 2006; several Danish newspapers decided to rerun the cartoons in question.

Referring to the republishing of the cartoons, bin Laden said, "Your publications of these drawings—part of a new Crusade in which the pope of the Vatican had a significant role—is a confirmation from you that the war continues."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

"On February 4, 2006, the Vatican said of the Danish cartoon controversy, 'The right to freedom of thought and expression cannot entail the right to offend the religious sentiment of believers.' Five days later, I issued a news release saying, 'The decision of most mainstream media outlets not to reprint or show the controversial cartoons is the right one: the Catholic League sides with the U.S., Britain and the Vatican in denouncing the inflammatory cartoons.' I concluded by saying, 'As for Muslims offended by the cartoons, they should learn what a civilized response entails.'"

"In other words, bin Laden's latest salvo against the Vatican is wholly unwarranted. So why is he trying to drum up hatred against the pope? He knows this is Holy Week and he knows that the pope has recently embarked on a series of interfaith sessions with Muslims; he also knows that the Holy Father will be meeting with representatives of other religions—including Muslims—on April 17 in Washington D.C. As any student of terrorism will confirm, nothing scares terrorists more than the prospect of peace: If they sense that their side is prepared to engage in détente, they will seek to foment enmity.

"The latest bullying by bin Laden, then, is a sign that his grip on Muslims is slipping. Looks like it's time for him to crawl back into one of his lovely caves."

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# THE HYPOCRITES ARE BACK AT UVA

Today's issue of the University of Virginia's student paper, *The Cavalier Daily*, featured a cartoon depicting a naked man smoking a cigarette in bed. Standing beside the bed, a woman in her underwear buttons up her shirt and asks, "Come on God, be honest—Did you really get a vasectomy? I can't let Joseph find out about this." The man replies, "Well, Mary, you're F\*\*\*ed." Yesterday's paper ran a comic portraying a crucified Jesus telling jokes onstage.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue had this to say:

"The hate-mongers typically come out of the woods in the days leading up to Holy Week. Easter can't come and go without someone taking aim at Christianity. This has been a relatively tame Lent thus far. Until, that is, *The Cavalier Daily* decided to once again dip into the well of bigotry.

"In the Fall of 2006, we wrote to the paper requesting an apology for cartoons that mocked the crucifixion and indicated that the Virgin Mary had an 'Immaculately Transmitted' venereal disease. (This apology was originally denied, though eventually the vile cartoons were removed from the paper's website and a statement of regret was posted.) And now *The Cavalier Daily* has returned to its old tricks, just as we approach the holiest time of the Christian calendar.

"Even more telling of the attitude of those at the University of Virginia's paper is the hypocrisy at play. Today's issue also shows a cartoon that acknowledges that any and all depictions of the Muslim prophet Muhammed are banned. Last year, the paper's editorial board forced a cartoonist to

resign after the campus chapter of the NAACP objected to a cartoon mocking Ethiopians. And in 2005, the paper was quick to apologize to homosexuals for remarking that the crane is the 'gayest-looking of all birds.'

"It's clear that there's a double-standard at play in the offices of *The Cavalier Daily*. Tell the paper's editor to afford Christians the same consideration shown to blacks, Muslims and homosexuals."

Write to Elizabeth Mills at [editor@cavalierdaily.com](mailto:editor@cavalierdaily.com)

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## LEWIS BLACK'S SHOW GETS UGLY

Last night, Comedy Central aired the first show in a new series, "Lewis Black's Root of All Evil." Black played a judge ruling on who was more evil—the Catholic Church or Oprah Winfrey. Click [here](#) for a partial transcript.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue raised questions about it today:

"No group in the U.S. sexually molests minors more than public school teachers; their rate is estimated to be *100 times that of Catholic priests* (see the work of Dr. Charol Shakeshaft.) Moreover, the teachers unions still make it near impossible to fire a molesting teacher. Yet it wasn't the public school industry that was labeled evil by the show, it was the Catholic Church.

"Radical Muslims behead their enemies, real and contrived, terrorize non-combatants, run planes into buildings, shoot nuns in the back, kidnap and kill bishops, burn churches to

the ground, *legally* murder those who want to convert, but no one associated with Lewis Black's show has the guts to get them. So instead they rip the Catholic Church for its role during the Inquisition. And that role, if truth be told, was miniscule compared to the role of the civil authorities. Indeed, the role of the Catholic Church back then, as compared to the role of radical Muslims today, was positively angelic.

"The worst part of the show was the assault on Our Blessed Mother and Pope Benedict XVI. This is a direct quote: 'The Catholic Church is also evil because it has such a grip over the mindless masses that they'll wait in line, thousands of them in the rain for hours, just to get a glimpse of a pork rind in the shape of the Virgin Mary...God impregnated Mary. We have a whole religion based on one woman who really stuck to her story.' The pope was called 'a hypocrite in his Prada loafers and his ball gown. How can he condemn homosexuality when he dresses like he is on his way to nickel cosmo night at the Veiny Shaft Tavern?'

"The only thing connecting this wild-swinging tirade was hate."

Contact Comedy Central's President  
at [michele.ganeless@comedycentral.com](mailto:michele.ganeless@comedycentral.com)

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## **MCCAIN DENOUNCES ANTI-CATHOLICISM; CITES HAGEE'S ROLE**

It was reported over the weekend that Sen. John McCain denounced anti-Catholicism and explicitly mentioned Rev. John



Hagee's role. McCain said that "I repudiate any comments that are made, including Pastor Hagee's, if they are anti-Catholic or offensive to Catholics."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented as follows:

"Sen. McCain has done the right thing and we salute him for doing so. As far as the Catholic League is concerned, this case is closed."

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## **McCain Stands Fast on Hagee; Criticism Mounts**

Mounting criticism of Sen. John McCain's refusal to denounce Pastor John Hagee's anti-Catholicism continued yesterday. In addition to the Catholic League, several other Catholic groups criticized the Republican presidential nominee. Joining in the criticism was House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Party of Georgia, columnists, bloggers and religious websites. Tonight Bill Moyers will air a show on the controversy.

When asked about this issue yesterday, McCain said the following: "Pastor Hagee endorsed me. That does not mean I endorse everything Pastor Hagee said. All I can say is lots and lots of people endorse me. That means they embrace my ideas and positions. It does not mean I endorse them."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue disagrees with this assessment:

"Ordinarily, what McCain said would be true enough. What makes the Hagee matter different is threefold: (a) McCain actively solicited the endorsement, appearing with the minister to

accept it (b) Hagee is not simply guilty of a few throw-away lines—he has a long history of demonizing Catholicism, and (c) McCain blasted then presidential candidate George W. Bush in 2000 for not condemning Bob Jones University because of the school's anti-Catholicism (Bush eventually did), thus he has already dropped anchor on this issue.

“Fortunately for McCain, he did not shut the door and say this matter is over. But time is running out. We expect to hear a more definitive statement that explicitly rejects Hagee's anti-Catholicism. If we don't, criticism from many quarters will only escalate. It is one thing for a candidate to disagree with the Catholic position on certain public policy issues, quite another to break bread with an anti-Catholic bigot.”

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## McCain's Next Move

Catholic League president Bill Donohue issued the following remarks today regarding Sen. John McCain's ties to Pastor John Hagee:

“Now that he has secured the Republican nomination for president, and has received the endorsement of President Bush, McCain will now embark on a series of fundraising events. When he meets with Catholics, he is going to be asked about his ties to Hagee. He should also be asked whether he approves of comments like this: ‘A Godless theology of hate that no one dared try to stop for a thousand years produced a harvest of hate.’

“That quote is proudly cited by David Brog in his recent book, *Standing with Israel*. Both Brog and Hagee clearly identify the Roman Catholic Church as spawning a ‘theology of

hate.'

"This is nothing if not hate speech. There are so many good evangelical leaders in this country—Dr. James Dobson, Dr. Richard Land, Tony Perkins, Gary Bauer, Dr. Al Mohler, Chuck Colson—and none has ever insulted Catholicism. To be sure, they have expressed theological differences, and that is to be expected; that is all fine and good. But they have never sought to denigrate Catholicism. That's what makes this situation so outrageous. Of all the great evangelical leaders, the one McCain cites as 'the staunchest leader of our Christian evangelical movement' just happens to be a Catholic basher.

"In 2005, when I was fighting with those senators who were making it all but impossible for pro-life Catholics to get on the federal bench, I said the following: 'So as not to be misunderstood, let me repeat what I've said before: the Catholic League believes there are no anti-Catholic senators.' That remains true.

"So no one should take from my criticism of McCain on this issue that I in any way think he is anti-Catholic. If anything, John McCain has been a good friend to Catholics. But he and his staff have thus far grossly mishandled this issue. We await their next move."

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## **McCain Set the Bar for McCain (8 Yrs. Ago)**

In February, 2000, presidential hopeful Sen. John McCain's campaign staff made phone calls to prospective voters in Michigan reminding the party faithful of candidate George W.

Bush's visit to Bob Jones University. The message was as follows: "Bob Jones has made strong anti-Catholic statements, including calling the pope the anti-Christ and the Catholic Church a satanic cult." After first denying that these calls were sponsored by the McCain campaign, officials later admitted they were.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue saw the irony in this:

"Yes, Bob Jones has a long record of demonizing Roman Catholicism, but so does Pastor John Hagee. In 2000, on the website of Bob Jones University, they indeed called the pope the anti-Christ and Catholicism a satanic cult. Incredibly, Hagee continues to call Catholicism the 'anti-Christ,' a 'false cult system' and 'The Great Whore.' If McCain was right to slam Bob Jones in 2000, why is he letting Hagee off the hook now?

"In fact, when Bush did apologize for his visit to Bob Jones (he was explicit and forceful in his denunciation of the school), McCain criticized him for taking so long. He said, if 'you don't say anything until three weeks later, then you have—~~are~~—abandoning your role as a—~~as~~ a person.' Well, it hasn't been three weeks since McCain has been apprised of his Hagee problem, but the clock is ticking.

"The day after I accepted Bush's apology on 'The Today Show,' February 28, 2000, McCain spokesman Dan McLagan said of Bush, 'He should be forced to address it [the issue] everywhere he campaigns.'

"I am not expecting McCain to have to address the Hagee endorsement everywhere he goes. Once he explicitly rejects the anti-Catholic baggage that Hagee carries, it will be enough to settle this matter once and for all. It is not Hagee's endorsement he needs to reject, it's the minister's anti-Catholicism he needs to reject. I can't get more specific than that."