

OBAMA CHOOSES VATICAN AMBASSADOR

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on President Obama's choice of Miguel H. Diaz, a Catholic theologian, to be his ambassador to the Vatican:

In choosing professor Miguel H. Diaz to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican, President Obama has selected a man whose writings do not address such hot-button issues as abortion, embryonic stem cell research, doctor-assisted suicide and gay marriage. In that regard, it appears this is a safe choice.

It is disconcerting, nonetheless, to learn that Diaz supported Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius for the position of Secretary of Health and Human Services. Sebelius is so extreme on abortion that she has been publicly criticized by the last three archbishops in Kansas City, Kansas. Moreover, when the current archbishop, Joseph F. Naumann, asked her to name a single instance in 30 years of public service where she supported restrictions on abortion, she could not name one. Thus, his decision to request that she not present herself for Communion.

It is a lame argument to say that it is morally acceptable to promote abortion-reducing public policies while jettisoning all legal remedies. If we applied this same logic to racial discrimination, no one would regard someone who worked to reduce the incidence of discrimination while abandoning all legal strategies as a bona-fide opponent of racism. Both approaches would be demanded.

It is a sad commentary on the Democratic party that out of the entire country they can't field a candidate to represent the U.S. to the Vatican who is unequivocally opposed to abortion-on-demand.

SOTOMAYOR'S CATHOLICISM

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments today on the nomination of Sonia Sotomayor to the U.S. Supreme Court:

When John Roberts was nominated to be on the high court, Senator Dick Durbin told CNN that he considered it fair game to probe Roberts about his Catholicism. Durbin released a glowing statement yesterday on Sotomayor that never mentioned her religion. When Roberts was questioned by Senator Arlen Specter and Senator Dianne Feinstein, they both asked him whether he agreed with President John F. Kennedy about separation of church and state. Neither even mentioned Sotomayor's religion in their respective statements yesterday.

When Roberts was nominated, Dahlia Lithwick, legal analyst for *Slate*, said, "I wouldn't underestimate the influence of his religion"; when Samuel Alito was nominated, Lithwick said that "People are very, very much talking about the fact that Alito would be the fifth Catholic on the Supreme Court if confirmed." Yesterday, Lithwick posted a lengthy piece on Sotomayor that never mentioned her religion. When Roberts was nominated, NPR's Nina Totenberg said that his wife was "a high officer of a pro-life organization. He's got adopted children. I mean, he's a conservative Catholic." Yesterday, she simply mentioned that Sotomayor attended Catholic schools without ever raising it as an issue. When Roberts was nominated, journalist Adele Stan noted his religion and said, "Rome must be smiling." Yesterday, in her positive assessment of Sotomayor, she never mentioned her religion.

What's going on? Are liberal Catholics Catholic? Obviously not, at least according to liberals. After all, if Sotomayor were known as a practicing Catholic, those who fretted over

Roberts and Alito would have called 911 by now. White House press secretary Robert Gibbs, however, put their worst fears to rest yesterday when he said of the Puerto Rican jurist, “I believe she was raised Catholic.” If this is true, then the telling verb “raised” would explain why liberals like Sotomayor—she’s one of those Catholics they can trust. Let’s hope they’re wrong.

COURT UPHOLDS GAY MARRIAGE BAN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented on the decision by the California Supreme Court upholding the resolution banning same-sex marriage in California:

The shame of it all is that after the citizens of California said no to gay marriage last fall—the people always say no (the record is 30-0 in state ballot initiatives)—homosexual radicals sought to do an end-run around the democratic process and have unelected judges overrule the express will of the people. But the opponents of democracy, and common sense, lost today and that is how it should be. No one supports two men getting married save for white people who have spent too much time in the classroom.

ANOTHER CATHOLIC ON THE SUPREME COURT?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue reacts to President Obama's choice of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to sit on the U.S. Supreme Court:

When John Roberts was nominated to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, left-wingers accused President Bush of "Playing the Catholic card." When Samuel Alito was selected by Bush, these same critics sounded the alarms over the prospect of a "majority" of the Supreme Court justices being Catholic. One would think that the selection of yet another Catholic to sit on the high court would drive these folks right over the edge. But for some reason, Sotomayor's Catholic credentials don't seem to matter. Is that because she is seen as reliably liberal?

Let's face it: left-wingers would gladly accept nine Supreme Court Catholics if they were reliably liberal before they would ever accept a diverse court that was reliably conservative. Ancestry, anatomy and religious affiliation have always been oversold: what trumps everything is ideology.

At this stage, at least, the Catholic League takes no position on the merits of Sonia Sotomayor to be on the Supreme Court.

On a personal note, I must say that having spent four years in the 1970s teaching in a Catholic elementary school in Spanish Harlem, I loved working with the Puerto Rican people. Indeed, I feel some of the pride that Puerto Ricans rightly feel today. Good for them—this is their special day.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY = HOMOPHOBIA?

New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch said he would not sign a recent bill ordering same-sex marriage unless it strengthened religious liberty provisions. Led by advocates of gay marriage, the vote yesterday was 188-186 against amending the bill to insure religious liberty protections.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue addressed what happened:

Leading the fight for gay marriage in New Hampshire is Rep. Steve Vaillancourt. He proves, beyond any shadow of a doubt, why champions of religious liberty must resist gay marriage: he worked to kill the bill because it insulated religious institutions from its reach.

In other words, it was not good enough for Vaillancourt to secure a win on gay marriage—he had to have it all. And having it all means denying the right of religious institutions not to sanction homosexual marriage. Indeed, he said the religious liberty amendment would “enshrine homophobia into the statutes of the New Hampshire legislature.”

So this is what we’ve come to in America: religious objections to homosexuality, rooted in the Bible, natural law and the teachings of most religions, is nothing more than a pernicious phobia. Not too long ago, such objections simply constituted common sense. Looks like we need a college course, “Common Sense 101.” The problem is, only the students would be capable of teaching it.

Radical gays, and their straight allies, have gotten so bold that they are prepared to assault First Amendment religious-liberty rights. Two years ago, a lesbian couple in New Jersey sought to have their civil union ceremony in a hall owned by a

Methodist organization, but was denied on religious grounds. The government sided with the lesbians: the Methodist establishment had its property tax exemption pulled.

We hope Gov. Lynch sticks to his guns

HYSTERIA OVER IRISH CLERGY ABUSE

After nine years of investigation, Ireland's Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse has published its findings. More than 30,000 children, most of them delinquents, passed through one or more of Ireland's Catholic-run institutions from the 1920s through the 1980s.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the report today:

Reuters is reporting that "Irish Priests Beat, Raped Children," yet the report does not justify this wild and irresponsible claim. Four types of abuse are noted: physical, sexual, neglect and emotional. Physical abuse includes "being kicked"; neglect includes "inadequate heating"; and emotional abuse includes "lack of attachment and affection." Not nice, to be sure, but hardly draconian, especially given the time line: fully 82 percent of the incidents took place before 1970. As the *New York Times* noted, "many of them [are] now more than 70 years old." And quite frankly, corporal punishment was not exactly unknown in many homes during these times, and this is doubly true when dealing with miscreants.

Regarding sexual abuse, "kissing," and "non-contact including voyeurism" (e.g., what it labels as "inappropriate sexual

talk”) make the grade as constituting sexual abuse. Moreover, one-third of the cases involved “inappropriate fondling and contact.” None of this is defensible, but none of it qualifies as rape. Rape, on the other hand, constituted 12 percent of the cases. As for the charge that “Irish Priests” were responsible, some of the abuse was carried out by lay persons, much of it was done by Brothers, and about 12 percent of the abusers were priests (most of whom were not rapists).

The Irish report suffers from conflating minor instances of abuse with serious ones, thus demeaning the latter. When most people hear of the term abuse, they do not think about being slapped, being chilly, being ignored or, for that matter, having someone stare at you in the shower. They think about rape.

By cheapening rape, the report demeans the big victims. But, of course, there is a huge market for such distortions, especially when the accused is the Catholic Church.

CARLA BRUNI RIPS THE POPE

Carla Bruni, wife of French president Nicolas Sarkozy, is angry that Pope Benedict XVI casts serious doubt on the efficacy of condoms to stop AIDS. She said that such teachings left her “profoundly secular,” and she called upon the Church to “evolve.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue doesn’t agree:

When the pope was in France, he urged the people to acknowledge the “irreplaceable” role of religion in society, gently nudging the French to rethink their fondness for secularism. President Sarkozy responded by saying it would be

“madness” for his country, which “accepts its Christian roots,” to “deprive ourselves” of religion. Perhaps he should have addressed his remarks to his wife.

It is really saying something when Bruni, who lives in one of the most secular societies in the world, concludes that the pope’s position on condoms is making her “profoundly secular.” In other words, when the pope calls on rational human beings to put the brakes on their libido—so that they may actually live long and healthy lives—he is pushing people like Bruni right over the edge. What a confession this is.

It used to be that European elites did not talk disparagingly about the pope in public. But now that they have embraced the amorality that is the mark of secularism, common decency has been thrown overboard.

OBAMA PIVOTS ON CONSCIENCE RIGHTS

In his address to the 2009 graduating class at the University of Notre Dame, President Barack Obama said yesterday that he supports conscience rights for healthcare workers. “Let’s honor the conscience of those who disagree with abortion,” he said, “and draft a sensible conscience clause, and make sure that all of our health care policies are grounded in clear ethics and sound science, as well as respect for the equality of women.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue applauded the president:

Last August, the Bush administration strengthened the

conscience rights of healthcare workers in a new set of guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). But in March the Obama administration said it was going to rescind these rights. It specifically said, "The Department [HHS] is proposing to rescind in its entirety the final rule."

Thus far, no final decision has been made. But given what President Obama said yesterday, it seems clear that he is now prepared to rescind the decision that was made rescinding conscience rights. For this he should be commended. We look forward to reading the revised proposal.

"ANGELS & DEMONS": SPECTACULARLY STUPID

Bill Donohue saw "Angels & Demons" today. Here is his take:

The movie is so spectacularly stupid that it blunts its anti-Catholic elements. But there are problems, nonetheless.

In the movie, the Catholic Church is said to have murdered members of the Illuminati, of which Galileo was a member. In real life, the Catholic Church never laid a hand on any member of the secret society and Galileo died almost a century and a half before the Illuminati were founded. In the movie, even Church officials admit that the Illuminati have reason for revenge, when, of course, this is pure nonsense. In the movie, we learn how the Church has worked against the march of progress, when, in fact, the historical record shows the opposite: the scientific achievements and contributions to higher education made by priests are incredible. In the movie, Catholics are portrayed as believing "Stem Cell Research Is

Murder,” when, in fact, the Church is pro-stem cell research, save for procedures which destroy embryos. In the movie, Pope Pius IX is said to have bludgeoned the genitalia of male statues (so anti-sex was he), when, of course, this never happened. Indeed, Pius IX lavishly funded the arts. And so on. There are a few bones thrown our way, but they hardly make up for the lies.

In the end, however, director Ron Howard turned out to be a blessing: his melodramatic characterization, and positively James Bondish type absurdities, have the effect of undercutting Dan Brown’s malicious portrayal of Catholicism.

DONOHUE CORRECTS NEW YORK TIMES

Bill Donohue on today’s article about him in the *New York Times*:

I have asked for a correction regarding a comment that is attributed to me, but which I never made. Regarding the movie “Angels & Demons,” reporter Paul Vitello writes as follows: “They even have a scene where rats eat a bunch of cardinals,” he [Donohue] said. “Can you imagine any other religion where this would not be viewed as rank religious bias?”

Not only did I never say anything even remotely like this, it cheapens my complaint. My central concern is the way Dan Brown’s book, and the movie upon which it is based, portrays the Catholic Church: The Catholic Church is *not* anti-reason and anti-science. I don’t care a fig about films showing rats eating cardinals.

The article says that *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, called the movie "harmless." Vitello did not mention that the newspaper, run by a professor, enjoys plenty of autonomy, and that its editorials are totally autonomous. The movie review, which also slammed the film for its "stereotyped characters" and historical errors, appeared in an editorial.

The Catholic League is identified as an organization that has zero affiliation with the Catholic Church. Yet as I pointed out to Vitello, we are listed in the *Official Catholic Directory*, quite unlike any number of groups with the name "Catholic" in it.

The article says the Catholic League has 50,000 members. As I told Vitello, we have 50,000 members who are our most reliable base of donors, but we have hundreds of thousands who contribute each year.

Vitello says of the Catholic League that it has "no spokesman except Donohue." Not true. My director of communications, Susan Fani, is also a spokesperson. Fani is incorrectly identified as my "assistant." This is shocking given that he met Fani and was given her business card.

To read the article, click [here](#).