

MARTHA COAKLEY TRASHES RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responds to what Massachusetts senatorial hopeful Martha Coakley said last night in a WBSM interview:

When Martha Coakley, a Roman Catholic, was asked whether she supports conscience rights for health care employees, she offered a resounding “NO.” So completely wedded to the extremists in the pro-abortion community, Coakley would not allow Catholic doctors and nurses—who unlike her accept the teachings of Catholicism—to recuse themselves from participating in procedures they find morally repugnant.

Coakley said that if she were asked to consider a bill that would say “if people believe that they don’t want to provide services that are required under the law and under *Roe v. Wade*, that they can individually decide to not follow the law. The answer is no.” When asked by host Ken Pittman about the rights of Catholics who follow the teachings of the Catholic Church, Coakley offered the separation of church and state mantra. Pittman then said, “In the emergency room you still have your religious freedom.” Coakley conceded that point but hastened to add, “you probably shouldn’t work in the emergency room.” Translated: You really don’t have a right to exercise your religious-liberty objections.

This is the opinion of the attorney general, the chief law enforcement agent in the state of Massachusetts. She effectively told practicing Catholics who work in the health care industry that they ought to get another job. As far as she is concerned, those who invoke a right to conscientious objection—a staple of religious liberty—should lose.

President Obama says he supports conscience rights for health

care workers. The Catholic bishops support conscience rights. Survey after survey show that the American people support conscience rights. But Martha Coakley does not—she says they're all wrong. Glad to know which side of religious liberty she is on.

HOLLYWOOD GOES APOCALYPTIC

Catholic League president Bill Donohue looks at Hollywood's treatment of the apocalypse in "The Book of Eli" and "Legion"; the former opens January 15, and the latter a week later:

By all accounts, "The Book of Eli" puts a positive spin on Christianity. The lead character, Eli, is played by Denzel Washington. Following a nuclear war which destroyed all copies of the Bible, save for the one in his possession, Eli is determined to get the last copy on the planet to a place directed by God; previous religious conflict destroyed all copies of the Torah and Koran. To be successful, Eli must keep the Bible away from a reigning tyrant who is hell bent on getting his hands on it so he can twist biblical teachings to suit his interests.

By all accounts, "Legion" puts a negative spin on Christianity. It features Michael the Archangel crashing down from the heavens to save the unborn child of a Virgin Mary-like character, a waitress who is anything but virginal. Indeed, actress Adrienne Palicki plays such a loose character that she said in an interview, "Who didn't I have sex with in the movie?" No matter, the film suggests God is the father of her Jesus-like messiah child. The entire story takes place on Christmas eve.

Both movies are violent, and both scripts seize on the

apocalypse. But that's where the similarities end. It is telling that Sony is responsible for the film that is not exactly Christian-friendly (Warner Bros. is releasing "The Book of Eli"). Sony, of course, gave us "The Da Vinci Code" and "Angels & Demons," so it knows how to tweak Christian sensibilities. It is so fitting that "Legion," which promises to be an abortion of a movie, is opening on January 22, the 37th anniversary of the infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision.

CELEBRITY CRUISES STIFFS CATHOLICS

Bill Donohue explains why the Catholic League is sharply critical of Celebrity Cruises:

Ten days before Christmas, we learned that Celebrity Cruises had just announced that beginning in 2010, it would no longer have priests on board to celebrate daily and Sunday Masses. We immediately followed up by questioning the cruise line about its new policy. Just this week we received a reply that said, "Out of respect for our guests of all religious faiths, Celebrity has chosen to align the religious services provided for Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Interdenominational faiths effective January 4, 2010." It added that religious services would be provided for "the major High Holy Holidays of each respective faith."

What this statement failed to note is the reason for the new policy. The following is an excerpt from the letter it sent to Catholic priests affected by the change in policy: "While we do meet the needs of many guests onboard by supplying a priest, we have recently encountered a great deal of negative

feedback pertaining to the 'selective' support of one particular religion/faith. After many internal discussions, external research, and marketing investigations, Celebrity Cruises will only place Roman Catholic Priests on sailings that take place over the Easter and Christmas holiday."

In other words, because some anti-Catholics objected to daily Mass onboard the ship, Celebrity Cruises threw the priests—and the lay Catholic men and women with them—overboard. Instead of standing on principle and telling those generating the "negative feedback" that no one is forced to go to Mass, and that tolerance demands respect for religious freedom, officials at Celebrity Cruises decided to yield to the bigots.

The Catholic League advises all Catholics to shop around the next time they plan to take a cruise, but not to waste their time checking out Celebrity Cruises.

Contact: captainsclub@celebritycruises.com

BOB SHRUM THROWS MUD AT BISHOPS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an article posted today on TheWeek.com by Democratic consultant Bob Shrum:

Shrum begins his [article](#) with a broadside against Democrat Bart Stupak, the congressman whose amendment in the House version of the health care bill bans abortion coverage. Shrum makes the patently false claim that Stupak's amendment "prevents Americans from purchasing abortion coverage with their own money." As Stupak wrote last month in the *New York*

Times, "The amendment does not prevent private plans from offering abortion services and it does not prohibit women from purchasing abortion coverage with their own money." Now if Shrum has evidence that Stupak is lying, he ought to present it.

Shrum gets nasty when he takes issue with Stupak's religiously informed conscience. He contrasts Stupak unfavorably with Ted Kennedy and Mario Cuomo, both of whom earned their hero status by thumbing their noses at Catholic teachings on abortion. Then he lays into the bishops for interfering in politics by criticizing two other Catholic dissidents, John Kerry and Joe Biden. He is at his demagogic best when he plays the anti-Catholic card by suggesting the bishops are hostile to democracy; watch out, he warns, they might even push to outlaw divorce!

Shrum really gets down and dirty when he slanders all Catholic bishops. "Having abetted thousands of priests in molesting children, they're now set on abusing health reform," he writes. Now if the standard of discourse allows for this kind of commentary, it finishes the prospects for civil conversation. Imagine an opponent of gay marriage citing gay leaders who abet the frequent use of bathhouses, the lethal sex acts that take place there, and the diseases they generate. Any group can be smeared.

Shrum needs to apologize for this scurrilous piece. He can't fight the bishops on the merits of the issue, so he resorts to mud throwing as a way to silence them. We look to responsible Democrats who disagree with the bishops on this issue to denounce Shrum for his despicable behavior.

OBAMA RENOMINATES ANTI-CATHOLIC LAWYER

Catholic League president Bill Donohue calls attention to the decision of President Obama to renominate Dawn Johnsen to head the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel:

Most of the critics of Dawn Johnsen focus on her strong pro-abortion record. While that is disturbing, a pro-abortion president can be expected to staff his administration with such persons, and no one doubts President Obama's position on this subject. But it is an entirely different matter when a president selects bigots to work for him.

Dawn Johnsen is not someone who simply takes issue with the Catholic Church's pro-life position: she wants to punish the Church. In the late 1980s, she joined a cadre of anti-Catholics to strip the Catholic Church of its tax exempt status. The charge? The Church was guilty of violating IRS strictures because it took a strong pro-life position. The lawsuit failed.

The person who led this assault was Lawrence Lader, co-founder of NARAL with Dr. Bernard Nathanson. (Nathanson later dropped his pro-abortion position, became a strong pro-life advocate and converted to Catholicism.) At the time the two men founded NARAL, Lader, according to Nathanson, liked to refer to the Catholic Church as "our favorite whipping boy," maintaining that his goal was to "bring the Catholic hierarchy out where we can fight them. That's the *real* enemy." (Italics in the original.) That was in the late 1960s. Twenty years later, Lader published a vicious book assailing the Catholic Church, and it was at this time that he launched his bid—assisted by Johnsen—to break the Church.

This is who Dawn Johnsen is. She is a person who is so fueled

with hatred of the Catholic Church that she would like to destroy it. Having failed to secure her appointment last year, Obama has decided that he just can't proceed without her. How telling.

Johnsen is not the first anti-Catholic chosen by Obama, but she is by far the most extreme and the most dangerous.

ATTACK ON PIUS XII IS UNSEEMLY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an article by Deborah Dwork and Eric Greenberg criticizing the Catholic Church for pursuing the cause of sainthood for Pope Pius XII; it is published on the website of today's [*Philadelphia Inquirer*](#):

Deborah Dwork is a specialist in Holocaust studies at Clark University, and Rabbi Eric Greenberg is the director of interfaith policy for the ADL. Their credentials are not in question, but their judgment certainly is.

They begin their remarks by saying that "Pius refused even to say the word *Jew* during his famous Christmas speech of 1942." Funny how the *New York Times* was able to figure out who the pope was referring to at the time. "No Christmas sermon reaches a larger congregation than the message Pope Pius XII addresses to a war-torn world at this season. This Christmas more than ever he is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent." Nowhere in the *Times* editorial of December 25, 1942 does it mention the word *Jew*, but only the delusional would think the editors were praising the pope for speaking out about Puerto Ricans. Indeed, the *Times* ran an editorial

the previous year, also on Christmas day, singling out the pope among world leaders: “The voice of Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas.”

The *New York Times* was not alone in praising the heroics of Pope Pius XII. So was Rabbi Greenberg’s organization: the ADL wrote gloriously of his efforts. So did the World Jewish Congress, Golda Meir, Albert Einstein, Emilio Zolli (the chief rabbi in Rome—he converted to Catholicism after the war, taking Pius’ name as his baptismal name), and many others. Furthermore, Israeli diplomat Pinchas Lapide credited the pope with saving as many as 860,000 Jewish lives. Today, English historian Sir Martin Gilbert credits the Catholic Church for its yeoman service.

There is always room for just criticism, but for Dwork and Greenberg to conclude that the cause of sainthood for Pope Pius XII is “an act of aggression against the Jewish people” is flat out unseemly. It also ill-serves Catholic-Jewish relations.

BRIT HUME’S CRITICS ARE REVEALING

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the on-going reaction to Fox News analyst Brit Hume’s plea to Tiger Woods that he turn to Christianity and seek forgiveness:

Anyone who doesn’t understand the premium that Christianity puts on forgiveness is badly educated, but that is no excuse for the kind of vitriol that has been spewed against Brit Hume. For advising Tiger Woods to consider Christianity, Hume

has been roundly condemned by those whose highest virtue is being non-judgmental. He has been compared to Islamic extremists by Keith Olbermann of MSNBC; he has been the subject of endless blogs ridiculing him and his religion; and is now being counseled by Tom Shales of the *Washington Post* to apologize.

None of Hume's critics, of course, seem to have any problem with the increasingly aggressive campaigns launched by atheists seeking to proselytize Christians. During this past Christmas season, we were treated to a slew of atheist evangelizing efforts, ranging from billboards in towns across America to posters on urban buses, all designed to promote atheism and denigrate Christianity. In England, author Philip Pullman is pushing for an atheist curriculum in the elementary schools, and his fellow countryman and cohort, Richard Dawkins, wants summer camps aimed at weaning kids away from Christianity. These examples, of course, are seen by Hume's critics as nothing more than exercises in free speech. But when he speaks, as an *analyst*, not as a reporter, he's put on the liberal watch-list as a closet Taliban.

When George W. Bush was reelected in 2004, all we heard from this gang was about the coming theocracy that threatened to engulf America. Even they didn't think that the worst that would happen was a soundbite from Brit Hume touting the teachings of Christianity.