

“THE RITE” EARNs RESPECT

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on movie reviews of “The Rite”:

Unfailingly, whenever there is a TV show or movie that touches on subjects like Transubstantiation—the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus—the Virgin birth, apparitions, the stigmata, even confession, it is the subject of ridicule and insulting commentary. But when it comes to the phenomenon of exorcism, it’s hard to find anyone who mocks it.

Catholic League staffers reviewed over 600 movie reviews of “The Rite” that appeared in mainline media outlets. Aside from a few snotty remarks, the subject of exorcism was given a respectful hearing: none was derisive. The cast of “The Rite” was also respectful: none lambasted the idea that demons could be purged by a trained Roman Catholic priest.

This is good news. Evil exists, and everyone save for a fringe minority, admits it. More important, the belief that the devil can be conquered also exists. That the Catholic Church has a mechanism to deal with it is hardly surprising. After all, it was founded by Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

SMITHSONIAN SMOKEsCREEN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on recommendations made yesterday by a Smithsonian panel:

“Culturally sensitive exhibitions should be previewed from a diverse set of perspectives,” said the Regents Advisory Panel. What exactly does this mean? If a swastika is painted on a synagogue, should those who find it endearing be consulted? If

KKK is plastered across a portrait of Rev. Martin Luther King, must those who can't decide if this is offensive be summoned for advice? Now imagine if there is a video of large ants running all over a depiction of Muhammad, is it incumbent on Smithsonian officials to find someone who likes such fare? Would it change things if we substituted the crucified Jesus for Muhammad?

Speaking of the artist who made the ants-on-the-crucifix video, the Smithsonian's John W. McCarter Jr. said, "I believe, in his mind, that [the video] was not sacrilegious." Did he stumble upon the diary of David Wojnarowicz? Has he been channeling him? McCarter also asks us to consider the possibility that the video "might have been very deeply religious?"

McCarter's subjectivism is unwarranted. We know some things about the artist, and what we know is that he branded the Catholic Church a "house of walking swastikas." So why is it so hard to connect the dots? Isn't it obvious the artist was a raging anti-Catholic bigot? Let's face it: if an artist offended Jews, African Americans or Muslims—as in the examples cited above—the artwork alone would be cause for censorship, never mind investigating any harbored prejudices he may have had.

What they did yesterday was a smokescreen. If a man like Wojnarowicz can insult Christians the way he did, knowing full well his sentiments on Catholicism, and he is still given the benefit of the doubt—even to the point of entertaining the fiction that his video is "very deeply religious"—then it is obvious what is going on.

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DAILY NEWS SMEARS NUNS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue takes issue with a news story in today's New York *Daily News*:

On the front page of the *Daily News*, in huge bold letters, it reads, "THE LYIN' 'NUN.'" Below, in smaller letters, it reads, "Spins rape tale, recants."

The quotation marks around "nun" do not give the newspaper cover: the average reader will no doubt conclude that a Catholic nun lied about being raped. The story appears on p. 6 with the headline, "Nun: Rape Tale Was 'Bed of Lies.'" No quotation marks are given this time. Moreover, the online version reads, "The Lyin' Nun," absent any quotation marks. Worse, it shows a picture of someone holding a rosary.

Not until readers get to the story do they learn that "A Brooklyn nun from a fringe Christian sect" has admitted she lied about being raped. We also learn that the Apostles of Infinite Love convent "appears to be linked to a Canadian-based religious order founded in the 1960s by a defrocked Catholic priest who ordained himself Pope."

In other words, these people are not Catholic, yet the *Daily News* deceitfully sold the story as if they were. Indeed, the story ends with an admission that this group is a "sect" from Quebec that "has been described as a cultlike group."

There is no way to justify such fraudulent hype. Catholic nuns have been smeared and the public has been invited to think the worst about them. The newspaper owes them an apology.

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