

PRESBYTERIANS WELCOME GAY CLERGY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the decision by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to welcome practicing homosexuals as candidates for ordination:

We knew that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was in trouble when it had to pass an amendment to its Constitution in 1997 affirming its teachings on ordination: married couples were expected to practice “fidelity” and single clergy were supposed to practice “chastity.” The fact that such a staple of Christianity was a matter of debate suggested that it was just a matter of time before it was jettisoned. After all, if the biblical injunction proscribing homosexuality can be ignored, why should the sexual practices of the clergy matter?

The Presbyterian Church now joins the United Church of Christ, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and the Episcopal Church in allowing practicing homosexuals and lesbians to become members of the clergy. It also has something else in common with these mainline Protestant denominations: it is collapsing. In the case of the Presbyterian Church, it has lost more than half its members since the 1960s; the other denominations are also in free-fall.

Liberal Christians, including liberal Catholics, have no explanation for this outcome. They never tire of saying how we need to relax the strictures for ordination—allow women clergy, ban celibacy, permit practicing homosexuals—and bingo, watch for a sharp increase in both vocations and membership. Well, they won on policy, but they got their clock cleaned on numbers. Orthodoxy works, both theologically and sociologically, but that’s not something liberals will ever figure out.

LADY GAGA “JUDAS” VIDEO IS A MESS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue had an opportunity to preview Lady Gaga’s “Judas” video. Here are his thoughts:

In her “Judas” video, Lady Gaga plays fast and loose with Catholic iconography, and generates several untoward statements, but she typically dances on the line without going over it. Perhaps that is because the video is a mess. Incoherent, it leaves the viewer more perplexed than moved. The faux-baptismal scene is a curious inclusion, as is her apparent fondness for the Jesus character. But if anyone thinks the Catholic League is going to go ballistic over Lady Gaga’s latest contribution, they haven’t a clue about what really constitutes anti-Catholicism.

KUSHNER UNWORTHY OF HONORARY DEGREE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the decision by trustees of the City University of New York (CUNY) not to award playwright Tony Kushner with an honorary degree:

As a general rule, objections to anyone being considered for an honorary degree take on weight only when there are serious reasons for doing so. An honorary degree is a statement from an academic institution that meritorious service should be recognized, but it is also a statement, ineluctably so, about the characterological attributes of the honoree. For example,

a gifted orator may properly be denied if what he espouses is hatred.

Tony Kushner is a talented creative artist, but he is also someone who espouses hatred. CUNY trustee Jeffrey S. Wiesenfeld correctly identified Kushner as a man whose relentless assaults on the democratic state of Israel effectively disqualify him from being honored by John Jay College, a CUNY institution. On that account alone, Kushner is not deserving of an honorary degree. But there is more.

When the Terrence McNally play, "Corpus Christi," was performed in New York in 1998, Kushner not only defended this vile work—it portrayed Christ having sex with the 12 apostles—he lashed out at the Catholic League for exercising its First Amendment right to freedom of speech. Never did we call for censorship. All we did was hold a demonstration.

When Matthew Shepard, the homosexual from Wyoming, was mercilessly killed by anti-gay thugs, Kushner blamed the pope! "Pope John Paul II endorses murder," he wrote in the *Nation*.

Kushner's vitriol against Israel, coupled with his Catholic bashing, make him unworthy of receiving a CUNY honorary degree. It may be that Kushner deserves to be in a Playwright Hall of Fame. But CUNY represents the norms of the academic community, and they do not counsel bigotry. Jeff Wiesenfeld raised the right issues, and made the right call.

KUDOS TO PEORIA CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue congratulates Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Peoria:

If the state of Illinois wants to grant adoption rights to homosexual couples in a civil union, it has a right to do so. But it has no right to force its will on those who, as a matter of conscience, disagree. This is especially true when conscience rights are grounded in religion: the First Amendment kicks in at this point.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Peoria does not discriminate between heterosexuals or homosexuals. It simply defends the institution of marriage. Heterosexual men and women who cohabit are no different from homosexual couples who live together: neither are married and both are therefore disqualified from receiving the sponsorship of Catholic adoption services. They can go elsewhere, and are indeed advised of alternative services by Catholic Charities. But no one has a right to demand that a religion forfeit its doctrinal prerogatives by bowing to the secular creed of the state in matters of marriage and the family.

Those who truly believe in diversity will respect the plea for pluralism made by Catholic Charities. If separation of church and state means anything, it means the right of religious bodies to practice their faith without state encroachment.

BOSTON GLOBE COVERUP?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on an article in yesterday's *Boston Globe*:

Yesterday, *Boston Globe* reporter Kevin Cullen said that Pope John Paul II "presided over a church that was guilty of one of the biggest institutional coverups of criminal activity in history." He also gave credence to the charge that "Priests were raping children all over the world with impunity." There are four errors in these two sentences.

- The John Jay College of Criminal Justice report on this issue shows very clearly that the period when most of the

incidents occurred was 1960-1985. Since John Paul II was not elected until 1978, it is factually wrong to suggest that the scandal took place mostly on his watch.

- Charol Shakeshaft, the nation's leading authority on the sexual abuse of minors in education, estimates that the rate of abuse in the public schools is approximately 100 times greater than found in the Catholic Church. Since most of those cases were never reported to the police, and since most of the offending teachers were moved from one school district to another, it is factually wrong to suggest that the Catholic Church has had a bigger problem with this issue than the public schools. Indeed, there is no evidence that the rate of abuse is any different in the Catholic Church than exists in other institutions, religious or secular.

- It is factually wrong to say that most of those abused by priests were raped: the most common infraction was "inappropriate touching."

- Most of those abused by priests were not children—they were postpubescent males. The John Jay report found that "81 percent [of the victims] were male," and that "more than three-quarters of the victims were post pubescent, meaning the abuse did not meet the clinical definition of pedophilia." Amazingly, Cullen wrote this in 2004, so even he knows that the problem is homosexuality!

It's hard to say whether Cullen is simply wrong on the facts, or whether he is the one engaged in a coverup. Maybe a little of both.

Contact Cullen: cullen@globe.com

NBC ALLOWS LENO TO BASH PRIESTS

The April 29 episode of "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" was the occasion for yet another assault on priests. In a skit about the Royal Wedding, Dame Edna played a British correspondent. She was shown taking secret footage of the

event while Leno pretended to be speaking with her live.

Dame Edna approached a vendor selling cheese called “Stinking Bishop.” Upon hearing the name, she said, “Stinking Bishop? My son toyed with the priesthood. Or perhaps it was the other way around.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented as follows:

Jay Leno would not be allowed to smear over 40,000 Catholic priests—over and over again—if NBC executives objected. His relentless assaults suggest a tolerance for bigotry that is disturbing. Leno and his scriptwriters are a sick bunch. What made this skit so invidious was its wholly gratuitous nature: there is no relationship between the Royal Wedding and Catholic priests. No matter, the writers just decided to jam their way in with another shot at priests.

It is time Catholics took their protest to the top as numerous complaints to Debbie Vickers, the executive producer of the show, have been dismissed.

Robert Greenblatt is the chairman of NBC Entertainment. Contact Rebecca Marks, executive vice president, Publicity: Rebecca.Marks@nbcuni.com

“THERE BE DRAGONS” IS A HIT

Tom Arkin of the Catholic League previewed “There Be Dragons” and found it inspiring. It opens May 6. Here is his review:

Academy-Award-nominated director Roland Joffe’s film, “There Be Dragons,” is a fictional account based on the life of the canonized saint Father Josemaria Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei.

Roberto is a middle-aged Spanish-American journalist assigned to write a book about Father Jose. Set in Madrid in the mid-1970s, he tries to reach out to his ailing father, Manolo, from whom he has become bitterly estranged. Roberto courteously telephones his father only to be hung up on when he broaches the subject of the priest. Intrigued, the son learns not only that his father knows a great deal about Father Jose, but also that they were boyhood friends before parting ways during the Spanish civil war of the 1930's.

The bulk of the movie is a flashback. The lives of Father Jose and Manolo are traced from their boyhood to the end of hostilities in 1938; it is narrated by Manolo, who is dictating his words onto tape for his son. The word "dragons" is used throughout the film to denote the effects of experiences during that violent time that threatened to destroy the priest's faith, and all but decimated Manolo's.

The main theme is the importance of faith and forgiveness in defeating one's own "dragons," and the film takes great pains to show that it is Roberto's research into Father Jose's life that provides the great opportunity for father and son to settle lifelong differences.

It was extremely refreshing to see a movie showing priests in a favorable light, and Joffe deserves praise for doing so.

Bill Donohue says, "The Catholic League heartily recommends this film!"