

TAX-EXEMPT STATUS OF CHURCHES IMPERILED



Bill Donohue comments on how the legalization of gay marriage will not be enough to satisfy radical activists:

There aren't enough homosexuals to wage war on religious institutions—they comprise only 1.6 percent of the population—but they have plenty of support among elites. From Wall Street to Wal-Mart, the corporate elite has gone lavender, embracing the gay-rights movement with as much gusto as exercised by elites in education, the arts, the entertainment industry, and the media. Will they now take the next step and attempt to shut down the churches?

Anyone who thinks that radical activists will stop with gay marriage is ignorant: The big prize has always been to force the churches to fall in line. Consider Mark Oppenheimer, who writes a biweekly column for the *New York Times*. His post of June 28, featured at Time.com, calls on the IRS to revoke the tax-exempt status of houses of worship.

The only difference between Oppenheimer and others in the lavender camp is his willingness to put down a marker right after the high court victory. Others will wait. Now if this becomes an issue in the presidential campaign—it is up to those opposed to gay marriage to make it one—it is going to be very hard for Hillary to make Oppenheimer's case. Even so,

this offers little comfort.

Stealth politics is what the left is good at, and on this issue they will have their unelected surrogates at the IRS do their bidding. There will also be legal challenges—the ACLU sued before trying to shut down the Catholic Church—so keep your eye on left-wing non-profits. Count on Americans United for Separation of Church and State to flex its muscles, along with a host of other militant foes of religious liberty. Surely extremists in the atheist community will relish the fight.

Religious leaders are going to be pressed on this issue like nothing we've seen before. They had better be ready—the other side is.

TMZ RIPS BRISTOL PALIN



Bill Donohue comments on a June 28 episode of TMZ:

A female commentator and a male announcer on TMZ took after Bristol Palin, zeroing in on her recently announced pregnancy.

Commentator: "So weird she doesn't believe in abortion, but she believes in just like raw dogging it all over."

Announcer: "So, thanks, hypocrisy. You're the reason we have Catholic school girl porns. Congrats, Bristol!"

Catholics always seem to get it, even when, as in this case—Bristol is not Catholic—it has nothing to do with us.

More important is the anger that these professional celebrity monitors have for Bristol: It bothers them to no end that she has chosen to have her child born out-of-wedlock rather than terminate her pregnancy. We know what they would do.

Bristol is a living reminder that motherhood carries responsibilities, something our culture sadly devalues these days.

GAY MARRIAGE RULING IS OMINOUS



Bill Donohue comments on the Supreme Court decision declaring same-sex marriage a constitutional right:

Once again, five Supreme Court justices have invented a right that is nowhere mentioned or implied in the U.S. Constitution. Instead of allowing the states the right to make decisions about marriage, these judges have elected to impose their will on the nation.

Moreover, their reasoning is sociologically illiterate. The idea that marriage is a matter of individual autonomy—and not a social institution—is the most profound flaw in their ruling. In their mind, society is composed of monads.

For people of faith, this decision is ominous. On p. 27, the majority declares that religious Americans “may continue to advocate with utmost, sincere conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should not be condoned.” It is nice to know they respect our First Amendment right to freedom of speech.

“The First Amendment,” the five justices say, “ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their lives...” That’s the best they can do? Justice Clarence Thomas, in his dissent, rightly criticizes this genuflection to religious rights. “Religious liberty,” he says, “is about freedom of action in matters of religion generally”—it is not confined to advocacy.

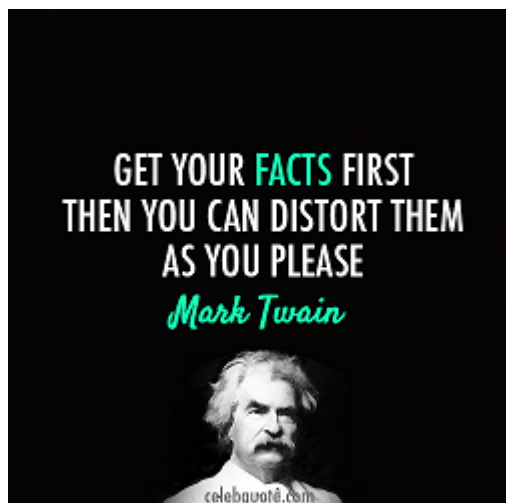
In order to stop the IRS from revoking the tax-exempt status of religious institutions that refuse to marry two men or two women, Congress needs to pass the First Amendment Defense Act that was introduced last week. Nothing less is acceptable.

FATHER SERRA EARNED SAINTHOOD

Bill Donohue has written an 18-page booklet, in a Q&A format, that explains why Pope Francis made the right decision to canonize Father Junípero Serra. There is no charge for the booklet, just a \$2 shipping and handling fee. To order, click [here](#). (It is available online. To read click [here](#).)



MEDIA DISTORT POPE'S WORDS



Bill Donohue comments on media reports regarding Pope Francis' address yesterday at the weekly General Audience:

Reports are flying around the Internet that Pope Francis is now promoting divorce as "morally necessary." From the Huffington Post to the *New York Post*, they are saying that the pope is championing divorce. They are all wrong.

The pope said yesterday that "there are cases in which *separation* is inevitable. Sometimes it can become even morally necessary, precisely when it comes to subtracting the weaker spouse, or small children, from more serious injuries caused by arrogance and violence, by humiliation and exploitation, by extraneousness (non-involvement) and by indifference." (My emphasis.)

The pope was not exactly breaking new ground. In 1992, the U.S. bishops issued a statement, "When I Call For Help: A Pastoral Response To Domestic Violence Against Women," that was even more pointed.

“Finally,” they said, “we emphasize that no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage. Some abused women believe that church teaching on the permanence of marriage requires them to stay in an abused relationship. They may hesitate to seek a separation or divorce. They may feel they cannot re-marry in the Church. Violence and abuse, not divorce, break up a marriage.” Well said. Yes, it is not divorce that breaks up an abusive marriage, it is the abuse itself.

The media have a duty to report what the pope, and the bishops, say, and not what they want them to say.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IS REAL



Bill Donohue comments on a
Public Religion Research
Institute survey:

Are Christians discriminated against in a nation that is over 70 percent Christian? The public seems to think so. Here is the question posed to respondents: “In America today, discrimination against Christians has become as big a problem as discrimination against other groups.”

By a margin of 49 percent to 47 percent, the public agrees with this question. White evangelical Protestants were the most likely to agree: 70 percent say that discrimination against Christians has emerged as big a problem as

discrimination against others. The majority of non-white Protestants agree, with 55 percent answering affirmatively. Catholics also see anti-Christian bigotry as a big problem, splitting 50 percent to 47 percent. White mainline Protestants are not convinced: their numbers are 46 percent to 50 percent. The unaffiliated clearly stand out from the faithful: only 34 percent agree with this question.

Why would most Americans say that discrimination against Christians is a serious problem? It surely has much to do with the sense that Christians are fair game for unfair treatment, as witnessed in legislation such as the attack on Christian non-profits under the Obama administration. In particular, the Health and Human Service mandate forcing Christian non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization, and contraception has set off the alarms. Punishing Christians who object to same-sex marriage is also a genuine concern.

We spend much more of our time at the Catholic League fighting defamation against the Catholic Church than we do fighting discrimination against Catholics. This suggests that the problem is even worse than what the survey indicates: most Americans know that while many demographic groups are treated kindly in the media, education, the entertainment industry, and the artistic community, Christians are fair game for the most obscene commentary and portrayals.

The political and cultural elites are driving this explosion in anti-Christian bigotry.

NBC NOW DEMANDS SECRECY

Bill Donohue comments on how NBC is handling the Brian Williams controversy:



NBC has its chief news anchor go rogue, and instead of commissioning an independent investigation, it does an in-house probe. Just as bad, it keeps the report secret. Now consider its reporting on the Catholic Church.

- On 5-18-11, it reported that an independent investigation of the Church's priest abuse scandal was flawed because the data provided to John Jay College came from the Church
- On 11-9-11, it said the Church was an institution of "secrecy"
- On 2-25-13, it commented on a "secret dossier" given to the pope
- On 2-26-13, it reported that "The pope decided that an internal report on that scandal [Vatileaks] would remain a secret..."
- On 3-7-13, it said "secrecy has become a top priority for Vatican officials"
- On 3-8-13, it quoted a journalist who said it was "dangerous" to expose Vatican "secrets" because some guy told him that its cameras were "so powerful they can even read the lips of people"
- On 10-1-13, it said the Vatican bank issued a report on its annual accounts "to boost transparency" and "rebuild its reputation"
- On 2-5-14, it said the U.N. issued a report on the

Church's "code of silence" in handling abuse cases. But it did not say that the 15-page report contained not a single footnote or endnote, nor did it say that the U.N. insisted that the Church change its teaching on abortion and other issues

Just yesterday, Fox News reported that U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appointed a panel to investigate sexual offenses against children committed by U.N. peace-keeping forces. NBC did not report on it. On May 21, I issued an open letter to Secretary Ban calling him to finally implement the "zero tolerance" policy that the U.N. adopted in 2004—after the U.S. bishops adopted one—or stop badgering the Holy See.

NBC cannot have it both ways: It cannot demand transparency from the Vatican while keeping secret its internal probes.

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MEDIA IGNORE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY BILL



Bill Donohue comments on media reaction to the First Amendment Defense Act that was introduced last week in Congress:

Given the fact that the media are eyeing a critical Supreme

Court ruling on same-sex marriage, it seems logical it would cover a bill that seeks to curb the reach of a decision that would be favorable to gay marriage. But they are showing no such interest. Regrettably, this includes the Catholic media—not a single story was run on this issue.

On June 17, Sen. Mike Lee and Rep. Raúl Labrador introduced the First Amendment Defense Act. Specifically, it would bar the federal government from discriminating against those persons and groups who object, on religious grounds, to same-sex marriage. It would apply to individuals and organizations in both the profit and non-profit sectors.

Importantly, the bill is vigorously supported by the U.S. bishops. Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone and Archbishop William Lori, who head the Subcommittee for the Promotion and Defense of Marriage and the Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, respectively, issued a strong statement on June 19. As they pointed out, the Act provides broad protections, covering such areas as federal contracts, grants, employment and tax-exempt status.

Already, left-wing activists with a history of attacking religious liberty are up in arms. But it is precisely because of people like them that the Act is necessary. We know, for example, that when the U.S. Solicitor General was recently asked by a Supreme Court justice whether churches might lose their tax-exempt status if they oppose gay marriage, he said that it “certainly [is] going to be an issue.”

It is a sad day when congressional legislation is needed to protect the First Amendment guarantee of religious liberty. But the attacks are mounting and more laws are needed. The media blackout of this bill speaks volumes about its politics.

CHURCH-STATE SEPARATION NOW BEMOANED



Bill Donohue comments on the way Church critics are reacting to Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment:

It is striking how many traditional proponents of separation of church and state are now screaming at Republican Catholics to get in line and start taking their marching orders from Rome. All of a sudden church and state separation is an anathema: they want the pope to shove his teachings down their throat. Correction: they only want the pope's position on climate change to be imposed—not his condemnation of abortion.

The *New York Times*, which normally loves church-state separation, is today expressing its hope that governments the world over will adopt the pope's "unexpectedly authoritative and confident" encyclical. "Sadly," it notes, "the encyclical, compelling as it is, is unlikely to have a similarly positive effect on American politics."

This is a keeper. Never before have I read an editorial by the *Times* saying how sad it is that agents of the state are not taking their cues from the pope. Indeed, this newspaper typically congratulates Catholic pro-abortion Democrats for their "independent" thinking. But independent thinking is the last thing the *Times* wants to encourage now.

The *Times* is not alone in its duplicity. Catholic leftists, such as John Gehring at Faith in Public Life, are saying that Catholic Republicans are now in a jam. "It's much harder for

them to brush off one of the greatest moral leaders of the world,” he said. Gehring is wrong. As a matter of fact, it’s really not that hard: all they need to do is call Nancy Pelosi.

POPE URGES ENVIRONMENTAL REFORMS



Bill Donohue comments on Pope Francis’ encyclical, *Laudato Si*:

Pope Francis wouldn’t be Pope Francis unless he was confounding his critics. Conservatives will recoil at his left-leaning politics, anti-market impulse, embrace of global policies to combat climate change, and his doomsday scenarios. Liberals will recoil at his condemnation of population control, embryonic destruction, and abortion; they will also reject his insistence on “valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity,” asking us to “joyfully accept the special gifts” of the sexes (#155).

The pope paints a bleak picture saying that the earth “is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” This may explain why he thinks—he actually calls it a “fact”—that “people no longer seem to believe in a happy future” (#113). Similarly, he does not say that we have a right to the *pursuit* of happiness, but a right to happiness itself (#43).

The pope's love for God's creation is genuine, and his urgent call for environmental reforms is welcome. But some will no doubt question his assertion that carbon dioxide is a pollutant (#24). Pollutants are generally regarded as human additives, not constitutive properties of humankind. His condemnation of air conditioning will also make eyes roll: he does not blame AC usage on consumer demand but on capitalists seeking to make money (#55).

Some of the problems he identifies are universal and resistant to reform. He decries population density in urban areas—the two are inseparable—and he bemoans the fact that “we still have not solved the problem of poverty” (#27). Whether it is poverty or environmental destruction, the pope fingers the pursuit of profit as the culprit, not governmental policies.

At one point (#61), he asks us to reject “doomsday predictions,” yet later (#161) he says: “Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain.” Better editing would have avoided such a serious inconsistency. No matter, the pope has given everyone much to consider.