

ANTI-CATHOLIC JOKES STILL OKAY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the way anti-Catholic jokes are being received today:

Ask any comedian how he feels today about telling jokes about certain protected classes of people—gays being the most protected—and he will confess what a minefield it is trying not to offend the politically correct police. But the sensitivity cops still have enormous tolerance for the most intolerant jokes about priests. There is no price to pay, no matter how vile and obscene the commentary.

Kevin Hart had to drop out from hosting the Oscars because he once told some jokes that offend gays. He said he has learned from his past mistakes, but that didn't change anything: he was forced to exit. Even after he pulled out, that wasn't enough to satisfy Kathy Griffin, who exploded, "I mean, f**k him."

Griffin is upset with Hart slighting gays, but she is perfectly fine cursing God. In September 2007, upon receiving an Emmy for her reality show, she screamed, "Suck Jesus, this award is my God now." Besides the Catholic League, few complained. She paid no price for her sick remark by anyone in Hollywood.

If Hart is not acceptable to host the Oscars, why was Ellen DeGeneres in 2014? Didn't her comments ridiculing nuns matter? Why was Seth MacFarlane deemed worthy in 2013 following his libelous remarks about priests? Why was Alec Baldwin fit to be the host in 2010 given his sweeping generalizations about priests? Why was Jon Stewart invited to host the Oscars in 2008 given his obscene attacks on Catholicism? Why was Whoopi Goldberg selected four times when she has a history of

Catholic bashing? [Examples of their anti-Catholic statements are available on our website.]

Nothing has changed. Since Thanksgiving there has been a rash of comedic attacks on Catholicism.

On the November 27 edition of the TBS comedy, "The Guestbook," there was an exchange about being good at Christmas for Santa. "If his parents are religious," one of the characters said, "he still has all the Jesus bulls*** to keep him on the straight and narrow for a while."

The December 4 edition of the ABC show, "The Kids Are Alright," featured kids putting a microphone in the purse of their mother so they could hear what she said when going to confession. The skit proceeded to mock the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Seth Meyers has been busy attacking Catholics this Christmas season. On December 5 he made a joke about the clergy raping kids. On December 10, he made it clear which religion he was referring to: he engaged writer Jenny Hagel in an assault on the Eucharist and allowed Hagel to lie about the Church's teachings on sexuality.

It's not just Hollywood that practices this double standard. On November 30, former "Saturday Night Live" writer Nimesh Patel was forced to leave the stage at Columbia University because he told some jokes about a gay black man that didn't sit too well with the PC police. The Columbia Asian American Alliance, which hosted the event, had him booted.

This is the height of hypocrisy. It was an Asian student from Columbia who in 2002, during the half-time show of a football game between Columbia and Fordham, told the fans via a loudspeaker that "Fordham's tuition is going down like an altar boy." After I mounted a public protest, the president of Columbia, Lee Bollinger, apologized to me about this incident.

Catholics have every right to treat all this hullabaloo about Kevin Hart as the *real* joke. Not until we get a level playing field, and anti-Catholic remarks are regarded as taboo, will we be persuaded that those who object to anti-gay remarks are principled.

NATIVITY SCENE ERECTED IN CENTRAL PARK

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the legality of nativity scenes on public property:

Can religious symbols be displayed on public property? Yes, but it is a qualified yes.

Today, the Catholic League erected a life-size nativity scene in Central Park, on a piece of public property in front of the Plaza Hotel, between 58th and 59th Street on 5th Avenue. We received a permit from the New York City Parks Department, as we have for decades. Sitting nearby is the world's largest menorah, which is also a religious symbol.

There are no Santa Clauses, reindeers, Jack Frosts, or any other secular symbols surrounding our religious display. We don't need to have them. Why? Because Central Park is a public forum, a place that is open to all ideas, concerts, artistic exhibitions, and the like. So the government cannot stop us from erecting our crèche.

So why do some say that religious symbols cannot be displayed on public property unless they are accompanied by secular symbols? They would not be correct if they were referring to a public forum, but they would be correct if they were referring

to a swatch of public land near a municipal building, such as city hall.

The difference there is that it could be argued that the proximity of the religious symbols near a municipal entity might be interpreted as government sanction of religion. That argument cannot reasonably be made if the land is a public forum. Practicing Christians, Jews, and others, need to understand the difference so as to avoid unnecessary problems.

Regrettably, there are still instances where the government is acting irresponsibly, such as the denial of a nativity scene at the Bandstand in Rehoboth: officials in this Delaware community should be challenged in court—the Bandstand is a public forum.

Another controversy has arisen this year in Springfield, Illinois when the Satanic Temple received permission to erect a Satanic display next to a nativity scene and a menorah in the Capitol rotunda. This mean-spirited “competition”—designed to neuter the religious displays—borders on hate speech and could be challenged on such grounds. Government officials said they had to honor the request. Really? Would they allow the display of a huge swastika to be placed next to a menorah?

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas said several years ago that the high court has failed the public by not making clear what is permissible under the Constitution when it comes to religious expression. He was right then, and nothing has happened subsequently to invalidate his observation.

We hope that New Yorkers, and those visiting New York City this Christmas season, will stop by and see the Catholic League’s nativity scene in Central Park. It will be up through the New Year.

MEDIA POLITICS EXPLAIN POPE COVERAGE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on recent news reports on Pope Francis:

A cardinal holds a beatification ceremony in Algeria for 19 monks, nuns and other Catholics who were killed during Algeria's civil war in the 1990s.

Pope Francis addresses an international conference celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights wherein he highlights the rights of the unborn.

It is not a stretch to say that most Americans would think that the second story would merit the most coverage; both appeared in the last few days. They would be wrong.

The first story on the beatification ceremony was picked up by the Associated Press, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Florida Times-Union*, *Post-Courier*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Washington Post*, and the *Winston-Salem Journal*. All these newspapers ran at least a part of the AP story by Nicole Winfield.

Not a single newspaper in the nation picked up the AP story on Pope Francis' address.

What's going on? Abortion. That's what.

Some may say that there is no news here: everyone knows the Catholic Church opposes abortion. But for the pope to give the rights of the unborn the prominence he did while celebrating an historic event—on a subject where there are dozens of other human rights that could have been mentioned—this is at least

as worthy of note as the Algerian story.

Moreover, in its release on the pope's address, the Vatican News listed 18 human rights that the Holy Father has spoken about in recent years. It listed at the top, "The right to life, particularly of the unborn and the elderly." It also cited, in its introductory commentary, the pope's critical remarks on ideological colonization (or gender ideology), i.e., the belief that male and female are interchangeable, not rooted in nature.

On economic issues, Pope Francis typically holds to a more liberal interpretation, but on moral issues he skews toward a more conservative position. This explains why the media give him plenty of coverage when he speaks on the former and is so dismissive when he speaks on the latter.

Media politics are very much at work.

SCRIBBLING SCREWBALL RIPS BISHOP THOMAS TOBIN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a critic of Providence, Rhode Island Bishop Thomas Tobin:

A screwball is loose at the *Providence Journal*, but she doesn't work in the office. Indeed, she doesn't live in Rhode Island. She splits her time between Florida and Italy. So why is she scribbling a monthly column for the newspaper?

The scribbler's name is Mary Ann Sorrentino. We know her at the Catholic League for her hatred of the Catholic Church. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church knows her as well. To be more

accurate, they once knew her: She was excommunicated in 1985. What for? For running a Planned Parenthood abortion clinic for nine years: approximately 9,000 children were killed under her watch.

Sorrentino had a column in the December 9 edition of the *Providence Journal* attacking Providence Bishop Thomas Tobin, a great defender of the children whom she thinks have no right to life. She accuses him of speaking with “ruthless cruelty, against anyone questioning his attacks on LGBTQ Catholics, progressive women, and lawmakers defending the Constitution.”

As is typical with Church haters, she doesn’t cite one example of Tobin’s alleged “ruthless cruelty” [Is there such a thing as non-ruthless cruelty?], or of his alleged attacks on alphabet homosexuals.

The best Sorrentino can do is to argue that Tobin was “surrounded” by priests named in the Pennsylvania grand jury report (many of whom were totally innocent), and that’s because he was neither contacted by the grand jury nor mentioned in the report. So she plays the “guilt by association” McCarthyite game.

Scribbling screwballs abound on the Internet—they have no legitimate role to play in any respectable newspaper. The real shame is the *Providence Journal* for carrying her vitriol.

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BANNING CHRISTMAS IN THE SCHOOLS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on attempts to ban Christmas in the public schools:

There is much ignorance about the state of the constitutional law as it applies to Christmas celebrations in the public schools. To cut to the quick—they are permitted.

A Christmas play by the Minden Junior Service League, performed at Minden High School in Webster Parish, Louisiana, was recently the source of much controversy. Two of the 35 minutes of the play discussed Jesus, and some objected, including the Webster Parish School Board.

The Superintendent Johnny Rowland was sympathetic to those who wanted the play, but insisted that there is a “federal court order [that] clearly spells out what is allowable and what is not.” Despite attempts to censor the play, it was performed anyway, and was greeted with a standing ovation.

Officials at Manchester Elementary School, which is part of the Elkhorn Public Schools in Nebraska, got all ginned up over Christmas and decided to ban displays of Santa Claus, Christmas trees, Christmas songs, and the colors red and green. Candy canes were also banned. Thanks to Liberty Counsel, the decision was reversed and sanity prevailed.

What is permissible at Christmastime in the public schools?

In 1995, Secretary of Education Richard Riley issued a directive on this subject at the behest of President Bill Clinton. Here is the language of how the operative paragraph begins:

“Official neutrality regarding religious activity. Teachers

and administrators, when acting in those capacities, are representatives of the state and are prohibited by the establishment clause from soliciting or encouraging religious activity, and from participating in such activity with students.”

This first part makes good sense: it is not the business of school officials to lead students in religious activities. But the second part also makes good sense, yet it is frequently ignored.

“Teachers and administrators are also prohibited from discouraging activity because of its religious content, and from soliciting or encouraging anti-religious activity.”

In other words, school officials cannot ban voluntary, student-led religious activity at Christmastime. Students cannot be punished for singing Christmas carols, distributing Christmas cards, wearing red and green, giving Christmas presents, writing Christmas poems, giving speeches paying tribute to Jesus, etc.

No federal court has ever ruled that Christmas must be censored in the public schools. It’s about time the superintendents and their lawyers got up to speed and stopped listening to cultural fascists bent on banning Christmas: they know nothing about the First Amendment provisions regarding freedom of religion and freedom of speech.

FLAGRANT BIAS AT TWO LEADING

NEWSPAPERS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on how two leading newspapers are misleading their readers:

A prominent man is found guilty in court and the story is covered by the major media. His conviction is later overturned. Fairness dictates that those media outlets that carried the first story should carry the second one as well. This was certainly true of the Associated Press, Reuters, and most media sources, but it wasn't true of the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*.

The prominent person was Catholic.

On July 31, 2018, the *New York Times* ran a 717-word story in the "A" section of the paper on the conviction of Australian Archbishop Philip Wilson; he was found guilty of covering up for sexual abuse by a priest.

On July 31, 2018, the *Washington Post* ran a 735-word story in the "A" section of the paper on the same subject.

On December 6, 2018, Wilson, the most senior cleric in the world ever to have been found guilty of covering up for sexual abuse, was exonerated. Judge Roy Ellis said that prosecutors failed to prove their case beyond a reasonable doubt. "The conviction and the orders of the local court are quashed," he said.

Why didn't the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* tell their readers that Archbishop Wilson's conviction was overturned? As a result, many still think he is guilty.

Perhaps you can ask the editors to explain themselves.

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DNC CHAIR SAYS CHRISTIANS ARE STUPID

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks made yesterday by the chairman of the Democratic National Committee:

DNC Chairman Tom Perez has a problem with Christians. He thinks they are stupid.

Speaking on December 6 at a liberal gathering in Washington, D.C., Perez appeared unhinged as he delivered a whining speech over the inability of Democrats to get their message across. He identified three obstacles: "Fox News, their NRA newsletter, and the pulpit on Sunday."

Perez then unloaded on the clergy and the faithful, making a veiled stab at President Trump. "That person on the pulpit is saying 'ignore everything else that this person has done and is doing. We have to focus on one issue of *Roe v. Wade*.' And people buy it because that's their only source."

This man is from some other universe. When I go to church on Sundays I rarely hear a priest mention abortion, except in passing. More important, we Christians are not stupid people who take our political cues from any one source. We actually read and think for ourselves. That we regard the fate of unborn children to be a paramount issue is true. We only wonder why others don't agree. What is more important than the right to live?

This is not the first time that Perez's passion for abortion has sent him off the rails. Last year he said, "Every Democrat, like every American, should support a woman's right

to make her own choices about her body and her health. That is not negotiable and should not change city by city or state by state.”

Perez’s statement was too much for Democratic commentator Mark Shields. After quoting the remark I just cited, Shields said, “The Democratic Party, which is a pro-choice party, would now become the ‘no choice’ party.”

In 2002, Shields blasted the DNC for providing a link on its website to Catholics for a Free Choice, an anti-Catholic front group. I followed through by taking out a *New York Times* op-ed page ad on September 16, 2003, titled, “Why Are The Democrats Insulting Catholics?”

The DNC is in trouble, and so is the Democratic Party. This demeaning comment by Perez that Christians are stupid is not going to sit well with millions of Americans. One thing is for sure—we will repeat what he said over and over and over again.

BOSTON GLOBE REJECTS REQUEST FOR DATA

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on his recent dealings with *Boston Globe* officials:

On November 4, there was a front-page story in the *Boston Globe* alleging that more than 130 bishops, or about a third of those still living, have been accused of “failing to adequately respond to sexual misconduct in their dioceses.”

The news story, which was based on a study by reporters from the *Globe* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, garnered national

headlines; it was released prior to a conference of U.S. bishops who were meeting in Baltimore to discuss the sexual abuse scandal.

How accurate was the study? We will never know. Why not? Because the *Boston Globe* is keeping it a secret: it denied me the right to examine its data.

That's right, the same newspaper that insists on total transparency on the part of the bishops—they must allow full disclosure of their internal data—will not make public its data on the bishops.

What data are we talking about? The *Boston Globe* said the reporters from the two newspapers examined “court records, media reports, and interviews with church officials, victims, and attorneys.”

On November 16, I emailed Brian McGrory, editor of the *Boston Globe*, asking if he would allow someone to verify the study. He did not respond. On November 20, I made the same request in a letter mailed to him at the newspaper. On November 28, I received the first in a series of email exchanges with Scott Allen, Assistant Managing Editor for Projects.

“A group of seven reporters in Boston and Philadelphia reviewed public records of all living bishops, including media reports, court records and interviews with sources all over the country,” Allen said. The information was then entered into a spreadsheet.

“We chose not to publish the spreadsheet because the point of our exercise was not to fault individual bishops,” Allen wrote. “Instead, we were demonstrating the widespread lack of accountability in the church hierarchy.”

This is pure rubbish. If the point was not to “fault individual bishops,” why did the news story feature the photos of four bishops on the front page (three of whom were arguably

innocent). And even if the point was to show lack of accountability, what does that have to do with my request to see the raw data?

My next request was to get permission to at least read the transcripts of the interviews that were conducted “with sources all over the country.” Again, I was turned down. Allen said, “We don’t circulate our interviews unless we plan to publish them.” That’s a nice Catch-22: I can’t read the transcripts because they won’t publish them.

I then asked why they wouldn’t publish the transcripts on their website. Allen told me that they do lots of interviews every week and don’t publish them. “But this is different,” I told him. This is not a news story—it is a study.

As a sociologist, I said, I have an interest in seeing “the raw data of a research project whose conclusions have been made public. It is common practice in professional research undertakings to make public the data upon which the conclusions have been made.”

This was the end of our exchange.

What is the *Boston Globe* hiding? Are they afraid that if people like me found out who they interviewed that it might blow up in their face?

A few years ago, Terence McKiernan of BishopAccountability told an audience of Church haters that Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, was concealing the names of 55 predator priests. This is an obscene lie. I have asked McKiernan several times for him to release the names and he never does.

Remember, the two newspapers are not saying that over 130 current bishops have been found *guilty* of covering up sexual misconduct. No, they said they have been *accused* of failing to *adequately* respond to sexual misconduct.

Accused by whom? The likes of McKiernan? Over the years, the Catholic League has shown many of the Church-suing lawyers and professional victims' advocates to be liars. Moreover, who determines whether the bishop's response was "adequate"? The same newspapers that have been at war with the Catholic Church for decades?

The study by the *Boston Globe* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* cannot be taken seriously by any objective observer. By any professional standard, it is a sham.

I have notified every bishop who heads a diocese about this issue. To read my exchanges with the *Boston Globe*, click [here](#).

REMEMBERING GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Catholic League president Bill Donohue recalls his memories of the late President George H.W. Bush:

During the 1988 presidential campaign, I was a Bradley Resident Scholar at The Heritage Foundation. My first book, *The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union*, published in 1985, was the magnet that landed me the job.

It was also a time when Michael Dukakis, the Democratic nominee for president, loudly proclaimed that he was "a card-carrying member of the American Civil Liberties Union." It didn't take long before those working for Vice President George H.W. Bush contacted me hoping to obtain inside information on the organization: Bush was running for president.

I happily gave the Bush team what they wanted, and appeared on several talk-TV shows, notably "Crossfire," defending Bush

against his critics. The ACLU issue took off like a rocket. "It sometimes seems as though the election is more about the ACLU than anything else," complained NBC anchor Tom Brokaw.

Before the first presidential debate, the Bush campaign asked me to provide them with a list of some of the most controversial ACLU policies. I did, and Bush quickly mastered them (my first of two books on the ACLU was an extension of my NYU Ph.D. dissertation on the organization; my other book, *Twilight of Liberty: The Legacy of the ACLU*, was published in 1994 and a new Afterword edition appeared in 2001).

During the debate, ABC anchor Peter Jennings asked candidate George Bush why he continued to make an issue out of Michael Dukakis' membership in the ACLU. Here is what Bush said.

"I simply don't want to see the ratings on movies—I don't want my ten-year-old grandchild to go into an X-rated movie. I like those ratings systems. I don't think they're right to try to take the tax exemption away from the Catholic Church. I don't want to see the kiddie pornographic laws repealed. I don't want to see under God come out from our currency. Now, these are all positions of the ACLU, and I don't agree with them."

The ACLU and the *New York Times* accused Bush of distorting the ACLU's record. They were wrong. I supplied David Margolick of the *Times* with the evidence that I gave to the Bush campaign, taken straight from the ACLU's Policy Guide.

The ACLU was on record opposing the Motion Picture Association of America's movie rating system, even though this was a purely voluntary nongovernmental body. The ACLU Foundation and the New York Civil Liberties Union had filed an amicus brief in support of the Abortion Rights Mobilization to secure standing in its lawsuit seeking to strip the Catholic Church of its tax-exempt status.

The ACLU lost in a unanimous decision in the U.S. Supreme Court (*New York Ferber*, 1982) seeking to protect the

production, sale, and distribution of child pornography. And its opposition to “In God We Trust” on coins was long-standing, a position that the founder of the ACLU, Roger Baldwin, told me was “one of the more foolish statements” the organization ever made.

Looking back at this presidential campaign, Garry Wills noted how incendiary these cultural issues were. “The Bush campaign was able to exacerbate this struggle, calling on the advice of William A. Donohue, the sociologist who wrote the right wing’s favorite book on the subject, *The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union*. Donohue, for instance, gave the campaign the useful political charge that the ACLU would keep ‘kiddie porn’ legal.”

God bless President George H.W. Bush. I am delighted to have played a small role in his life.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY V. THE WALL

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a controversy over the First Amendment and national security:

Building a wall to protect our borders is a legitimate national security issue, but it should not be done at the expense of religious liberty. To be sure, no right is absolute, and that means that government seizure of church grounds may be acceptable in some very limited instances. But the presumptive right must be the First Amendment right to religious liberty.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is seeking to confiscate property owned by the Diocese of Brownsville to aid in the building of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. Bishop

Daniel Flores is protesting the invocation of eminent domain to justify the seizure of approximately 66 acres of land. The property includes La Lomita mission owned by the diocese; it is home to the historic La Lomita Chapel.

"The United States needs immediate possession of the subject property in order to meet this congressional directive," claims the government. Federal officials say they need to take control of the land for a year before they decide whether to take the property for the purpose of constructing a wall.

The Catholic League sides with Bishop Flores. Here's why.

A hearing was scheduled for January to weigh the concerns of the Diocese of Brownsville, but the authorities changed their mind and want to seize the land immediately. They should be denied by court order if necessary. Not to wait for one month to consider the First Amendment implications of this land grab is indefensible.

We appeal to Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen to put the January hearing back on the calendar. There is no need to hit the panic button, not when it comes to an issue as serious as this one.