

NATIVITY SCENE ERECTED IN CENTRAL PARK

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the Catholic League's nativity scene on public property:

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.

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.

JIMMY KIMMEL INSULTS CHRISTIANS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on last night's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" show:

On last night's Jimmy Kimmel show on ABC, they did a skit about the nativity scene where they crossed the line. Referring to the Shroud of Turin, believed to be the burial cloth of Jesus, as "the shroud of urine," is needlessly offensive.

This was not a mistake. A mistake would be to insult any world religion other than Christianity. When it comes to Christians, sticking it to them is exactly what we would expect from the entertainment industry. No matter, this is still a new low for Jimmy Kimmel.

Contact: Chelsie.M.Tanamachi@abc.com

EXONERATED PRIEST STILL BRANDED

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a Tulsa priest who has been exonerated:

On December 3, the Associated Press (AP) ran a story on a Tulsa priest who was allowed to return to work after an internal investigation found that an allegation of sexual abuse against him was unsubstantiated. Many of those media outlets and watchdog groups that initially reported on the allegations have not reported on his exoneration.

Fr. Joe Townsend of the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma was put on administrative leave in July after it was alleged that he acted improperly when he was an associate pastor at St. Pius X Catholic Church from 1988 to 1991. He denied the accusation of sexual misconduct and no criminal charges were ever brought. Now the diocese has cleared him altogether.

It has been a week since the AP story was published, and among the media outlets that reported the allegation, but not the exoneration, are KOCO (the ABC affiliate in Oklahoma City) and KFSM (the CBS affiliate in Springdale, Arkansas). Even more disturbing has been the reaction of BishopAccountability, a watchdog internet site that monitors priests accused of sexual misconduct.

In August, BishopAccountability posted four different articles on its "Abuse Tracker" about Fr. Townsend. In October, it said the investigation was ongoing. But there has been no posting about him being cleared by an internal investigation.

The public has become increasingly skeptical about the media, and as we recently learned from an NBC survey of Catholics who work for the Church, they don't trust the reporting on clergy sexual abuse. Stories like this are why.

Many in the media rely on BishopAccountability as a source of information. But it is not reliable. It is not just Fr. Townsend who has been treated unfairly by this watchdog group—it has routinely smeared priests who have been exonerated by failing to post the final outcome.

There is an AP story today about priests feeling beleaguered.

Add Fr. Townsend to that list. Standing up for the rights of accused priests takes guts in our society today. Unfortunately, few are up to the task, including those in Catholic circles.

RELIGION HATERS CASH IN ON CHRISTMAS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on how religion haters are celebrating Christmas:

Americans United for Separation of Church and State (Americans United) was founded as an expressly anti-Catholic organization after World War II. Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) is an atheist religion-hating organization that considers abortion to be a “blessing.” Both are seeking to cash in on Christmas this year by appealing to anti-Christian bigots.

Americans United is conducting a direct mail campaign that portrays religious liberty as a threat to freedom. Its survey is totally skewed against religious liberty, making it seem that those who exercise their First Amendment right are a threat to a free society. In particular, as a bow to homosexuals and the sexually confused, the survey is clearly weighted against Christians who accept the Judeo-Christian understanding of marriage.

FFRF paid for a full-page advertisement in the December 5th edition of the *New York Times* that is inflammatory, demagogic, and bigoted. It accuses those who promote religious liberty of seeking to impose a “theocracy” on the nation. It is so desperate to prove its point that it actually claims that those who laud “Judeo-Christian standards” are theocrats bent

on destroying our liberties. According to these geniuses, that would mean that the Founders were the originators of our theocracy.

Both of these organizations are driven by hate, and both are at war with our nation's Judeo-Christian heritage. Ironically, were it not for that tradition, they would not enjoy the freedom of speech that allows them to condemn us. But they are too clueless to connect the dots.

For anti-Christian bigots to cash in on Christmas is analogous to white racists cashing in on Black History month. Sadly, this is how some people justify their livelihood—by living parasitically off of those whom they seek to destroy.

Contact:

Americans United's Rob Boston: boston@au.org

FFRF's Amitabh Pal: apal@ffrf.org

PELOSI DEFENSIVELY INVOKES HER RELIGION

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on Nancy Pelosi's response to a reporter's question:

As House Speaker Rep. Nancy Pelosi was leaving her press conference today, reporter James Rosen asked her, "Do you hate the president, Madame Speaker?"

Pelosi was livid. She spun around and, pointing at Rosen, said, "I was raised in a Catholic house. We don't hate anybody—not anybody in the world. So don't accuse me of that."

Rosen replied that he never accused her of anything. Red hot with anger, she returned to the podium where she warned him, "don't mess with me."

Regarding President Trump, she labeled him a "cruel" man. She then went back to the well. "As a Catholic," she said, "I resent you using the word hate in a sentence that addresses me."

Whether Pelosi hates the president, or anyone else, is impossible to say, though labeling him "cruel" surely invites speculation.

What bothers many practicing Catholics is her selective invocation of her Catholic status. Here are a few examples.

- Pelosi is a champion of abortion rights, for any reason, and at any time of pregnancy, including instances when a baby can be killed who is 80 percent born. [Note: The U.S. bishops recently named "the threat of abortion" as the "preeminent priority" for Catholics.]
- Pelosi rejects the Church's teachings on marriage, holding that two men can marry and raise a family (adopted children, of course) in a manner that is no different from the normal arrangement of a man and a woman.
- Pelosi works tirelessly to support bills like the Equality Act that would devastate religious liberty while also undermining the Catholic Church.
- Pelosi will never support school vouchers for indigent minorities, consigning them to public schools that wealthy white people like her wouldn't set foot in.

Pelosi is such a rank hypocrite that she not only selectively, and defensively, wears her religion on her sleeve, she has the gall to call herself a "[conservative Catholic](#)."

She would be well advised either to stop rejecting Church teachings on core moral issues, or stop playing the Catholic

card to justify her opposition to them.

Contact: Ashley Etienne, communications director for Pelosi:
ashley.etienne@mail.house.gov

WHEN THE FAITHFUL TUNE OUT THEIR CLERGY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the results of a new Pew Research Center survey on the faithful and their clergy:

The clergy have great sway over the faithful on religious, family, and life issues, but much less so on matters that are outside their expertise. That is the central finding of the latest Pew Research Center survey on the faithful and their clergy, though that is not the way the narrative of this survey interpreted the results. Instead, prominence was given to the following: “Just 8% of Catholics say they are very close with their clergy, compared with a quarter of Protestants.”

The survey asked those who attend religious services at least a few times a year or more often (a pretty low bar measuring religiosity) about nine issues, some of which were public policy matters and others which were not. It divided the responses according to the follow categories: Protestant, Evangelical, Mainline, Historically black, and Catholic.

It makes sense that the faithful were most likely to heed the guidance of their clergy on matters such as “Growing closer to God” and “Interpreting scripture.” They also showed great respect for their guidance on “Marriage/relationships,”

“Parenting,” and “Abortion,” though to a lesser degree than they showed for religious issues.

There was a significant drop-off in confidence for their clergy’s advice on issues such as “Anxiety or depression,” “Personal Finances,” “Immigration,” and “Global climate change.”

The first cluster of issues—those where the greatest confidence was registered with their clergy—are clearly in the orbit of the expertise of the clergy. The second cluster is more interesting.

It is not hard to understand why the faithful are the least impressed with what their clergy say about anxiety or depression and personal finances: most people naturally incline to seek the advice of family members, as well as professionals who specialize in offering advice about such matters (though it is not a good sign that the clergy are not solicited when dealing with anxiety and depression—they used to be). But how to explain the lack of confidence in the public policy issues?

Immigration and climate change are constantly being discussed, so why do the faithful tune out what their clergy say when they address these issues? This is especially true of the latter one.

It is easier to understand why few of the faithful give any credence to their clergy’s advice on climate change: Why would people of the cloth know any better about the scientific intricacies of this issue than they do?

It is harder to appreciate their lack of enthusiasm for their clergy’s guidance on immigration. Could it be that the natural inclination of the clergy to embrace “the stranger” collides with the stark reality of protecting our borders from being crashed? If so, this would explain why the advice of priests, ministers, rabbis, and imams are discounted.

The clergy of all religions would do well to listen to what the faithful are telling them about the limits of their expertise, and their tendency to sentimentalize controversial issues.

This is important because the more the clergy speak out about such issues as climate change—one way or the other—the more likely the faithful will tune out what they have to say about matters they would ordinarily listen to very carefully.

The potential diminution of the clergy's prestige and authority is the real takeaway of this survey.

PURSUIING OLD CASES OF ABUSE IS AN INJUSTICE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the recent wave of lawsuits against the Catholic Church:

Church-suing lawyers are celebrating the holidays with a boatload of new cases, all in the name of justice. In reality, more injustice than justice will be rendered. The steeple-chasers are jumping on the bandwagon effect of the Pennsylvania grand jury report that was issued last year.

A comprehensive news story by the Associated Press details how 15 states have enacted legislation to suspend the statute of limitations to allow the pursuit of old cases of sexual abuse. Why is this unjust? Here are seven good reasons, beginning with Pennsylvania.

Grand jury reports are rarely made public, and with good reason: grand jury members hear only one side of the

story—defendants have no voice—and there is no cross examination of witnesses. So the likelihood that an indictment will be granted is quite good. It is because the scales of justice are weighted so heavily against the defendant that Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro should have followed established legal practice and not have released the grand jury report. That was injustice #1. The rights of accused priests were summarily ignored.

Injustice #2 was the initial seating of the grand jury. If established legal practice had been followed from the beginning, there would have been no state grand jury investigation. The entire process began when Shapiro's predecessor, Kathleen Kane (who was subsequently sent to prison for leaking grand jury reports, etc.) fielded a request from Cambria County District Attorney Kathleen Callihan to conduct a statewide investigation of the Catholic Church.

What Callihan did was unusual. When she learned of a case of sexual abuse dating back to the 1990s committed by Brother Stephen Baker at a Catholic high school in Altoona-Johnstown, she could have commenced her own probe. Instead, she pitched it to Kane. Would she have pitched one case of sexual abuse that took place in a public school decades ago to Kane, or would she have pursued it herself? More important, her office did not nail Baker—his bishop did. It was Bishop Mark Bartchak who told Callihan about him. Had he kept his mouth shut and handled the matter internally—the way almost every other institution in the United States did in the past *and still does today*—there would have been no grand jury.

Injustice #3 is the wave of lawsuits that are engulfing the Church across the nation; it is estimated that more than 5,000 new cases will be pursued, costing the Church more than \$4 billion. If Bishop Bartchak had not contacted the local authorities, and if they did not give the case over to the chief law enforcement officer in the state, and if he did not release the grand jury report, there would have been no tidal

wave of state grand juries launched against the Catholic Church. In other words, the Church is being sabotaged because Bishop Bartchak, unlike others, did what he was supposed to do.

The suspension of the statute of limitations is injustice #4. This is a fundamental 5th Amendment right of due process, one that organizations that are as disparate as the Catholic League and the ACLU can agree on. How can a defendant have his rights protected in cases that extend back decades? Were there any witnesses in the first place? If there were, are they still alive? How accurate is their recall? Moreover, there is a really good chance that the accused priest is dead.

Injustice #5 is the cherry picking that is going on. Most of the lawsuits that have been filed target the Catholic Church. Why is this? For the same reason why most of the billboards and radio advertisements seeking clients cite the Catholic Church and not the public schools or other religions.

Fighting the public school bureaucracy takes time and its records on miscreant employees are not as detailed as those kept by the Church. Most religious bodies do not have a centralized structure, nor do they have established record keeping protocols the way the Catholic Church does. This makes it difficult to probe them. In other words, the Church is a much easier target. Just as important, there is a clique of Church-hating lawyers who will do anything they can to destroy it.

Injustice # 6 is punishing the innocent: There are millions who depend on Church services, agencies, and institutions for their welfare. By diverting Church funds to pay for the legal fees of cases involving dead or laicized priests, many of the needy will be deprived of the care they need.

Injustice #7 is the failure to make the guilty pay. How is justice served when those who should pay for their offenses

will never be prosecuted? To wit: only two of the 301 priests (and others) named in the Pennsylvania grand jury report have been prosecuted.

This is a scam. There will be lots of money exchanged—the lawyers will cream a third of the loot right off the top—but little in the way of justice will be achieved. By any measure, this is not a defensible outcome.

ACLU TO CELEBRATE ITS CENTENNIAL

Next month, the American Civil Liberties Union will celebrate its 100th anniversary. Bill Donohue has written a Ph.D. dissertation on the ACLU as well as two books: *The Politics of the American Civil Liberties Union* (with a preface by Aaron Wildavsky) and *Twilight of Liberty: The Legacy of the ACLU*. The former was published in 1985 and the latter in 1994 (new material was published in the 2001 edition).

Both were published by Transaction Press and both were chosen as the Book of the Month by the Conservative Book Club.

The ACLU brands itself as the nation's most non-partisan defender of civil liberties and as an indispensable force for freedom. It will no doubt promote that vision when it celebrates its centennial.

The truth is that while the ACLU has done some important work, its record is one of duplicity. From its founding in 1920, its goal has never been civil liberties for everyone: it has always been the legal arm of the liberal-left (the exception being during the 1940s and 1950s). In more recent years it has

become increasingly politicized. Moreover, its unbridled defense of radical individualism has wreaked havoc in American society, weakening social institutions and corrupting the culture.

To set the record straight, Donohue has published a 25-page booklet, "The ACLU at 100," that is being mass mailed this week to thousands of legal and advocacy organizations, the nation's top 200 law schools and departments of political science, the media, and others. It contains nearly 100 endnotes, detailing his sources.

If you would like to purchase a copy for \$5 (to cover shipping and handling), click [here](#).

WHY DOES CNN HATE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on a CNN story on the Catholic Church:

In the more than 26 years I have spent at the Catholic League, never have I read a more irresponsible, and just plain dumb, report on clergy sexual abuse in the Catholic Church until I read the CNN Interactive report, "Pedophile Priests Operated at this California School for Decades." It is featured on the front page of CNN's website.

To begin with the title is inaccurate: *none of the molesting priests in the story are pedophiles—all are homosexuals*. How do I know this? Because every one of these alleged victims was a teenager at a high school. Quite frankly, CNN is involved in a cover-up. It wants to deflect attention away from homosexual

priests, who account for the lion's share (80 percent) of the abuse. Less than 5 percent of the abusers have been pedophiles.

As I have said many times (just recently to NBC), the clergy abuse scandal is long over. In the last year we have data for, there were three substantiated cases of abuse made against over 50,000 members of the clergy. That comes to .006 percent, which proves my point.

CNN also proves my point: virtually all the cases it discusses occurred many decades ago, extending back to the 1950s.

Why is CNN doing a big story on old cases of Catholic clergy sexual abuse? Kids are being raped in the public schools all over the nation, and it is going on right now as we speak, so why did CNN not do a big story on that? And if the subject is pedophilia, why not probe Hollywood—it is rich with source material.

Why did CNN choose one Catholic high school out of the entire country to describe the offenses of sick homosexual priests who abused teenage boys decades ago? Because it could not find any new dirt, that's why.

The CNN story further maligns the Church when it offers a totally false quote from Patrick Wall, an angry ex-priest who can always be counted on to slam Catholicism. "Other religious institutes are reporting out lists of credibly accused, they're saying who they are, when they knew about them, where did they work, everything else."

This is a bald-face lie. Which religions? Name them! There may be an occasional release of accused names from a few denominations, but *no religion* has outed more abusers than the Catholic Church. And where is the analogue to New York Archbishop Cardinal Timothy Dolan? He outed former cardinal Theodore McCarrick. What minister, rabbi, or imam can CNN name who has outed one of his own senior clergy members? They sure

didn't do it at CBS or NBC.

It is embarrassing to note that CNN put five reporters on this non-story. They clearly spent too much time Googling and not enough time speaking to practicing Catholics. This explains why they write about the "Hierarchy of the Secular Clergy," an esoteric term used in some canonical texts; it draws distinctions between members of the clergy. But this is not the way Catholics speak about the hierarchy.

What the reporters were trying to get at, in their own obtuse way, was the distinction between diocesan priests and order priests. The former constitute two-thirds of all priests; the latter comprise the other third. The diocesan priests are under the authority of a bishop; religious order priests are not—they have their own hierarchy.

Why does this matter? Because it shows how clueless these reporters are. "The hierarchy of the Catholic Church that most people are familiar with is called the 'secular clergy.'" Really? Why don't one of these five reporters stand outside a Catholic church on a Sunday and ask the parishioners if they even heard of such a thing as the "secular clergy"?

To say CNN is not a religion-friendly media outlet is too kind. This kind of reporting—sifting through old stories looking for dirt on the Catholic Church while participating in a cover-up—smacks of hatred.

Contact Richard Davis, executive vice president of News Standards and Practices: richard.davis@turner.com