

VIRGINIA TV NEWS REPORT DRAWS LEAGUE RESPONSE

In a news report on February 21 on WJLA in Virginia, it was mentioned that an abortion clinic was bombed. But the anchor woman also just happened to mention that the clinic "is down the street from a Catholic church."

The Catholic League, struck by this gratuitous association, sent a letter of protest to the station manager of WJLA TV. The league wondered why it wasn't said that the abortion clinic was across the street from a palm reader's office (which it is). The Washington, D.C. law firm that represents the station responded immediately, denying that any negative inference was intended.

In reply, the league contended that "the average viewer comes to conclusions based on innuendo as well as factual content." Explicitly, the league was incensed about "the suggested nexus between the crime and the proximity of a Catholic church." Subliminal messages, to the extent that they exist, can leave impressions, and that was the point the league was trying to make.

The timely and responsible answer provided by the law firm was reassuring. It is the league's hope that our very non-subliminal message was not lost on the parties involved.

BREAKING THE COMMANDMENTS

USA Network runs three steamy back-to-back shows on Sunday nights, "Pacific Blue," "Silk Stalkings" and "The Big Easy."

Not satisfied to appeal to the curious and prurient among us, USA Network decided to flag its Sunday night programs in TV Guide by printing the following inscription: "GUARANTEED TO BREAK AT LEAST 20% MORE COMMANDMENTS THAN ANY OTHER LINE-UP."

Swell. Now if the guys and girls who run that network can stop giggling for just a moment, perhaps they can explain why pushing the envelope is a badge of courage. It strikes us as juvenile. It also tempts us to advise our members "Thou shalt not watch USA Network."

SOUTH DAKOTA SPONSORS ATTACK ON CATHOLICISM

On February 7, the most notoriously anti-Catholic play ever written, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*, was performed by students from Douglas High School in Box Elder, South Dakota, at the Johnson Fine Arts Center of Northern State University. The play was selected for entry into a state-wide contest and was nominated for an award by school officials from Douglas.

In a statement to the press, the league said "It is astonishing that a play which has been labeled as anti-Catholic by such organizations as the Anti-Defamation League, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the American Jewish Committee—to say nothing of the scores of Catholic groups that have protested it—is now being considered for an award by the government of South Dakota."

According to a report we received in our office, when the league blanketed the media in South Dakota with its news release, "it was like as if a B-52 had just hit." The league's

action made front-page news in many papers and was given extensive coverage on radio and TV.

The league contacted the governor and senator of South Dakota stating its concerns over this state abuse of church-state relations. From what we have learned, we think our message has gotten through to the offending parties, public officials and the residents of South Dakota.

PETA DISCREDITED –AGAIN

In a recent issue of *Catalyst*, we reported on the bigoted attack that People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) made on Boys Town. PETA had charged Boys Town with animal abuse, and in the course of introducing its readers to Boys Town, it made inflammatory and wholly inaccurate charges of pedophilia against the priests who once ran Father Flanagan's famous home.

After Boys Town and the Catholic League provided evidence that exonerated Boys Town of any wrongdoing on the part of priests, PETA backed off these charges. So now its latest fund-raising letter simply repeats the charges of animal abuse. But it is now certain that PETA was wrong on this accusation as well.

According to a report file by the Office for Protection from Research Risks, a federal office associated with the National Institutes of Health, the results of an investigation stated that there was no merit whatsoever to charges of animal abuse occurring at Boys Town.

So now that the kittens aren't being abused, and there are no miscreant priests at Boys Town—not now or in the past—just what the bigots at PETA will do for an encore is anyone's

guess.

ANOTHER “ARTISTIC” ATTACK

The Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois is the latest venue for blasphemous and vulgar art. The exhibition in question, “Dans La Zibeline Du Zob,” consists of ten large wall hangings that depict the interior of three European Cathedrals. What’s hanging from nails in the center of each drawing is the source of our complaint: from eight of the drawings there are red glass vaginas and from two of them there are red glass holy water fonts with crosses on them; three had an additional vagina hanging from nails in what appears to be drawings of side chapels.

Like the offensive art at Penn State, this one was created by a female who claims to be Catholic; unlike the Penn State incident, the offender is not a student at the university. Just as with the Penn State “artist,” this one says her work is a statement about the oppression of women in the Catholic Church.

Funding for this exhibition came from the French and French American organizations (the artist is French) and from the Illinois Arts Council. From the league’s perspective, the fact that this “art” is being displayed in a state school that receives state monies, and is being funded with additional revenues from a state agency, raises serious church-state questions. Accordingly, the league took its complaint to public officials in Illinois.

LEAGUE AD TO BE PUBLISHED BY PRENTICE-HALL

The Catholic League is proud to announce that its 1995 ad on the U.N.'s Beijing Conference on Women will be published in a forthcoming volume by Prentice-Hall. The book, *Perspectives on Argument*, Second Edition by Nancy V. Wood , will republish the following ad; it appeared on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times* on September 3, 1995.

WISCONSIN CAMPUS MINISTER SLAMS CHURCH

Pamela Strakeljahn, the campus minister at the University of Wisconsin's Platteville campus, wrote a piece in February in the Wisconsin State Journal, that attacked the Catholic Church. Professing to disagree with the Catholic Church's teachings on qualifications for the priesthood, Strakeljahn blasted the Vatican for having "forgotten the human compassion and unconditional love that Jesus came to deliver." In a letter to the editor of the newspaper, the league branded this remark as "arrogant and fallacious."

Even more astounding was Strakeljahn's comment that if Jesus were here today, He would disagree with the Church's teachings. "Excuse me," William Donohue wrote, "but does

Strakeljahn have some special pipeline to Jesus that the rest of us have been denied?" He then added, "This absurd statement shows how fundamentalism on the left is no different than fundamentalism on the right-both are born of hubris and both ineluctably express themselves with an animus towards Catholicism."

What this also goes to show is that those who are hostile to Catholicism not only can get their work published in mainline sources, they can be rewarded with a position as campus minister. Now just how receptive of an ear is Strakeljahn capable of providing Catholic students at her campus? It seems not to matter a whit, not even to the high priests of tolerance in higher education.

NATIONAL LAW JOURNAL OFFENDS

The February 24th edition of the *National Law Journal* contained a critical article about a recent court decision that legitimated the rights of abortion protesters. The article was responsible journalism, even if it was disagreeable from the league's perspective. What was irresponsible was the accompanying cartoon.

The cartoon by Martin Mayo showed a judge tied to his chair with Rosary beads; the cross was shown lying at the judge's feet. The judge in the case that was addressed in the article had a very Italian-sounding name (Sprizzo), giving rise to that sneaking suspicion that he might be Catholic. Hence, the liberty to Catholic-bash.

The league fired off a letter to the publisher letting him know just how pleased we were with his concept of fairness. We made sure to remind him that the U.S. Constitution allows for

no religious test for anyone holding public office.

TOUCH LEAVES US UNTOUCHED

The movie, *Touch*, tries to capture what Christ would be like if he came back to earth in the 1990s. Viewers are introduced to a Christ who, though capable of miracles, shows no interest in spreading the gospel, perhaps owing to his attraction to girls. We meet nutty Catholics who are prepared to kill for a return to the Latin Mass an array of characters whom most Catholics would find bizarre. In short, just the regular fare we've come to expect.

INDIANAPOLIS STAR INFLAMES CATHOLICS

Beginning February 16, the *Indianapolis Star* ran a three-part series on sexual misconduct among priests in the Lafayette Diocese. Though some of the reporting was professional, and an editorial on the subject was reasonable, there were elements to the story that justifiably inflamed area Catholics, and none more than Bishop William Higi.

The way the story began was the first clue that sensationalism was at work: "In the heart of Indiana lies a Roman Catholic diocese tainted by priestly sins, dark secrets of lust and betrayal that have wounded scores of victims." That is the kind of bombast worthy of tabloid journalism, the kind found

next to the checkout counter of your local supermarket. It was that sort of thing that the league protested.

Bishop Higi scored some real points in his letter to the editor of February 23. He properly took the offensive by saying that just as the *Star* takes pains to protect the privacy of persons whom the newspaper believes are victims, so, too, does his diocese refuse disclosure of those found to be victims. Not shying away from the question of privacy for offenders, Bishop Higi drew a distinction between a cover-up and an honest attempt to maintain privacy rights.

What angered the league most was what angered Bishop Higi most, namely, the tawdry sensationalism that marred the story. He said that when he first learned that a series would be done on clergy sexual misconduct in his diocese, he "never imagined the kind of graphic headlines, distasteful illustrations and lurid details that have been featured in these articles."

Perhaps what was most strange about the story was the fact that there are no current cases of abuse in the Lafayette diocese. Not one. So if there is no on-going problem in the diocese, what motivated The Star to write an on-going story about events that happened (in some instances) before the reporters were born?