

MARYLAND JUDGE VIOLATES CHURCH-STATE BOUNDARIES

Frederick County Circuit Judge Mary Ann Stepler has issued a preliminary injunction ordering a Catholic high school to allow two of its students, who have been expelled, to attend school pending a trial. The students, a boy and a girl, were expelled after a sexual encounter in the hallway of the school; they are suing on grounds of racial discrimination. Robert Forrest, president of the league's Baltimore chapter, spoke publicly on this issue, including an hour-long interview on WABC radio in New York.

The Catholic League came to the defense of the school, issuing the following reasons in a news release for its intervention:

"For St. John's Literary and for the expelled students, what matters is that justice be done. What matters for the Catholic League is that justice does not come from the bench. Independent of the innocence or the guilt of the students is the right of Catholic schools to determine their own disciplinary measures without intrusion from the courts. When the judiciary engages in imperialism, as it clearly has in this case, then the entire structure of democratic governance is jeopardized.

"Those who clamor for separation of church and state should support the Catholic League's position. If they don't, then it suggests that their real First Amendment interest is in exploiting church-state issues for political purposes.

"We hope that the school will fight this to the end. What is at stake is nothing less than the autonomy of Catholic schools."

VICTORY FOR SICKOS

A jury in Ocala, Florida has refused to convict a man on obscenity charges for wearing a T-shirt that depicted a nun masturbating, with a vile comment about Jesus on the flip side. No one will be shocked to learn that the decision was hailed by the ACLU and anti-Catholic bigots.

The front of Andrew Love's T-shirt sported an image of a topless nun with her hands between her legs, painting a picture of ecstasy on her face; below the image was the inscription, "vestal masturbation." The back of the shirt read, "Jesus is a (slang for female genitalia)." The T-shirt that Love wore promotes an English "death metal band" called Cradle of Filth, mostly known for its songs that are filled with references to Satan and devil worshipping.

News reports said that defense attorneys sought to convince the jury that the T-shirt was a comment on the hypocrisy that exists in organized religion. We took it as a comment on the sickness of the accused, the prostitution of the lawyers and the perversion of the First Amendment. We'll make sure to log it in next year's *Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism*.

HORMEL STILL IN THE RUNNING

In the last issue of *Catalyst*, we mentioned that the Catholic League was challenging the Clinton nomination of James Hormel to be the next U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg; Hormel refuses to retract his endorsement of the anti-Catholic group, Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. At press time, he was still in the running. It seems that Hormel's generosity to many causes that congressmen and senators applaud have made it difficult for them to vote against him.

Since writing to every member of the Senate, the most interesting development thus far came from the office of California Senator Dianne Feinstein. She wrote the league citing Hormel's philanthropy, adding that "the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations approved the nomination of Jim Hormel without objection...." Yet the week before we received a letter from Jesse Helms, chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, wherein he said "I share your opposition to Mr. Hormel's nomination and, as you know, I voted against it...."

Upon receipt of Senator Feinstein's letter, we called her office and asked for an explanation. We were told that the phrase "without objection" was not meant to suggest unanimous support for Mr. Hormel, but rather to indicate that the nomination "was not held up" in committee. Sounds to us like a classic case of Clintonese, worthy of inclusion in the ever-growing Orwellian book on Doublespeak.

"NUNSENSE" IN DRAG

Over the past several years, we have been asked on occasion whether the Catholic League objects to the long-running play,

“Nonsense.” Our answer has been, no. As a matter of policy, we generally don’t make complaints when there is an element of doubt about a given illustration, movie, depiction, etc. Because we have doubts about “Nonsense” being objectionable, we haven’t said a word. Until now, that is.

When we recently learned that a “Nonsense” in drag was playing in New Orleans, we wondered what the creator of the play would say. We were disappointed. As it happens, an actor and director by the name of Jon J. Dendinger approached the play’s creator, Dan Goggin, of his desire to do an all-male “Nonsense.” Goggin, who had seen a foreign-production with a “gender-bender” cast, gave him the green light.

Goggin’s approval is disturbing. It suggests that he is interested in making more than a light-hearted statement. Our advice would be not to subsidize Goggin’s new game plan. Pass the word.

MUDSLINGING AT MUHLENBERG

Muhlenberg is a small college in Eastern Pennsylvania that, up until now, has never caught our attention. That changed when we learned that a controversial statement about Our Blessed Mother was made on campus; we also objected to a slam at Pope Pius XII.

In the library of the school stood an icon of Mary, complete with a statement that chastised Catholics for not recognizing her Jewish origins. It also indicted Pius for being “silent” during the Holocaust. Here is the text of William Donohue’s letter to Muhlenberg president, Dr. Arthur Taylor.

“I recently learned of the controversy over the icon of Mary

and was disheartened to find out that you support Chaplain King's position on this issue. While I do not want to unnecessarily continue what has already been a lengthy exchange on this matter, I do feel that as president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization that some further comments are required.

"It astounds me that anyone would make the case that Catholics are less than willing to recognize Mary's Jewishness. That she is more commonly referred to as the Virgin Mary, or Our Blessed Mother, in no way suggests that Catholics have failed to come to terms with her ethnicity. In the same vein, the Albanian ancestry of Mother Teresa is well-known, yet few give primacy to her ethnicity when considering her status; only a prig would carp at this.

"The attack on Pope Pius XII, while popular these days, has been more than adequately rebutted by Catholic and non-Catholic scholars alike. Enclosed find a copy of the Catholic League volume on this subject, as well as an excerpt from a new book on Pius. Also enclosed is a copy of the December 22, 1997 *New York Times* op-ed page ad that the Catholic League published on this issue.

"Finally, there is another issue that is separate from these concerns. Having spent most of my professional career in higher education, I know how vital it is to have an open forum for debate. But what I don't understand is the venue of this controversy: to use a chapel (as opposed to an art gallery or library) to make a political statement against Catholicism strikes me as being reprehensible.

"Thank you for your consideration."

Donohue has not heard from Dr. Taylor yet. We hope he gets the message.

VICTORY FOR PRO-LIFERS

Students for Life, a group of pro-life students at the University of Buffalo, have won a settlement of \$38,000 from the school for discriminating against them for political reasons.

In 1996, Students for Life was discouraged by the university from holding an anti-abortion conference and from erecting a memorial of 4,400 crosses. The group was required to put up a bond of \$4,800, something no other student group had ever been asked to do. The group sued and won, the result being that the University of Buffalo must now revise its policy so that "viewpoint discrimination" is eliminated from its discretionary powers.

The Catholic League gave advice to the students at the time and is delighted that they won.

"OUR LADY OF THE PUCK"?

What is it about our religious themes and icons that seem so irresistible to Madison Avenue executives? The latest example of this comes from Spike Lee, better known for his Hollywood forays.

Lee has been commissioned by Fox Sports to do an ad for its coverage of National Hockey League games. Lee chose comedian Flip Wilson to preach from a pulpit at "Our Lady of the Puck." Filmed at Woolman Rink in Central Park, Wilson preaches "the

gospel of hockey to dozens of 'worshippers' in wooden pews on the ice." He proclaims, "To win a Stanley Cup, you must do unto others...but not in front of the refs!—Hallelujah."

We don't find this crude or insulting, just dumb, which is why we won't protest. But if this represents Spike Lee's best effort at breaking into Madison Avenue, we suggest that he stay put on the west coast.

KEEPING HOLY WEEK HOLY

Carl Horst, president of the San Diego chapter of the Catholic League, has kept a close watch on the public school calendar as it impacts on Easter. Last year he protested a decision made by area schools to hold class on Good Friday, and this year he took aim at the 1998-1999 calendar because it doesn't allow for spring break to coincide with Holy Week; there are no problems with this year's schedule.

On March 17, at the behest of the San Diego chapter of the Catholic League, the Escondido Union High School District Board of Trustees voted 4-1 to change next year's calendar so that spring break occurs during the week of Easter, rather than the week following Easter. Horst was delighted with the result but was not totally happy with the reasoning that was advanced to reach this end. Thus, he will continue to work with school officials until a long-term resolution to this problem is found.

LEAGUE TARGETED IN NOVEL

In a new novel by Mary Gordon, the Catholic League is introduced as a censorial agent. In *Spending*, Gordon refers to the “Catholic Defense League” as an activist organization that protests the artistic work of Monica Szabo.

Spending is a sex novel about a jaded artist who wants to put a new spin on pictures of “dead Christs.” Her desire is to do “a series of paintings of postorgasmic men based on the great Italian Renaissance portraits of dead Christs.” She is met with a protest from the Catholic Defense League and even debates the leader of the civil rights organization on the Charlie Rose show.

“Mary Gordon’s reputation in Catholic circles,” said William Donohue, “is one of disrepute. Her new book contributes nicely to her status.” Regarding the reference to the Catholic League, Donohue added, “we know this is a work of fiction when Gordon’s heroine wins a TV debate with the Catholic League.”

WHO SPEAKS FOR CATHOLICS?

Time and time again, critics charge that the Catholic League has no right to speak for all Catholics. Never mind that we never said we did, or that we have repeatedly said otherwise, the mudslingers continue to dig for dirt. But it makes us wonder why no one seems to ask the We Are Church/Call to Action folks how they can honestly advertise themselves as representing “70%” of American Catholics, given their tiny support. In a recent ad for an upcoming conference, that’s exactly the claim they made.

Not too long ago, the We Are Church ensemble pledged to get 1,000,000 Catholics to sign its petition demanding that Rome restructure the Church. After foundation money poured in, and after schoolchildren were literally bribed a buck for every name they snatched, the final tally was an embarrassing 37,000 signatures, a third of which came from non-Catholics. By contrast, the Catholic League garnered over 1,000,000 signatures in three months protesting the Disney/ABC show "Nothing Sacred." And remarkably we did it without exploiting children or cheating.

So who speaks for Catholics? While that can be debated, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out who doesn't.