

ARTISTS IDENTIFY VIRGIN MARY AS WHORE

During the first part of March, there were 12 performances of the play, “‘Tis a Pity She’s a Whore,” at New York Performance Works, a downtown New York theater. The play was written by John Ford in 1633 during the English Renaissance. It has been called a “bloody revenge tragedy” that features incest, stabbing and poisoning. The play was produced by the Wide Sky Theatre Company in association with the New York Performance Alliance.

The postcard that was sent to prospective theater-goers advertising the play showed an illustration of the Virgin Mary with the Immaculate Heart; the inscription, “‘Tis a Pity She’s a Whore,” was written across her. It was sent by the Actors Equity Association.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows to the press over this matter:

“New York Performance Works told me that the play is not about Catholicism. Indeed, I was told that the decision to put an illustration of the Virgin Mary on the postcard advertising the play was ‘the personal choice’ of the New York Performance Works. Not surprisingly, their friends at Actors Equity disclaimed any responsibility for the advertisement.

“In the recently released *Catholic League’s 1998 Report on Anti-Catholicism*, I commented that ‘There is something perverse going on in the artistic community.’ What the New York Performance Works has now done adds to the legacy of anti-Catholicism that marks this community.

“The fact that this sick play is being shown in some dump for just a few weeks suggests that it isn’t worth getting too excited about. But the postcard illustration is worth noting:

there is something about Our Blessed Mother that the depraved can't stomach."

GAY ALMANAC ERRS

The *Gay and Lesbian Almanac* has a chapter on Religion and Spirituality that contains a gross falsehood. It says that the 1997 U.S. Catholic Bishops' document, "Always Our Children," advises parents "to put their love for their gay children before church doctrine that condemns homosexuality."

The document, which does encourage Catholic parents of gay children not to stop loving them, says nothing about subordinating church teaching on homosexuality to some other interest.

What bothers us most of all is the following disclaimer that appears in the book: "While every effort has been made to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, St. James does not guarantee the accuracy of the data contained herein." We took them up on the next remark by letting them know of the inaccuracy: "Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions." Time will tell if this promise will be honored.

POLITICS OF LIFE

“Life, What a Beautiful Choice.” Question: Who wants to ban this innocent message? Answer: Cherry Hill, New Jersey’s *Courier-Post*.

The censors at the *Courier-Post* were upset to learn that Our Lady of Good Counsel Church had put this message on a banner and hung it across the street. There is a municipal ordinance that says that banners posted on public property must advertise or be related to an actual event, and in the end the church had to remove the banner because of this ruling. But this was not the reason why the *Courier-Post* was so angry. “While for some people the pro-life slogan is indeed a personal belief,” the editorial said, “it is also a nationally advertised, partisan political catch phrase.”

Msgr. James McGovern, pastor of the church, drew the hypocrisy out of the *Courier-Post* when he pointed out that no one had complained about a banner that read, “Do a Random Act of Kindness Every Day.” According to the bright lights at the newspaper, that banner was “erected in conjunction with national Random Acts of Kindness Week” and therefore “does not take a political stance.”

Now do you understand all this? “Life, What a Beautiful Choice” is a slogan that cannot be tolerated—must in fact be censored—because its message is political. But “Do a Random Act of Kindness Every Day” is not political and therefore should be allowed. Now if you can figure this out, maybe you can work for the *Courier-Post*.

HUNTER MADNESS

A few months ago we ran a story about a particularly disgusting item in the Hunter College student newspaper, *Envoy*. We thought the issue died with the apologies.

Some anti-Semitic letters were received at *Envoy's* office, portions of which were reprinted in the newspaper. That the hate mail was unfairly superimposed on Catholic League letterhead led the league to warn *Envoy* to cease and desist lest they get sued.

CELEBRITIES BASH CHURCH

Many scholars have commented on how anti-Catholicism is the only respectable bias left in the nation. It could also be said that among many celebrities, Catholic bashing is something to celebrate.

Cher was recently asked whether she had ever dated someone her own age. Her reply was, "I would never have gone out in my whole life if I waited for guys my own age to ask me out. I would have been a nun—what a terrible waste."

Britney Spears is one of the hottest teenage singers around. According to *Newsweek*, at an MTV appearance in New York, "Teenage girls mimicked the naughty Catholic-school uniform she wears in the video for "...Baby One More Times": unbuttoned white shirt, sexy black bra and a gray miniskirt hiked so high it makes Ally McBeal look like a nun."

Phil Donahue, who has never made a secret of his contempt for

the Catholic Church, contributed to his legacy of Catholic bashing at a gay and lesbian bash in Los Angeles. In an address before the homosexual audience, Donahue “railed against the Catholic church’s ‘promotion of homophobia.’” He also said that President Clinton’s “popularity owes not so much to his grandeur as to America’s reaction to the gross violation of his privacy.”

Elton John and his boyfriend, David Furnish, have secured the film rights to the David Yallop book, *In God’s Name*. The controversial 1984 best seller alleges that Pope John Paul I was killed by the Mob; the book was denounced by the Vatican as a collection of “absurd fantasies.” The New York *Daily News* commented that this “Sounds like it’ll be another favorite of the Catholic League.”

SACRED SYMBOLS, PUBLIC SPACE

For more than three decades, Jersey City, New Jersey, has erected a crèche and menorah outside City Hall. When the ACLU sued a few years ago, citing the usual separation of church and state argument, Mayor Bret Schundler added Santa, Frosty the Snowman, a sleigh and Kwanzaa ribbons. But the ACLU still wasn’t happy and so it wound up in the courts.

The latest ruling on this issue proved to be a victory for Mayor Schundler and a loss for the ACLU. A federal appeals court ruling has said that the mix of secular and sacred symbols passes constitutional muster. The ACLU is appealing the decision. Members should know that for the past few years, the Catholic League has made a financial contribution to this cause, helping to defray the legal costs. The victory belongs to the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, headed by Kevin

Hasson.

At four southern Ohio high schools there are Ten Commandment monuments. The ACLU is now suing to have them removed. Fighting back, the Adams County/Ohio Valley school board has decided to press the case in court. The man who brought the suit, Berry Baker, has formed the Center for Phallic Worship and has asked the school board for permission to put a 6-foot marble penis next to the tablets. School officials ignored his request.

APOLOGY FOR SLURS

On February 21, a band called Tammy Faye Starlight sang a song riddled with slurs against nuns, Jews and brain-injured children. The band was featured on WKCR, a Columbia University radio station.

Following a complaint lodged by the Catholic League, as well as others, the station's program director apologized for what happened and pledged that this would not happen again. The regular host of the show was sick that day and the substitute host, an 18 year-old student, was taken by surprise when she heard the lyrics. An on-air apology was granted by the regular host just days after the offense was committed.

DEVILISH SCHOOLS

We live in strange times. A high school student from suburban Detroit has sued her school arguing that she has a constitutional right to wear the symbol of her faith on campus—the practice of witchery. The ACLU, naturally, is defending the witch, Crystal Siefferly.

It should be known that the ACLU opposes the right of nuns in habit to teach at a public school (Muslim teachers who wear Turbans, however, are okay). The ACLU is also against singing “Silent Night” at Christmas. Given all this, it’s nice to know that their understanding of diversity is inclusive of witches.

If some school officials and parents in White Plains, New York, had it their way, Satanism would be taught in the classrooms throughout the country.

But three courageous Roman Catholic families have sued the Bedford Central School District in an effort to stop what Mary DiBari calls activities that initiate children into “Satanism and witchcraft and other pagan worship.” Some public school officials in this area have previously gotten skittish about students carrying candy canes to school at Christmas, but they are non-plussed about Satanism invading the classroom through surreptitious means.

What’s been going on in Bedford schools is a blend of New Age programs, pop psychology, non-Christian spirituality and the occult. This is the determination of William Coulson, a highly respected psychologist (and Catholic League member) from California. Dr. Coulson testified that the “net effect of these programs is destructive. It’s psychotherapy applied to children who don’t have enough life experiences to find a fund of answers to draw from within themselves.”

If the schools can tolerate witchery, surely they can tolerate students who say an innocent prayer in the huddle before a

football game. Right? Wrong.

A federal appeals court in Houston has ruled that such prayers—even though they are student-led—are unconstitutional. It is unclear whether there will be an appeal, but it should be noted that the Fifth Circuit's jurisdiction covers Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, home of fervent football fans. Also unclear is whether the same judges who delivered this decision would have been so intolerant had the issue been a moment of silence initiated by a Satanist fullback.

Finally, we have the case of Eight Corners School in Scarborough, Oregon: they banned the celebration of Valentine's Day this year. Here's how Bill Nemitz, columnist for the *Portland Press Herald*, put it:

"That's right, kids. Forget about the crush Johnnie has on Susie that's been repressed since September, waiting for its moment in the midwinter sun. Forget about the cute rhymes, the smiley faces, the heart-shaped nuggets of chalk-candy that set pulses racing with verbal confections like 'UR Cute' and 'Be Mine' and 'Hot Stuff!' Forget about the cards, the envelopes, the cryptic notes beneath the signatures..." All this is because school officials determined that St. Valentine's Day was a religious celebration.

These four cases have two things in common: a) a willful disregard for the plain meaning of the First Amendment and b) a hatred of Christianity. The devil, they say, is in the deed.

PAPAL BASHING

In the last issue of *Catalyst* we said that "Media treatment of the pope's visit to St. Louis was overwhelmingly fair." We

stand by that assessment, though there have been some new developments.

The "Daily Show" on Comedy Central did a segment wherein they poked fun at the pope's mental health, took a cheap shot at teenagers who turned out to see the Holy Father and managed to throw in a few choice words about the Crusades and the Inquisition. We complained to the network.

Student newspapers at the University of New Hampshire and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale also contributed to Catholic bashing. In the pages of the *New Hampshire*, senior Sam Epstein proved that after four years of college, he was still an anti-Catholic bigot (assuming that his bigotry wasn't learned on campus). Carolyn Skaggs at Southern Illinois bragged about her Catholic-bashing exploits in the pages of the *Daily Egyptian*. An embittered ex-Catholic, Ms. Skaggs cannot understand why so many love the pope.

A mild offense took place in the pages of the *Waco Tribune-Herald* around the time of the papal visit. Under the banner, "Papal Worship," was a picture of a woman kissing the pope's ring. When we pointed out the obvious—that it is a sign of respect to kiss the ring, not worship—we received a sincere apology from the editor.

The magazine, *Wired*, printed another attack on the pope, only this time it was coupled with all kinds of shots, ranging from the Inquisition to the Holocaust. We labeled it "mindless anti-Catholic diatribe."

Talking about the Holocaust, here we go again. Actress Anne-Marie Johnson on the "Leeza" program said that Pope Pius XII collaborated with the Nazis. We set the record straight, something we will never tire doing.