

NBC SHOW PROTESTED; VICTORY SCORED

Following the February 22 episode of the NBC-TV sitcom, "Committed," we were hit with an avalanche of complaints. We investigated the matter and immediately demanded that this particular episode be permanently retired, never to air again. NBC agreed.

The episode featured two non-Catholics who are mistakenly given Holy Communion at a Catholic funeral Mass. Nate, who is Jewish, and Bowie, a Protestant, don't know what to do with the Eucharist, so they make several failed attempts to get rid of it. For example, they try slipping it into the pocket of a priest, dropping it on a tray of cheese and crackers, etc.

At one point, the priest, who is portrayed as not knowing the difference between the Host and a cracker, goes to grab the "cracker" from a tray of appetizers; he initially balks when he discovers that it is the last one. Then he changes his mind, saying, "Oh, what the hell." By far the most offensive scene occurs when Nate and Bowie accidentally flush what they think is the Host down the toilet.

In our news release, we said, "The complaints have come from bishops, college chaplains, pastors and the laity, and they have come from all over the country. With good reason: NBC has made a direct frontal assault on Roman Catholicism, choosing to mock, trivialize and ridicule the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ."

We also pointed out that what happened was no accident: "What happened was deliberate. According to a January 2 story in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the writers for the series, Eileen Heisler and DeAnn Heline, have been encouraged by NBC executives 'to push the limits of comedy.' For obvious

reasons, the writers...chose not to push the buttons of homosexuals (or some other protected group), so they decided to play it safe and stay in good standing with their bosses by bashing Catholics."

We then sought a promise not to rerun this episode again.

It speaks well for NBC that its top officer in charge of such matters immediately called William Donohue. After he saw the episode, he agreed it should never air again. Donohue then issued another statement saying that NBC's response was "fair and decisive."

HALLMARK PULLS CARD

It wasn't the worst we've seen, but it was still unnecessarily offensive. So we made a complaint to Hallmark and they decided to withdraw the birthday card for good.

On the cover of the card was a sketch of a homely nun wearing a habit, saying, "I'm so excited about your birthday, I feel like doing a cartwheel." On the inside, it said, "Oops. Better not. Just remembered it's 'No Underwear Day' here at the abbey."

Some of our members, including a dedicated soul from the Bahamas, sent us the card and asked what we could do about it. So we wrote a letter to the President and CEO, Donald J. Hall, Jr., wanting to know why Hallmark, which has a good name to protect, would want to stock such a card. We subsequently received a letter from Eileen Drummond, the Creative Director of the Writing & Editorial Department, saying, "we will cease any future production and shipping of this card."

Ms. Drummond also said that the intent of the card “was never to offend.” Perhaps. But whether it was or it wasn’t doesn’t really matter in the end: we’re more than a little sick and tired of the “creative types” taking liberties with our religion. Not that it would make us feel any better, but why don’t these “artists” pick on some other group once and a while?

On the other hand, it speaks well for Hallmark that they didn’t try to justify the card as a humorous statement. All we ask is that our complaints be taken seriously, and Hallmark did exactly that.

KEY TO CATHOLIC SUCCESS: KEEPING IT CLEAN

William A. Donohue

Several years ago, a woman who was setting up a new Catholic lay group asked if it would be okay for her to attend one of our staff meetings; she admired the success of the Catholic League and wanted to learn how I handled such matters. She was told that I could not accede to her request because we don’t have staff meetings (to be honest, we have a few). More important, we told her, she now knew one reason why we are a success.

Staff meetings are occasionally necessary, but when used promiscuously, they are a menace to success. Worse than meetings are committees, and worse still are subcommittees. Decision-making by committees is nothing less than an abdication of individual responsibility: if something goes wrong, everyone is to blame, which means no one is to blame.

Fortunately, most Catholic institutions tend not to be top-heavy in administration, which is why they work so well.

Take the Vatican. Despite the image that the Catholic Church is run by some monstrous bureaucracy, it is actually one of the most decentralized institutions in the world. For example, the Church has 1.1 billion members being served by 2,600 Vatican employees, most of whom are lay persons. According to Rev. Thomas Williams, dean of theology at Regina Apostolorum Pontifical University in Rome, "The proportion would be like to run the federal government of the United States with 500 people." By the way, the actual number of federal employees today is 1.8 million.

Of course, most of the real work of the Church is done locally. It's our parish and diocese that most Catholics identify with, not the Vatican. As I recently told MSNBC's Chris Matthews, though the pope is central to the life of the Catholic Church, it is nonetheless true that he no more runs the affairs of the Church in Kenya anymore than he does in Kansas. To a considerable extent, I said, the Church is on "automatic pilot." How else could a global institutions survive for 2,000 years?

One good reason why the Catholic Church is not an administrative nightmare is lack of money. Again, there is this idea that the Church is loaded with money, but as John Allen recently wrote in *All the Pope's Men*, this is a myth: "To put it bluntly, the Vatican is not rich. It has an annual operating budget of \$260 million, which would not place it on any top 500 list of major social institutions. To draw a comparison in the nonprofit sector, Harvard University has an annual operating budget of a little over \$1.3 billion."

To those who ask, "What about the Vatican's art collections?", Allen reminds us that it "has no cash value because it can never be sold or borrowed against." This is why he concludes that "the Vatican is less well-heeled than most mid-sized

American colleges" (e.g., Notre Dame's budget is almost double the Vatican's).

Catholic schools are the real jewels in this regard. Run on a shoestring budget compared to public schools, they post an impressive achievement record, and nowhere is this more true than in the inner city. Again, one of the prime reasons for success is administrative leanness: the school principal enjoys a great deal of autonomy, and it is this lack of a bureaucratic structure that allows for tough decisions to be made.

The contrast with the public school system was recently brought home by Diane Ravitch, perhaps the nation's leading scholar of education. Here is how she describes what the average principal in a public school must put up with: "In every situation, the principal must take care not to violate federal laws, state laws, court decisions, consent decrees, case law, union contracts, and chancellor's regulations." This means "850 pages of state law (in small print); 720 pages of state regulations; 15,000 formal decisions by the state commissioner of education; hundreds of pages of collective bargaining agreements; thousands of pages of federal laws affecting the schools; and thousands of pages of chancellor's regulations."

And when it comes to dealing with a disruptive student, Ravitch says the principal "must embark on a very lengthy legal process that involves multiple letters, notifications, conferences, hearings, appeals, decisions at the local level, more conferences, more hearings, more appeals, decisions at the regional level, more hearings, more appeals, and so on." And Catholic parents just need to see their child's teacher or principal.

The Catholic League, as I indicated at the beginning, is also organizationally lean. We get things done because we are driven, and because we don't farm things out to consultants. And we have no intention of ever becoming fat and lazy.

WHY WE PUBLISHED THE PIUS WAR

By William Doyno, Jr.

Eight years ago this month, the *New Yorker* magazine published a spectacularly long article entitled “The Silence.” Written by the resigned priest James Carroll (now a columnist at the *Boston Globe*), it argued that the doctrine of papal infallibility and the Church’s insistence “upon the primacy of Jesus as a means to salvation” were both false and had caused untold harm throughout history. In a misunderstanding of papal infallibility remarkable in one who had studied Catholic theology, Carroll contended that the doctrine prevented the Church from acknowledging its own guilt, causing John Paul II to remain “silent” in the face of overwhelming institutional sin. “The doctrine of infallibility,” Carroll concluded, “is like a virus that paralyzes the body of the Church.”

“The Silence,” caused a mini-sensation, becoming a focal point for anti-Catholics everywhere, and a conversation piece among the chattering classes. What made the article notable were not its attacks against the pope, its slashing attacks against papal infallibility, nor even its manifold errors about theology and Church history. What caused the greatest impact was Carroll’s attempt to blame Pope Pius XII—and, to a large extent, the Catholic Church itself—for the Holocaust.

Carroll’s charges were hardly novel. As early as 1943, Soviet propagandists concocted tales about Pius XII’s alleged collaboration with Hitler’s Germany, attempting to drive a wedge between the faithful and the Church. After the war, these Communist myths were picked up by the German playwright Rolf Hochhuth—ironically, a former member of the Hitler Youth—whose play *The Deputy* (1963) attempted to transfer

German guilt to an Italian pope. Hochhuth caricatured Pius XII as a cowardly and avaricious man who could have prevented the Holocaust with a few dramatic words, but—because of his own weak character and financial interests—chose to remain “silent.” Carroll’s *New Yorker* article resumed Hochhuth’s indictment of Pius XII, and extended it.

Although many people dismissed the *New Yorker* piece—even *Commonweal* magazine, often critical of the Vatican, called the essay “factually flawed...logically garbled...theologically incoherent”—Carroll’s attacks against the papacy encouraged anti-papal polemicists, both within and without the Church, to publish their own salvos. Within a few years, a cottage industry of attacks on Pius XII and the Catholic Church emerged: John Cornwell’s *Hitler’s Pope* (1999); Gary Wills’s *Papal Sin* (2000); Susan Zuccotti’s *Under His Very Windows* (2000); Michael Phayer’s *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (2000); David Kertzer’s *The Popes Against the Jews* (2001); Carroll’s own *Constantine’s Sword* (2001); and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s *A Moral Reckoning* (2002).

On the talk-show circuits and in the academic journals, these books—despite their manifold errors—were greeted with an almost rapturous reception. One man, however, remained unconvinced: Rabbi and historian David Dalin. Disturbed and angered by what he considered the hijacking and exploitation of the Holocaust for partisan purposes, Dalin decided to respond. With degrees in both history and theology, and as a long-time participant in the Jewish-Catholic dialogue, he had both the knowledge and the authority to rebut the anti-papal polemicists, and write accurately about the Catholic Church and the Holocaust. The result was a series of essays and reviews, the most important being his first one, “Pius XII and the Jews,” a 5,000-word analysis of the entire controversy in the *Weekly Standard* of February 26, 2001.

Translated into several languages, Dalin’s article became one of the most widely reprinted essays on Pius XII. What struck

so many people about Dalin's work was not just his point-by-point refutation of Pius' detractors, but his dramatic conclusion: "Pius XII was, genuinely and profoundly, a Righteous Gentile."

To be sure, Dalin's essay did not please everyone, particularly those who had made a small fortune off of the Deputy Myth, or whose ideological disagreements with the Church were energized and sustained by that myth. The attack became all the more ferocious. In an essay published in the journal *First Things*, Joseph Bottum argued that although Pius's supporters had demolished the accusations against the wartime pontiff, they had lost the larger war over Pius's cultural reputation—or at least, not yet won it—because the opponents of Pius XII still wielded the most influence. Bottum's conclusion, however, may have been a bit premature.

In reality Pius's supporters were growing in influence, not just in America, but throughout the world. Discussing this matter among ourselves, we decided to put together an anthology which would do what had not yet been done: answer the recent critics of Pius XII *all at once*, within a single cover, in a comprehensive, measured fashion. The result is *The Pius War: Responses to the Critics of Pius XII*, edited by Bottum and Dalin, and published by Lexington Books.

The first hundred pages of the book collect the best essays and reviews—selected from literally hundreds of possibilities—of the various attack books which have appeared during the past decade. The criteria for selections were eloquence, force of persuasion, depth of knowledge and, above all, historical accuracy—as the contributions would be worthless unless they could prove their case.

Hence, two distinguished Church historians—Dr. Rainer Decker of Germany, and Fr. John Jay Hughes—respond, respectively, to Cornwell's *Hitler's Pope*, and Michael Phayer's *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust*—explaining what really happened

during the Nazi roundup of Rome's Jews (which was at the heart of Hochhuth's malicious play). Professor Ronald Rychlak, the foremost Pius scholar in America, deconstructs Susan Zuccotti's claim that Pius XII did "little or nothing" to assist persecuted Jews; Robert Louis Wilken, an eminent historian of Christianity at the University of Virginia, delivers a body blow to James Carroll's *Constantine's Sword*; teacher and publisher Justus George Lawler takes issue with Gary Wills' scatter-shot attacks and deeply flawed history; papal scholar Russell Hittinger responds to David Kertzer's *The Popes Against the Jews*; archival expert John Conway critiques historians who speak darkly about the Vatican's "secret" wartime archives—while never having studied the voluminous Vatican archives already released in eleven volumes; Michael Novak responds to Daniel Goldhagen's aspersions against Pius and the Church; and Kevin M. Doyle contributes the unexpected gem of the book, an analysis of the so-called "hidden encyclical," against anti-Semitism, intended by Pius XI and allegedly suppressed by Pius XII. Doyle shows that, far from remaining "hidden," the encyclical was transformed and published just six weeks after the beginning of the Second World War under a different name, *Summi Pontificatus*, condemning racism in all forms. Add to this Dalin's famous essay, and an introduction and concluding essay by Bottum.

Following these essays is my own contribution: an 80,000-word, 180-page annotated bibliography which attempts to canvass every aspect of this controversy—with a focus on demonstrating how Pius XII, far from remaining "silent," condemned anti-Semitism, racism, and genocide before, during and after the Holocaust. Constituting some two-thirds of the book, my bibliography has been very generously called "a tour de force of scholarship and highly readable to boot" (*National Review*, February 14). My purpose was to provide a kind of historical road map, an intellectual compass, for both laymen and scholars alike, who want to know more about this subject—and

want to know which authors can be trusted, which cannot—and why.

As important as we believe *The Pius War* is for recovering historical truth, it does not downplay or whitewash the sins of the “sons and daughters” of the Catholic Church, to quote John Paul II. Many of the essayists speak frankly about anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, and the bibliography has a long section on Jewish-Catholic relations, covering every aspect of this turbulent relationship, light and dark alike.

Already we can see signs of change. A movie of Hochhuth’s *Deputy* called “Amen” was released in 2002 only to become an international flop, garnering highly negative reviews. Hochhuth himself was recently caught praising the notorious revisionist historian—and accused Holocaust-denier—David Irving, thereby discrediting himself even further. John Cornwell recently stated that he now finds it “impossible to judge” Pius XII, in light of “the debates and evidence” that followed publication of his now-discredited *Hitler’s Pope*. Even Susan Zuccotti, writing in the esteemed *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (Fall 2004), while still maintaining her excessively skeptical attitude toward Pius XII’s involvement in rescue efforts, acknowledges evidence she previously overlooked, and now believes there is “much room for compromise and reconciliation” between participants in this debate. So, progress has been made, and continues to be made, as new archives are opened, new books are written, new perspectives are formed.

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TRIBUTE TO FATHER VIRGIL BLUM, S.J.

The Jesuits at Marquette University are fielding the names of priests they would like to honor, whether deceased or living. To that end, Father John Rainaldo, S.J., asked William Donohue to prepare a tribute to Father Blum, founder of the Catholic League. We thought we'd share it with our members.

Although I never had the privilege of meeting Father Virgil Blum, S.J., like everyone associated with the Catholic League I owe him a special debt of gratitude. Father founded the league in 1973, the year of the tragic *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion on demand in all 50 states. The league, of course, was not established primarily as a pro-life organization. Its chief functions were, as they remain, to defend individual Catholics and the institutional Church against slander and discrimination, similar to the Anti-Defamation League's role in defending Jews. Still, it is of more than symbolic importance that he began the work of the Catholic League the year of such a victory for the Culture of Death.

His vision for the league was of laymen and laywomen so burning with love for the Church that they wouldn't hesitate to take whatever Catholic action was necessary to defend her from attack. Long before Pope John Paul II was elected, Father Blum was putting into action the admonition the Holy Father would make to Catholics throughout the world: "Be not afraid!"

Father Blum was among the very earliest proponents of private school vouchers. Back in the 1970s, the ultra-secularists in the bloated, union-dominated public school establishment were

certain they would never be called to task on small matters like not being able to teach pupils. And quite frankly, a lot of conservatives of the time balked at supporting vouchers because they thought such a sweeping reform was a political non-starter in the Carter era. Father Blum knew differently, and his prescience was remarkable. Pro-voucher parents “fear that such legislation, no matter how designed, would be struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court,” he noted in the summer of 1977. “I do not think these fears are justified. A careful study of the reasoning of the Supreme Court...reveals, in my opinion, that education vouchers would meet the established criteria of constitutionality.”

How ahead of the curve Father Blum was. In a landmark case in 2002, the Supreme Court ruled that Cleveland’s voucher program was indeed constitutional, emboldening what is now a legion of highly organized voucher supporters across America. I hope they pay homage to those like Father Blum who long ago planted the seeds of the success they enjoy today.

That kind of political astuteness shouldn’t be surprising coming from an accomplished scholar of political science. Father Blum understood better than most the interplay between politics and culture. But he also, in the true spirit of Vatican II, grasped something that would become vital for the Catholic Church in the final decades of the 20th century: the role of the laity in the defense of the Church.

Since his death in 1990, we at the Catholic League have strived to stay loyal to Father Blum’s mission as we’ve adapted to the age of cable television and the Internet. Like this fine priest and man of action, we’ve tried to be courageous, as well as prudent. And yes, confrontational when necessary.

We hope he’d be proud of how we’ve cared for his legacy.

NEW SOURCE OF BIGOTRY

The Saudi Arabian government is actively disseminating hate literature to Muslims in the U.S., some of which is virulently anti-Christian.

Freedom House, the most reliable source of information on civil liberties throughout the world, has a Center for Religious Freedom that monitors religious liberty. It has just released a major report, *Saudi Publications on Hate Ideology Fill American Mosques*. It focuses on the teachings of Saudi Arabia's hardline Wahhabi sect. Wahhabism is the official state doctrine of Saudi Arabia; it is also "dominant in many American mosques."

What concerns the Catholic League is the extent to which Muslim Americans are being filled with hatred of Catholics. And not just Catholics—this pernicious brand of Islam preaches hatred of virtually everyone outside its ranks.

"In the Saudi Wahhabi literature found in the United States," the report says, "Christians and Jews are often paired together for attack." We're the "infidels." Regarding Christianity, the Wahhabis teach that Catholic dogma on the Trinity is "blasphemous." This is more than a theological quarrel—it's hate speech, pure and simple.

No one knows how many American Muslims are being taught such hatred. But one is too many.

THE NEXT POPE

William Donohue was asked by the Fox News Network to submit a short piece on the next pope; it was posted on its website.

Those who are banking on the next pope to be someone who will undo much of the work of Pope John Paul II are in for a grand disappointment. There are two good reasons why major changes will not be made: a) John Paul II has appointed over 95 percent of the cardinals who will vote on the next pope, and b) issues like abortion and gay marriage are defined by Scripture and Tradition, and thus will never change.

Now it is likely that the next pope will have a new style and will seek to carve his own place in Church history. Perhaps he might even entertain some changes in such Church disciplines as the celibacy requirement, or seek to expand the role of deacons. But the kinds of glacial changes that many Church dissidents desire are not going to happen.

What will prove to be as interesting to watch as what the next pope does is what the critics of John Paul II decide to do once they realize that they've lost again. Will they quit and join another religion? Or will they park themselves in the Catholic Church and continue pressing for a transformation of Church teachings? If they really respect diversity, they will join a religion that gives them what they want (there is no shortage of such "relevant" religions, though none of them is posting the membership gains that the Catholic Church is).

Most Catholics love John Paul II and someday he is likely to be known as John Paul the Great (he would be only the third pope in history to hold this honorific title). But even he can't please everyone, and what's comforting to know is that he really doesn't try. He just speaks the truth, and lets the chips fall where they may.

PHOTO PULLED

Arizona is home to Oregano's, a pizza chain. At its Tucson location, there was a large photograph of Pope John Paul II with an inscription below that was offensive—"Chicks Dig It."

One of our members from Tucson contacted us, and we, in turn, contacted the proprietor of Oregano's, Mark Russell. He quickly apologized for what happened and said, "Please rest assured that the picture will be taken down immediately." Case closed.

POPE'S RESILIENCY ANGERS NEWSWEEK

In the March 7 edition of *Newsweek*, there was an article in the "Periscope" section by Christopher Dickey on the health of Pope John Paul II titled, "He Has Willpower—But No 'Living Will.'"

In the article, Dickey (who did the piece with Robert Blair Kaiser) wrote, "Even as the aged pope's body shuts down in the late stages of Parkinson's disease, his will to live—and to impose his will on the Roman Catholic faithful—remains as stubborn as ever." He later wrote that if the pope were to slip into a coma, "Could anyone—would anyone—pull the plug?"

We weren't amused, and thus released the following remarks to the media:

“When presidents like Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt continue in office despite poor health, they are regarded as courageous, even heroic. But not Pope John Paul II—he has a duty to die. That’s because the pope, unlike the presidents, stubbornly imposes his will on the people. What is really astonishing—and maybe Dickey could address this—is the extent to which this dictatorial pope is loved the world over.

“Dickey lets us down when he asks whether someone could pull the plug on the pope. We thought he was smarter than that. It should be obvious—even to someone like Dickey—that any man who can impose his will on 1.1 billion people surely can impose his will on his own doctors. The very idea that this despotic pope has left anything to chance is beyond comprehension. That Dickey can’t connect his own dots does not speak well for his intellect, which is why it’s time for *Newsweek* to pull the plug on his column.”

EPISCOPAL BISHOPS RESPONDS

In the last issue of *Catalyst*, we printed a letter by William Donohue to New York Episcopal Bishop Mark S. Sisk. Donohue described the artistic work of Diane Victor that was showcased in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine; Victor’s “The Eight Marys” portrayed Our Blessed Mother in an obscene way. Donohue asked the bishop whether he would object if the artist portrayed his own mother the way the Virgin Mary was shown in the exhibit.

One month later, Donohue received a letter from Rev. Canon Thomas P. Miller; he said he was writing on behalf of Bishop Sisk. He said, in part, that “the artist’s figures are not meant to be representations of the Holy Mother.” So what are

they? “They are self-portraits in reference to the artist’s own struggle as a woman to come to terms with traditional religious iconography,” he said. The art, he stressed, was supposed to express “the dynamic spirit of a democratic South Africa.”

Want more baloney? Read this paragraph: “Diane Victor’s personal struggle as an artist and as a woman may be difficult to look at, but that very difficulty might serve to remind us of our call to be stewards of divine mercy in deference to God’s judgment. In a Cathedral filled with beautiful and transcendent images, we are reminded that, like Jesus and in Christ’s name, we are called to reach out beyond our comfort to the unlovely and unloved. Mary’s Song promises that God looks with favor on the lowly, who will be lifted up, as the proud will be scattered and the powerful brought down. In this light, the Victor portraits reach for Mary’s advocacy and offer hope even for what is most disturbing among us.” Whew!

Why is it that these nutty artists are always struggling? And what explains why she is struggling *as a woman*? Is it a struggle for her not to be a man? If so, she needs treatment, something any man of the cloth who purports to be troubled by the “unlovely” should have counseled. As for this business about “the Victor portraits...offer hope even for what is most disturbing among us,” someone needs to tell this struggling artist that nothing is more disturbing than her own work.

We’re saving the best for last. After being told that we didn’t quite understand Victor’s masterpiece, we are then congratulated: “Your questioning of ‘The Eight Marys’ has helped us to think more incisively about this important mission and reminded us of the importance of critical dialogue in the arts as well as religion.”

Now if we blew it, why the pat on the back? Moreover, wouldn’t it be highly condescending to thank us for getting it wrong?

Want to know what really happened? After getting pummeled by Catholic League members (we provided the bishop's address in the March *Catalyst* on purpose), the bishop told his underling to spin the issue by writing a tortured letter laced with artsy lingo. He succeeded. But we succeeded—thanks to you—in getting our point across.