

DO CATHOLICS OPPOSE THE OBAMA MANDATE?

The *New York Times* recently reported that a majority of Catholics (it did not cite the percentage, either in the article or on the *New York Times*/CBS Poll website) “are at odds with the [Catholic] church’s official stance [on the Obama mandate].” We found these results a bit puzzling.

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life reported that 55 percent of all Catholics, and 63 percent of those who attend church weekly, are opposed to the Obama mandate. A Rasmussen survey found that 77 percent of Catholics oppose the Obama mandate. So what gives?

The *Times* asked respondents, “Do you support or oppose a recent federal requirement that private health insurance plans cover the full cost of birth control for their female patients?” Notice there was no mention of the religious liberty implications, nor of the issue of exemptions. It’s just about free services for women.

Pew asked whether there should be an exemption for religiously affiliated institutions that object. Similarly, Rasmussen asked whether “individuals should have the right to choose between different types of health insurance plans.”

In short, how the question was framed affected the answer. We will leave it to the reader to decide whether the *Times* asked about the real issue.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND “RELIGIOUS LIBERTY”

Let's contemplate a scenario: assume that the federal government tries to censor the *New York Times*, and that critics of the newspaper take it to task for complaining that their “free speech” rights have been violated. The *Times* would be justly angered at the suggestion that their First Amendment right to free speech was being discussed as if it were their so-called free speech rights. Well, here's how it handles the religious liberties of Catholics under fire from President Obama.

- *Times* reporter Laurie Goodstein wrote a story, “Bishops Open ‘Religious Liberty’ Drive” (11-15-11)
- An editorial slammed Mitt Romney for “promising to defend the Roman Catholic Church’s ‘religious liberty’” (2-2-12)
- An editorial discussed the “phony crisis over ‘religious liberty’” (2-11-12)

Bloggers and other newspapers also picked up on the “religious liberty” rights of Catholics (Pam's House Blend, 2-10-12; Ira Chernus, Religion Dispatches, 2-21-12; an editorial in Vermont's *Brattleboro Reformer*, 2-21-12).

The *New York Times*' game of dumbing down the religious liberty rights of Catholics even extended to mocking the title of pro-life leaders: Richard Doerflinger, the associate director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the bishops' conference, was referred to in a news story as the “associate director of ‘pro-life activities.’”

It would be wrong to conclude that the *Times* always speaks derisively about religious liberty. In an editorial on Nov. 22, 2010, it pointedly said, “Mr. Obama respects religious liberty.” And on Sept. 19, 2011, it said, “Mayor Michael

Bloomberg rightly stood up for religious liberty.”

What was the issue? Mayor Bloomberg’s support for building a mosque at Ground Zero.

OBAMA URGES CHURCHES TO GET POLITICAL

In February, President Barack Obama launched his “African Americans for Obama” campaign. What was of particular interest to us was the accompanying video that was cut to help promote it.

In the video, President Obama explicitly called on African Americans to go “to your faith community” in order to get the word out about his campaign for re-election. He even went so far as to say that “congregation captains” should be organized to accomplish this goal.

It is hardly newsworthy for President Obama to beckon African Americans to support his presidential campaign, but his clarion call to black churches to get on board represented a break with presidential politics: it was a deliberate challenge to the IRS stricture governing the role of religion in politics. After he saw the video, Bill Donohue said, “This is good news. It means that the IRS harness on the clergy is officially off.”

Priests can now appoint “congregation captains” who will inform the faithful about attempts by the Obama administration to deny Catholics their First Amendment rights. By formally appealing to their parishioners to mobilize against the ObamaCare legislation, priests will be faithfully implementing

the president's new initiative.

Bishops, of course, will be able to seize on this ground-breaking proposal by utilizing priests, nuns, brothers, school teachers—lay leaders of every cause—to get the word out about the draconian Health and Human Services edict.

Donohue ended his statement to the media saying, “By undoing the IRS muzzle on black ministers, President Obama has also made it possible for bishops and priests to organize against his war on Catholics with impunity. The timing is auspicious.”

FRONTAL ASSAULT ON CATHOLICISM

Never has there been a more vicious, hate-filled anti-Catholic advertisement in a prominent American newspaper than the one found in the March 9 *New York Times* by Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF). The demonization of Catholicism was palpable.

The pretext of the ad was the Catholic Church's opposition to the Health and Human Services mandate forcing Catholic non-profits to include abortion-inducing drugs, contraception and sterilization in its insurance plans. Its real agenda was to smear Catholicism. The ad began: “It's time to quit the Roman Catholic Church. Will it be reproductive freedom, or back to the Dark Ages?”

The ad blamed the Catholic Church for promoting “acute misery, poverty, needless suffering, unwanted pregnancies, overpopulation, social evils and deaths.” It said the bishops are “launching a ruthless political Inquisition” against

women. It talked about “preying priests” and corruption “going all the way to the top.” In an appeal to Catholic women, it opined, “Apparently, you’re like the battered woman who, after being beaten down every Sunday, feels she has no place else to go.”

FFRF is led by a husband and wife team, Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker. Fortunately for Gaylor, her mother did not follow through on the advice she gave women in her book, *Abortion Is a Blessing*.

Not a single Catholic who read this ad would have been impelled to leave the Church. That is not the issue (Catholicism, unlike many other religions, is actually growing in the U.S., and worldwide). The issue is the increase in hate speech directed at Catholics.

Nothing will stop Catholics from demanding that the Obama administration respect their First Amendment rights, this vile assault by FFRF notwithstanding. Why the *Times* allowed this ad is another issue altogether, but the developments that were unveiled a few days later spoke volumes.

Following the running of the FFRF ad, anti-Islamist activist Pamela Geller decided to submit an ad to the *Times* that played off the FFRF one by changing the wording to make it look like an attack on Islam. For example, she asked Muslims to quit their religion because they oppress so many people.

Neil Munro of The Daily Caller wrote a splendid article on Geller’s courageous gambit explaining why she was turned down by the *Times*. It was rejected, they said, because “the fallout from running this ad now could put U.S. troops and/or civilians in the [Afghan] region in danger.”

The *Times*’ rationale for denying Geller’s ad was sound: we are opposed to unnecessarily putting our armed forces in harm’s way. But we wondered why it took fear to impel the *New York Times* not to run bigoted ads. Wouldn’t ethics suffice? It

certainly wasn't enough when they decided to run the FFRF ad assaulting Catholic sensibilities.

It would be wrong to merely pick on the *Times*. There needs to be a national discussion on the way the elite media extend a privileged position to some sectors of our society, while failing to extend the same protections to other sectors.

OBAMA'S PRO-INFANTICIDE VOTE

During a recent GOP debate, Newt Gingrich charged that in the last presidential campaign the elite media never asked "why Barack Obama voted in favor of legalizing infanticide." Gingrich wasn't off by much—Obama was rarely asked about it, and never was he pressed on this issue. Even now, the media cover-up that Gingrich alleged is patently true.

The day after Gingrich's remark, we conducted a Lexis-Nexis search linking "Obama" and "infanticide," scouring all U.S. newspapers. Our results found that only four papers, and one wire service, reported on Gingrich's claim. But there was more to it than that, there were actually five newspapers that made mention of this.

The *Chicago Tribune*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and the *Washington Times* all gave accurate accounts. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* was factually wrong when it said that "Gingrich was referring to Obama's opposition to...partial-birth abortions." No, Gingrich was referring to Obama's opposition in the Illinois state senate to bills in 2001, 2002 and 2003 that would have mandated that a child born alive as a result of a botched abortion be given medical care.

AP mentioned what Gingrich said but did so by citing Obama's

support for “infanticide.” Why the quote marks? Intentionally letting an infant die who is completely born would be nothing less than infanticide.

The top prize for deceit went to the *New York Times*. In the paper’s early edition, the story by Jeff Zeleny and Jim Rutenberg offered the Gingrich quote but added a curious parenthetical: “(It was a reference to Mr. Obama’s opposition to bills in Illinois that would have provided legal protection to aborted fetuses showing signs of life; Mr. Obama said he had seen the measures as attacks on women’s reproductive rights.)” This attempt to bail out Obama, as bad as it was, was stricken altogether from later editions—there was no mention of the infanticide issue—and did not appear in a Lexis-Nexis search.

By the way, in 2008, Rutenberg wrote that accusations surfaced “accusing Mr. Obama of supporting ‘infanticide’ (he does not).” The bias couldn’t be more blatant.

DOLAN DENIED HONOR

Recently, Rep. Michael Grimm’s request that the Empire State Building shine red in honor of the elevation of New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan to Cardinal was denied. The decision was predictable.

The problem with Cardinal Dolan is that he is not a mass murderer. If he were, he may have been honored the way Mao Zedong was in 2009. Even though Mao murdered 77 million innocent Chinese men, women and children, Anthony Malkin, the owner of the Empire State Building, lit the tower red and yellow on the 60th anniversary of the Communist Revolution.

The decision to deny Rep. Grimm's request did not surprise us. We petitioned to have the tower of the Empire State Building shine blue and white on August 26, 2010 in honor of Mother Teresa's centennial. We were denied. Worse, we were lied to. With Malkin's blessing, a brand new policy barring recognition of religious individuals was developed *after* we were denied, and it was then invoked as cause for denial; the policy in place when we submitted our proposal had no such stricture.

To protest this insult, we staged a rally outside the Empire State Building on the 100th birthday of Mother Teresa. Representatives from several religions, both eastern and western, spoke before an estimated crowd of 3,500.

To show how utterly clueless Malkin and his crew are, the Empire State Building recently honored St. Patrick from March 16-18. Who do they think St. Patrick was? A closet secularist?

IF ONLY CATHOLICS WERE INDIANS

The Obama administration will not extend a religious exemption to Catholic non-profits who don't want their insurance carrier to provide for abortion-inducing drugs, but it has decided to grant a religious exemption to an Indian tribe so they can kill bald eagles. The Northern Arapaho Tribe threatened to sue the government for violating its religious liberties when they were denied a permit to kill the eagles; federal law prohibits killing a bald eagle. Now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has decided to grant the tribe a permit to kill *two* bald eagles.

We live in strange times. It is legal to kill a human being in

utero through term—for any reason. Moreover, the president of the United States thinks it should be legal to allow a baby born alive as a result of a botched abortion to die on the doctor's table unattended. But we can't kill eagles that are bald. However, the Northern Arapaho can kill the birds by insisting on their religious rights. Yet when Catholics demand their religious rights, they are punished, largely because they oppose killing unborn babies.

It should be noted that not only is it illegal to kill one of these birds, it is illegal to "disturb" them. But disturbing babies in the womb—e.g., when an abortionist jams a pair of scissors into the kid's head in a partial-birth abortion—is somehow acceptable. The only time these people object to disturbing babies in utero is when a doctor is required to show a woman contemplating an abortion a picture of her child via sonogram.

What if the Indians kill *three* of these birds? Can they file suit claiming the quota system is unconstitutional? Lucky for them they don't have to worry about PETA—they're too busy killing 95 percent of the cats and dogs in their possession.

CATHOLIC CONTENDERS ELICIT HATRED

Some of the critics of Rick Santorum and Newt Gingrich have recently gone well beyond Catholic bashing.

On the blog site of the *New York Review of Books*, Garry Wills called Santorum a modern-day Torquemada, a man who "equates contraception with the guillotine." On examiner.com, Michael Hughes compared Santorum to the Taliban, arguing he wants "a

Christian form of Sharia law.” Mark Morford at the *San Francisco Chronicle* said that Santorum reminds him of a molester, someone who is trying to save “the dying Catholic church.”

Larry Doyle at Huffington Post went beyond the candidate to slam all Catholics for participating “in a barbaric ritual...a ‘mass’ in which a black-robed cleric casts a spell over some bread and wine...[resulting] in a cannibalistic reverie.” Sexpert Dan Savage said that when Newt Gingrich was married to his second wife, he was “still f***ing the consecrated host out of his ‘devout Catholic’ mistress.”

The Catholicism of these candidates only explains some of the hatred. John Cassidy in the *New Yorker* said that Santorum “with his seven kids” (which he notes first and foremost) is radically different from the magazine’s readership. He is right: those for whom abortion is the most precious right can’t figure Santorum out. Neither could Ivan Strenski at Religion Dispatches. While he said photos of Santorum and his daughter who suffers from Trisomy 18 “touched his heart,” he also wondered, “Why would one choose, in effect, to take the risk of bringing a doomed child into the world?”

These people may be threatened by Catholicism, but what gives them the chills are babies. And they really flip over couples like the Santorums who don’t abort their disabled children.

Fr. MACRAE’S APPEAL

Readers of *Catalyst* know that we have long felt that Father Gordon MacRae has been treated unjustly. In 1994, he was sentenced to prison for up to 67 years for allegedly molesting a minor. His case garnered national attention when Dorothy

Rabinowitz raised serious questions about MacRae's guilt in a pair of articles in the *Wall Street Journal* in 2000.

Father MacRae's case is on appeal; he is being represented by Robert Rosenthal of New York City and Cathy J. Green of Manchester, New Hampshire. The National Center for Reason and Justice is sponsoring the case. The new trial is entirely warranted.

Tom Grover is the accuser. In the early 1990s when the alleged offense took place, it was well known around Keene, New Hampshire that the Diocese of Manchester was forking out a lot of money to alleged victims. Enter Grover, an unemployed drug addict and alcoholic. He charged MacRae with molestation when he was a teenager and won a settlement of \$200,000.

There were no witnesses, but there are plenty of family members and friends who are now talking. They say Grover is a liar and that he perjured himself at MacRae's trial. We know, for example, that when Grover won in court, he paraded around flashing wads of cash and taking pictures with it. Moreover, FBI Special Agent Supervisor James Abbott, who spent three years investigating this case, has said, "I discovered no evidence of MacRae having committed the crimes charged, or any other crimes."

For more information, go to MacRae's website, *These Stone Walls*. If you would like to make a donation to the hefty legal costs he is incurring, you can do so by following the directions on the home page. The website of the National Center for Reason and Justice, ncrj.org, provides all the legal information you need to make up your own mind; just type Gordon MacRae in the search engine.

AMAZON ACTS RESPONSIBLY

We recently got a tip from a friend that when he was searching for a book on Amazon.com, *The Priest of the Fathers*, many patently obscene books turned up as well. Moreover, just typing in “priests” and “Catholic priests” yielded similar results; the words “priests and fathers” triggered even more highly obscene results.

We wrote to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, noting that it was probably a “technical glitch,” but asked that it be corrected anyway. It has been. We received a letter from a customer relations person who said, “I’m very sorry these types of items appeared while using non-offensive search words. We’re consistently making improvements to how our site handles adult-themed content and you should no longer see these results among the top of these searches.” Case closed.