

DID IRISH NUNS STARVE KIDS TO DEATH?

The insanity over the “mass grave” story in Tuam has now reached a fever pitch. The Irish Prime Minister, Enda Kenny, recently said that the Bon Secours Sisters took the babies of unwed mothers and “sold them, trafficked them [and] starved them.”

That is a serious charge, and serious accusations demand serious evidence. He provided none. Kenny offered not one scintilla of evidence to back up his fantastic story. Not surprisingly, he found a kindred soul in the U.S. in Niall O'Dowd of Irish Central; he quoted his remarks with relish the next day.

Here is what Kenny said on March 7: “No nuns broke into our homes to kidnap our children. We gave them up to what we convinced ourselves was the nuns’ care.” That is all true. But then he goes on to say that the nuns sold the children, trafficked them, and starved them.

The nuns did not sell children to bidders. They placed abandoned and often abused children—abandoned and abused by their mothers and/or fathers—up for adoption. Customarily, as one would expect, the adopting parents would make a donation to the nuns. That’s what people do as a demonstration of their gratitude. But from the Kenny-O’Dowd account, they would have us believe that the nuns ran some kind of auction, selling the kids off to the highest bidder.

Children were “trafficked”? That conjures up images of slave labor. This is a new charge. Kenny and O’Dowd need to share their evidence with the rest of us. Otherwise, we might conclude they are liars.

Children were “starved” to death? This is the most damning of

the accusations. Kenny just throws this charge out there hoping it will stick. O'Dowd is more specific, claiming that some of the children in the care of the nuns died of "marasmus," or malnutrition.

The following explanation of why the children died in the Mother and Baby Home operated by the Bon Secours Sisters was given by an Irish student of this subject.

"For the years 1925-1926, 57 children, aged between one month and three years, (plus two, aged six and eight years) died in the Children's Home. Of this number, 21 died of measles, other causes were convulsions, gastroenteritis, bronchitis, tuberculosis, meningitis, and pneumonia."

The researcher also listed other factors. "Other causes of death were as follows: pertussis (otherwise known as whooping cough), anaemia, influenza, nephritis (kidney inflammation), laryngitis, congenital heart disease, enteritis, epilepsy, spinal bifida, chicken pox, general oedema (dropsy), coeliac disease, birth injury, sudden circulatory failure, and fit."

A total of 22 diseases is cited, but there is no mention of marasmus. Why not? This takes on greater significance when we consider the author of this description: it was none other than Catherine Corless, hero of the "mass grave" fame. It can be found on the last two pages of her 2012 journal article, "The Home."

Let's say Corless is wrong about this; perhaps she overlooked the marasmus. The real issue here is not whether kids died of malnutrition—let's assume they did—the real issue is O'Dowd's intellectual inability to conceive of any reason other than intentional starvation.

Dr. Jacky Jones worked for the Irish health services for 37 years in the field of health education and health promotion. She says that "high infant mortality rates were normal for certain groups of people in Ireland until the 1970s." She

further notes that “Children from poor families were four times more likely to die before their first birthday.”

Now ask yourself this: Were the children of indigent unmarried mothers in the early twentieth century more likely or less likely to be part of that segment of the population as described by Dr. Jones?

Those children who were dropped off at the convents were not the sons and daughters of the rich. They were the abandoned and often abused offspring of parents who could not, or would not, care for them. That some of the children may have been suffering from malnutrition when they were acquired by the nuns would hardly be surprising, and it is just as unsurprising to think that some died “before their first birthday,” as Dr. Jones said.

If this is too hard for O’Dowd to understand, then perhaps he thinks that the reason why more people die in hospitals than in hotels is because hospitals are known for killing people. It would never occur to him that the sick and dying are more likely to check themselves into a hospital than a hotel. Get the point, Niall?

It is malicious to accuse anyone of intentionally starving children to death without proof, and it is even worse when an entire order of nuns is charged with doing so. That is what the Prime Minister of Ireland has done, and that is what the founder of Irish Central has done.

KENTUCKY PROTECTS RELIGION IN

SCHOOL

In February, the Catholic League contacted every member of the Kentucky legislature in support of SB 17, a bill to ensure the religious rights of teachers and students. We are pleased to report that the bill, sponsored by Sen. Albert Robinson, passed the State Senate and House overwhelmingly, and has now been signed into law by Gov. Matt Bevin.

This bill was a direct response to the censoring of “Charlie Brown’s Christmas.”

In 1965, the animated Christmas special, “Charlie Brown’s Christmas,” was first aired. Peanuts character Linus quoted from Luke in the New Testament, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior which is Christ the Lord. That’s what Christmas is all about.” It was widely hailed as a thoughtful and joyous statement.

Back then, virtually no one thought about registering a complaint against “Charlie Brown’s Christmas” being performed in a public school. But a half century later, activist Christmas haters now threaten lawsuits, and nervous school administrators cave in to the intimidation. That is why Kentucky lawmakers have said enough is enough.

At Christmastime 2015, a Kentucky school in Johnson County, W.R. Castle Elementary, was ordered by Superintendent Tom Salyer to excise the scene featuring Linus’ statement about the true meaning of Christmas from the school’s presentation of “Charlie Brown’s Christmas.” One person complained. That was enough to muzzle free speech.

Parents and public officials were not pleased with this act of censorship, and began to reexamine the role of religion in the schools. This resulting law expands the religious and political rights of students, whether expressed in homework assignments, artwork or other modes of speech.

In addition, this new law respects speeches given by students at a school forum: the text of their remarks cannot be altered before delivering them. Religious messages on student clothing are also protected, as is the right of students to meet outside the classroom for religious purposes. Teachers may use the Bible to teach history and the study of religion; they may also use it to discuss biblical influences on art and music.

As we went to press a second bill, HB 128, was still pending in the Kentucky Senate. This bill would allow an elective social studies course on “the Hebrew Scripture, Old Testament of the Bible, the New Testament, or a combination” of the two. The bill’s sponsor, Rep. D.J. Johnson, reminds us that “The Bible is the single most impactful literary work that we have in Western civilization. It affects our culture, our values, our laws.”

HB 128 passed the House, 80-14, and was unanimously approved by the Senate Education Committee, sending it to the full Senate for a vote.

That these measures are needed in 2017 is a sign of how militant the nation’s secular activists have become. All these bills do is lock in what should be considered the uncontroversial rights of students and teachers.

A Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life report of 2007 accurately summarized these rights. The following four principles can be found in two documents: the 1995 “Religious Expression in Public School” report by the U.S. Department of Education, and its revised guidelines in 2003:

- “Students, acting on their own, have the same right to engage in religious activity and discussion as they do to engage in comparable secular activities.
- “Students may offer a prayer or blessing before meals in school or assemble on school grounds for religious purposes to the same extent as other students who wish

- to express their personal views or assemble with others.
- “Students may not engage in religious harassment of others or compel other students to participate in religious expression, and schools may control aggressive and unwanted proselytizing.
- “Schools may neither favor nor disfavor students or groups on the basis of their religious identities.”

Regarding the rights of teachers, while they cannot teach religion, they have every right to teach about religion. There is a difference between mandating that students believe that Jesus is the Son of God and teaching that this is what Christians believe.

The American people want to guarantee religious rights in the public schools. A Pew survey from 2006 found that 69 percent agreed that “liberals have gone too far in trying to keep religion out of the schools and the government.” In 2002, a Rasmussen poll found that 82 percent favor celebrating at least some religious holidays in school, Christmas being first among them. In 2013, a Rasmussen survey reported that a majority of Americans believe that “public schools need more religion.”

This past Christmas, a school district in Texas banned a “Charlie Brown Christmas” display because the dreaded word “Christ” was mentioned. The school board agreed. Fortunately, the censors were overruled by Bell County State District Judge Jack Jones. “Religious discrimination toward Christians has become a holiday tradition of sorts among certain groups,” he noted.

Kentucky lawmakers, and Gov. Bevin, are insisting that the religious rights of students and teachers are respected. In doing so, they are providing a great model for all states. Not to do so would be to award the censors with constitutional rights they should never have.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH SLAVERY AND RAPE?

The following article written by Bill Donohue was recently published by CNSNews.com.

Recently, a professor from Georgetown University publicly rose to the defense of slavery and rape, and not a single major media outlet—with the exception of a blogger on the Washington Post website and a brief posting on foxnews.com—said a word about it. The absence of outrage is not hard to figure out: Jonathan Brown's defense was limited to Islam.

Brown, a convert to Islam, holds an endowed chair in Islamic studies at Georgetown. The Jesuit-run institution has a wealthy benefactor in Saudi Arabia, a nation which bans Christianity. How sweet.

What did Georgetown get from this arrangement? Money, and a lot of it. Twelve years ago, Saudi Arabia wrote a check to the Jesuit-run institution for \$20 million; it went to support the school's Center for Muslim Christian Understanding, run by Brown. And what did Saudi Arabia get from this peculiar "understanding"? Legitimacy.

The fruit from this decayed tree is now apparent. Georgetown now employs a tenured professor who defends slavery and rape, provided the slavemasters and rapists are Muslims. This is Georgetown's idea of diversity. It also shows how phony the school is. Why all the handwringing about Georgetown's ownership of American slaves in the 19th century when it employs defenders of slavery today?

Brown's position was not made in the heat of debate. If

anything his comments were well prepared: they were delivered at the Islamic Institute for Islamic Thought. After being criticized by some, he tried to walk it back, offering a lame Tweet that meant nothing.

“As a category, as a conceptual category that exists throughout states and trans-historically,” Brown said clumsily, “there’s no such thing as slavery.” It gets better. “I don’t think you can talk about slavery in Islam until you realize that there is no such thing as slavery.”

It is not certain what Brown would say to slaves in Mauritania and Somalia today—they are owned by their Muslim masters. Would he tell them to stop promoting fake news? Would he tell them that slavery is a mirage? Would he tell them that they are delusional? Better yet, would he switch places with them?

Brown is also incompetent. If slavery doesn’t exist in Muslim-run nations, why the need to justify it? “Slavery cannot just be treated as a moral evil in and of itself,” he opined. He really means it. “I don’t think it’s morally evil to own somebody because we own lots of people all around us.”

When someone in the audience challenged Brown, he became indignant, as well as inconsistent. “The fact that there was slavery is wrong [thus did he contradict his remark that there was no such thing in Islam]. Okay. If you’re a Muslim, the prophet of God...had slaves. He had slaves. There’s no denying that. Are you more morally mature than the prophet of God? No, you are not.”

One would hope that all of us are more morally mature than Muhammad. After all, he was not only a slavemaster and an advocate of violence, he consummated his marriage with his bride Aisha when she was nine years old. That’s what we call rape.

Speaking of which, Brown went on to say that non-consensual sex—it’s called rape—is okay with him, at least if the

offenders are adherents to Islam. He took aim at the Western notion of “consent,” maintaining that “It’s very hard to have this discussion because we think of, let’s say in the modern United States, the *sine qua non* of morally correct sex is consent.”

Brown and Georgetown would be on the front page of every newspaper in the nation if he had justified Christians enslaving and raping Muslims. It would be the lead news story of the night on television, and the Internet would explode. But because Brown was justifying slavery and rape committed by Muslims—whose real life victims are Christians and Jews—there was hardly a peep.

TRUMP GOES MUTE ON MORAL ISSUES

President Trump raised everyone’s expectations by recently delivering a powerful speech to the Congress outlining his agenda for defense, jobs, infrastructure, healthcare, education, immigration, and other policy matters. But he said not a word about moral issues.

The following words were never mentioned: abortion, assisted suicide, religion, religious liberty, and religious exemptions. The closest Trump came was to include support for religious schools in his school choice proposal.

While Trump is correct to cite education as a civil rights issue, he is wrong to say it is “the civil rights issue of our time.” To be sure, children have a right to a good education, but that is predicated on their right to be born, a right that does not exist.

The fight for religious exemptions, as a cornerstone of religious liberty, is being waged with ferocity across the nation. One might have thought that a president, who has floated a very fine draft of an executive order on religious liberty, might have made mention of this subject, if not the draft, in his remarks.

The problem with Trump's speech is that it only spoke about missiles and markets, never citing morality. This is popular with many Republicans, whose only goals are making money and protecting national security. But without demonstrating a concern for the moral order, the two "M's" of missiles and markets are an insufficient condition of the good society: the third "M," morality, must be added if success is to be achieved.

TRUMP CHAMPIONS EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

Unlike President Obama, who opposed giving poor blacks the same right that he and Michelle exercised by enrolling their children in a private school, President Trump believes in educational equality. His trip to St. Andrew Catholic School in Pine Hills, Florida, was an important statement.

Students from St. Andrew Catholic benefit from the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship. The program, which started in 2002, provides tax incentives to businesses who fund private schools. Currently, more than 92,000 Florida students are using this program to escape the public schools. This initiative is targeted at poor families, overwhelmingly non-white.

To qualify, the student must (a) either currently be in foster care (or was placed there during the past year) or (b) qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program. The student must also be in a household where the income does not exceed 260 percent of the federal poverty level.

In the 1970s, Bill Donohue taught at a Catholic school in Spanish Harlem and saw first-hand the yeoman job of Catholic education in the ghetto. There was a public school across the street but it had to be closed down because of all the gang violence and rapes. But his students were not only safe, they thrived academically, as well as spiritually.

Those opposed to school choice extend beyond the selfish interests of the teachers' unions; it extends, in some cases, to anti-Catholic bigots. Indeed, there is an outcry right now in some quarters of Florida: Activists are upset because nearly 70 percent of the students enrolled in this program are in religious schools.

If poor blacks in Florida, and elsewhere, choose Catholic schools to enroll their children—many of whom are not Catholic—we should not blame them or the Catholic schools. We should instead address why the parents made this choice and do something about lousy public schools.

Kudos to President Trump. Let's see who objects to educating poor blacks being funded by the corporations. Our guess is it will be those who scream the loudest about equality, yet do everything they can to keep the poor in their place.

ACLU'S WAR ON CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE CONTINUES

The ACLU continues its war on Catholic health care, this time in Peoria, Illinois.

The ACLU objects to the fact that federally funded Heartland Health Services leases two of its four clinics from OSF Saint Francis Medical Center. The lease agreement requires staff at those two clinics to comply with the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services—meaning, complains the ACLU, that patients cannot get prescription contraceptives at those clinics.

Heartland's director of marketing, however, points out that prescription contraceptives are available at its other two clinics in the city, and that it offers free bus passes and taxi vouchers for patients who might have transportation issues. So once again, the issue for the ACLU is not access to contraception. Their real goal is to bring the Catholic Church to heel—forcing it to either provide “services” that contravene its moral teachings, or else to get out of health care ministry. This is just the latest front in the ACLU's ongoing assault on the religious freedom of Catholic health care institutions.

As usual, the real victims would be the people who rely on those institutions: in this case, Peoria's low-income adults and children, minorities, uninsured, medically indigent, and homeless who are the focus of Heartland's services. They are the people who would suffer if the ACLU succeeds in driving a wedge between Heartland Health Services and OSF Saint Francis Medical Center.

But to the ACLU, they are just acceptable collateral damage in its ideological war against the Catholic Church.

HARVEY WEINSTEIN SEEKING A FIGHT?

There is no one in Hollywood who delights in offending Catholics more than Harvey Weinstein: he has made a long list of anti-Catholic films.

Now he is at it again, putting the final touches on his latest contribution to Catholic-themed films, *Mary Magdalene*. No release date has been set.

In December, the online edition of the *Hollywood Reporter* asked rhetorically if the movie, starring Rooney Mara, “will spark controversy among conservative Christians?” Co-producer Iain Canning said it wouldn’t. Time will tell if he is right, but one thing is certain: Weinstein is laying the groundwork for a fight.

Weinstein was recently quoted by Screen International saying, “I’ll probably take a vacation around the time the film comes out because over the years the Catholic League have [sic] made me their poster boy. I get sent lovely letters [saying things] like ‘Dear Jew mother*****’.”

We have a quote for Weinstein. “If you don’t want to be the subject of vitriol, stop baiting Catholics. If a Catholic made as many anti-Semitic films as you have made anti-Catholic ones, no one should be surprised if some Jews act badly. Stop the bigotry and stop the whining.”

GAY ACTIVISTS EXPLOIT ASH WEDNESDAY

Gay activists can't even commemorate Ash Wednesday without drawing attention to themselves. That is why many accessed ashes mixed with purple glitter; approximately 150 participating clergy in several cities across the country took part in "Glitter+Ash Wednesday." A New York City homosexual outfit, Parity, promoted this stunt nationwide.

Liz Edman, a lesbian Episcopalian priest in New Jersey, started this exploitative event last year. Reportedly, her goal was to "come out" as queer, though it is not clear who among her friends and followers thought she was heterosexual. It was her girlfriend who suggested the purple glitter idea.

The executive director of Parity is Marian Edmonds-Allen, allegedly a member of the clergy of some religion (the *Washington Post* did not say which one). Speaking of her comrades, she said, "On the day, Ash Wednesday, when Christians are publicly Christian, we are going to be publicly queer." The narcissism doesn't get much deeper than this.

This just goes to show what a joke all this talk about inclusion is: gay activists intentionally draw attention to themselves to show how different they are. On that score, everyone can agree.

ABC'S "WHEN WE RISE" MOCKED

CATHOLICS

Catholics in America make up about 25 percent of the population. Yet when it comes to negative stereotypes of religion, Hollywood targets us almost 100 percent of the time.

Nowhere is this more true than with gay-themed entertainment. The hostility shown toward all things Catholic made us wary when we heard about ABC's February miniseries on the history of the gay rights movement, "When We Rise." As the opening episode confirmed, we were right to be on guard.

The slaps at Catholics kept coming. There was the nun, in full habit, of course, who walks in on two teenage boys kissing, grunts, and walks out; the young woman from a "very Catholic" family, whose put-upon mother was beaten down by 10 pregnancies and a domineering husband who wouldn't let her work outside the home; and the same young woman afraid to reveal her lesbian relationship because of that big Catholic family.

Most vicious was a discussion about holding a "women's march" in Boston. "We get beat up by the very cops that refuse to protect us," one character said, "in a city run by all Catholic cops."

Right. Any negative comments about "Jewish bankers," or "gay hairdressers," or "black criminals"? Of course not. Those vicious and hurtful stereotypes would never be uttered on TV networks—and rightfully so. But it's OK to stereotype "Catholic cops" who run a city and beat up women. As always, Catholics are the target of the entertainment industry's bigotry.

There is one saving grace: Yahoo picked up our criticisms of the show and prominently posted it as the lead story on its homepage.