

PAPAL TRIP TOPS EXPECTATIONS

Here is how Catholic League president Bill Donohue summarized the papal trip to the United Kingdom:

Almost everyone was surprised by both the size of the crowds that came out to greet Pope Benedict XVI and the enthusiasm he generated. British Prime Minister David Cameron was particularly kind, praising the pope for the “searching questions” he posed. Perhaps most gratifying was the way the BBC, no friend to Catholics, treated the Holy Father. “A pope who had previously been regarded as someone rather cold, professional, aloof and authoritarian,” wrote David Willey, “had suddenly been perceived as a rather kindly and gentle grandfather figure.” Not only that, but the pope’s speech at Westminster was dubbed a “triumph,” moving one British notable to say his performance was “sheer magic.”

In the U.S., the coverage began and ended on a mixed note. Far and away the most unfair coverage came from CNN and the *New York Times*. CNN proved relentless with its criticism of a male-only clergy, even going so far as to highlight some excommunicated women who think they are priests. The *Times* was just as fixated on one topic: the sexual abuse scandal. Take today’s newspaper, for example. On page 4, there is a 1224-word story on a non-story: readers are treated to a rehash of old cases of abuse that took place in Belgium. To find out about the pope’s trip, which garnered only 704 words, the reader must turn to page 11.

It does not speak well for CNN and the *New York Times* that Catholic critics on the other side of the Atlantic look eminently fair by comparison. Can’t wait to see what CNN has in store for us this Saturday night when it airs a “documentary” on the pope. From the looks of things, it appears it will pick up where the *Times* left off last spring when it sought to blame the pope for the scandal. We’ll see.

CARNEGIE HALL STOOPS LOW; “JERRY SPRINGER” DIRTIES ITS NAME

On January 29 and 30, “Jerry Springer–The Opera” will be performed at Carnegie Hall. The first act is a parody of the Jerry Springer Show; the second act depicts the television personality in Hell attempting to bridge a resolution between Jesus and Satan.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue laced into the show today:

“When this opera debuted in London, it was the subject of a libel suit for defaming Christians. When the BBC picked it up, it drew more than 60,000 complaints for its anti-Christian theme. Not bad for a non-Christian country. The *London Times* described the concert as a ‘cocktail of biblical characters, filthy arias and tap dancing Ku Klux Klansman.’ After watching a DVD version, I would say that’s an understatement. In a Nexis search, linking ‘blasphemous’ with the show provides 745 hits; there are 112 articles that use the word ‘filth’ to describe the concert.

“The opera has Jesus introduced as that ‘hypocrite son of the fascist tyrant on high, Jesus of Nazareth.’ He is portrayed as a fat, effeminate gay-like character (he admits to being ‘a bit gay’ after the chorus labels him as such) who walks around in a diaper. The crucifixion is mocked, the Eucharist is trashed, the Virgin Mary is introduced as a woman who was ‘raped by an angel’ and Eve fondles Jesus’ genitals. [For a detailed description, [click here](#); adult language is used.]

“More than anything else, what this show celebrates is moral nihilism. At the end, it even voices this theme: ‘Nothing is wrong and nothing is right’ and ‘there are no absolutes of good and evil.’ This is exactly what the Nazis said in their defense at Nuremberg.

“Veteran BBC official William Rees-Mogg said he was ‘ashamed of the BBC’ for airing this show. Will the patrons of Carnegie Hall be similarly ashamed?
Contact: publicaffairs@carnegiehall.org. We will contact its most generous corporate sponsors.”

PBS TO AIR DOCUDRAMA ON INQUISITION

On May 9 and 16, PBS will air a four-part docudrama called “The Secret Files of the Inquisition.” Catholic League president Bill Donohue raised some concerns today:

“PBS will not air a movie that its officials say paints Muslims in a bad light, ‘Islam vs. Islamists,’ but it has no qualms about showing a flick that Catholics have every right to question. This film is advertised on PBS’s website with an eerie black background depicting all the ‘T’s’ as crosses. All that is missing is Dracula’s voiceover. ‘For over half a millennium a system of mass terror reigned,’ it says, and ‘Thousands were subject to secret courts, torture and punishment.’ This is plainly dishonest.

“As British historian Henry Kamen has shown in his magisterial work, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*, almost all the conventional wisdom about the Inquisition is wrong. By comparison with secular courts at the time, the Inquisition’s

methods were more humane, e.g., defendants could be represented by an attorney. Edward Peters, another student of the period, says, 'Modern historiography has completely blown the old Inquisition propaganda out of the water. No one seriously contends that hundreds of thousands or millions were killed, or that the Protestant countries were any more humane than Spain was.' Indeed, scholars today refer to the old school mythology as 'the Black Legend,' a tale of lies spun by Elizabethan England. No wonder that in 1994, BBC/A&E aired 'The Myth of the Spanish Inquisition.'

"Here's what we know. Of the approximately 125,000 cases tried by the Spanish Inquisition, 1 percent resulted in the death penalty. Of the so-called witch hunts, where women were burned at the stake, secular courts executed 50,000 (not all of whom were women); less than 100 were killed by the Inquisition. Solzhenitsyn once compared the killings that took place in the Soviet Union in 1937 and 1938 to the killings that took place during the Spanish Inquisition and found that 20,000 were killed per month in the U.S.S.R. and 10 were killed per month during the Inquisition. But don't look for such comparisons on PBS. To do so might get in the way of the truth."

BBC'S HIT JOB ON THE POPE

On October 1, the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) aired a documentary, "Sex Crimes and the Vatican," that accused Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) of covering up priestly sexual abuse for 20 years. The show, which aired on the BBC's flagship, Panorama, says that Cardinal Ratzinger had been in charge of enforcing a 1962 Vatican document that was allegedly written to cover up these crimes.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented as follows:

“It is a tribute to American journalism that the lies told by the BBC have not been widely disseminated in the United States. The 1962 document that the BBC refers to had absolutely nothing to do with covering up priestly sexual abuse. Quite the contrary: it dealt specifically with solicitations that a priest might make in the confessional. In fact, it prescribed penalties for any priest who, ‘whether by words or signs or *nods of the head*’ (my emphasis) might convey a sexual advance.

“This was an ecclesiastical response to a possible offense that, given the priest-penitent privilege, lay outside the purview of civil authorities. Furthermore, if a priest were found guilty, he could be thrown out of the priesthood. To top it off, if the penitent were to tell someone about sexual solicitation by a priest in the confessional (perhaps another priest), he or she had 30 days to report the incident to the bishop or face excommunication. In other words, the Vatican document actually prescribed punishment for the penitent if he or she didn’t turn in the guilty priest. The 1962 document was superseded by the 1983 Code of Canon Law and the norms established in 2001 for dealing with serious crimes involving the sacraments. As for the sexual abuse scandal, it was not until 2002, after the scandal had exploded in the media, that Pope John Paul II appointed Cardinal Ratzinger to investigate these matters.

“In short, the BBC’s hit job on the pope demands a quick and sincere apology.”

A WHO'S WHO OF CATHOLIC BASHERS DELIVERS "LIAM"

"Liam" is the story of a Depression-era Liverpool family seen through the eyes of a 7-year-old boy. The movie opened in select theaters today and was previewed by Catholic League research analyst Louis Giovino.

Of interest to the Catholic League is the dreary tale of Liam's experience preparing for First Communion. All Liam learns in school is just how filthy children's souls are. He learns this from his teachers, as well as from the parish priest. The priest, a quintessential bully, bombards the kids with horrific sermons on Hell, effectively bestowing them with fear and guilt.

All the familiar anti-Catholic stereotypes are there: the Catholic Church exists solely to torment young children, is sexually repressive, etc. Indeed, the film is so over the top that Giovino concludes it is unfair to say that it is a one-dimensional portrait of Catholicism. No, it is a cruel caricature that has been deliberately crafted.

Catholic League president William Donohue added to Giovino's assessment today:

"This film is the work of a Who's Who of Catholic Bashers. 'Liam' is written by Jimmy McGovern; the distributor is Lions Gate; and the producer is the BBC. McGovern previously wrote the anti-Catholic movie, 'Priest'; Lions Gate previously released the anti-Catholic film, 'Dogma'; and the BBC has produced more anti-Catholic flicks than any other company (it was also responsible for 'Priest').

"I'm trying to think of an analogy that works but I can't. I can't think of a single writer, distributor or producer—in Hollywood or London—that is the bigoted equivalent of

McGovern, Lions Gate and the BBC. That's because all forms of bigotry are taboo among the cultural elite. Save one.

"I expect 'Liam' will draw well in New York, Los Angeles and in neighborhoods populated by artists and college professors."

BBC BASHES CATHOLICS IN "A LOVE DIVIDED"

"A Love Divided" opened today in select theaters. Produced by the BBC, the movie is based on an allegedly true story about a Protestant woman, married to a Catholic, who brings her children up Protestant in Ireland in the 1950s after pledging to bring them up Catholic. As the story goes, when a local priest objects, the woman flees to Northern Ireland. Irish bishops then join a boycott of all Protestant goods and services and a national uproar follows.

Catholic League researcher Louis Giovino saw the film in New York today. According to Giovino, "cruel caricatures" of the Catholic clergy abound. The first caricature is of "an arrogant bishop," followed by "a demagogic priest." Giovino agrees with Stephen Whitney of the Newark *Star-Ledger* who said, "it rather strenuously portrays the Catholic Church and the Republic of Ireland as a haven for bigots and bullies."

Catholic League president William Donohue offered his own thoughts:

"I await a movie produced by the BBC about the life of Oliver Cromwell and how he 'interacted' with the Irish. In the meantime, it must not go unmentioned that the producer of the film, Gerry Gregg, has been described by the *Sunday Business*

Post as having produced documentaries which 'have dumped on Sinn Fein or the Catholic Church, or both.' Gregg is on record for saying that Ireland is a 'corrupt, hypocritical, inegalitarian society.' His base point of reference being, no doubt, his gentlemanly England: his home still outlaws marriage between its splendidly egalitarian princes and lowly Catholics. Then we have Orla Brady, the actress who played the victimized wife. She is on record saying that the pope is 'a voice for evil.'

"When Mel Gibson's 'Braveheart' and 'The Patriot' were released in England, the WASPS went mad. Indeed, after 'Braveheart' was released, there reportedly was an outbreak of anti-English prejudice in Scotland. Fortunately, America is more civilized which is why the Catholic League does not expect an outbreak of anti-Catholicism in the U.S. now that the anti-Catholic film, 'A Love Divided,' has been released."