

NYC SCHOOLS CHANCELLOR DOES A 360: RELIGIOUS LOSES

On November 14, New York City Schools Chancellor Harold Levy approved a new policy that would allow school officials to designate a specific area where Muslim students could gather to pray during Ramadan. On the evening of November 15, he reversed himself saying that no such accommodation will be tolerated.

The *New York Post* broke the initial story about Levy's 180. Curiously, there was no official announcement of this new policy from the New York City Board of Education. No matter, upon reading about the new policy in the newspaper, William Donohue faxed a letter to Schools Chancellor Harold Levy commending him for his decision; he also issued a news release on the subject.

In his letter to Levy, Donohue said, "In the spirit of inclusiveness, I am asking that you also accommodate the interests of Jews and Christians." He specifically asked Levy to "institutionalize this policy by requiring all schools to set aside a permanent area that can be accessed by students of all faiths for any religious observance they want." Donohue stressed that "reasonableness must guide any such policy and it should be understood that not every request will be granted." He then asked, "But if it is okay for Muslims to pray at noon in, say Room 123, why should it not be okay for Catholic schoolchildren to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday at noon in Room 123?"

Late in the day of November 15, league communications director Patrick Scully contacted the Schools Chancellor's office to find out if there were any new developments regarding this issue. He was told there were not. He also told Levy's office that Donohue was going on national television to discuss this

issue (he appeared that night on the Fox News Channel show, “Hannity and Colmes”). That is why we were so taken aback to learn the next day that Levy had reversed his policy.

In a statement to the press, Donohue wondered, “Is it because the Catholic League was requesting parity for Jews and Christians?” He also raised another troublesome aspect to this story. “The initial decision to accommodate Muslim students,” he said, “was never publicly announced—the *New York Post* broke the story—but the decision to do a 360 was formally posted on the Board of Education’s website.” Donohue asked, “Was Levy trying to slip this by New Yorkers? What accounts for his duplicity?”

On the morning of November 16, we learned that Mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg was going to have lunch with Levy. We immediately contacted his office asking that he question Levy about both his reversal and his tactics when they meet for lunch. “Something smells about all this,” Donohue charged, “and we hope Bloomberg (who has said he supports school prayer) gets to the bottom of it.”

Given that Hanukkah and Christmas are upon us, this is a story that will have several repercussions, both in New York and around the country.

WORLD GIRL SCOUT LEADER ACTS AS FEEDER FOR ANTI-CATHOLIC GROUP

Has radical feminism infiltrated the Girl Scouts? It’s not entirely clear but the fact that we raise the question

suggests something's less than kosher at the Girl Scouts. Consider the following.

Leslie Wright is the Team Coordinator of the New York group that represents the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) at the United Nations; Girl Scouts USA is a member of WAGGGS. She recently cooperated with the anti-Catholic group, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), helping them to secure new personnel. The league was first alerted to this by Austin Ruse, director of the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute.

Catholic League director of communications, Patrick Scully, spoke with Jennifer Wagner, international relations coordinator for the Girl Scouts USA, and Liz Shepard, the director of media and communications for the organization, explaining the league's concerns. They defended Ms. Wright saying she was just passing along an e-mail message concerning the opening at CFFC. When they told Scully that the Girl Scouts were "an inclusive group," the league spokesman asked whether they were aware that CFFC is an expressly anti-Catholic group. They said they "were not religion experts." Pressed further, they reiterated that the Girl Scouts were "an inclusive group."

The league is concerned that an official at the umbrella organization (WAGGGS) that the Girl Scouts USA belongs to is aiding and abetting anti-Catholicism during working hours. More unfortunate still is the fact that the tired cliché regarding "inclusiveness" is being voiced by Girl Scout leaders in this country. It would be instructive to know whether their commitment to inclusiveness extends to working with bigots.

Accordingly, the Catholic League lodged a protest with both WAGGGS and the Girl Scouts USA. Frances Kissling of CFFC is not merely pro-abortion, she is on record saying it is her goal to "overthrow" the Roman Catholic Church. That being so,

it is inexcusable that any responsible person would facilitate Kissling in her quest.

On October 23, William Donohue wrote to Marsha Johnson Evans, national executive director of the Girl Scouts, and to Girl Scout president Connie Matsui. Three days later Evans wrote back, representing herself and Matsui. She claims that Wright does not represent the Girl Scouts and that her organization has no relationship with Kissling's anti-Catholic group.

We expected something stronger from the Girl Scouts. At first we get the bit about inclusiveness. When pressured, the Girl Scouts opt to distance themselves from the offender.

We trust they got the message. If not, we'll be sure to keep a watchful eye on the Girl Scouts from now on.

GO FATHER BRIGGS!

Kudos to Father Everett F. Briggs of West Virginia.

Father Briggs is so upset about Catholic bashing that he has taken things into his own hands. Like putting up billboards along the highways in his home state. Here's what one of them says:

CATHOLIC BASHING

is as unacceptable as

anti-Semitism and racism

Hate Will Destroy America

&

AWAKE, AMERICA:

Your Governments, Courts,

Communications, Schools

are ANTI-CHRISTIAN:

ANYONE INTERESTED?

Congratulations Father Briggs. You're our kind of guy.

NBC'S "LAW AND ORDER" HITS CATHOLICS AGAIN

In the October 17 episode of the NBC show, "Law and Order: Criminal Intent," there was a bizarre portrayal of a priest that clearly went over the line.

The story revolves around a sexton who is murdered by a junkie. The junkie, who works at the parish, is then killed by another priest. The killer priest is also guilty of embezzling church funds. Adding to the craziness of the plot, the priest tells the police that the junkie was his lover. Later in the show we discover that the priest was lying: the junkie is actually the priest's son. It is now clear that the real motive for killing the junkie was to protect the young boy's mother—the woman the killer priest had an affair with 20 years earlier.

In our complaint to NBC, we detailed previous problems we have had with this show. For example, in 1995, there was an episode on "Law and Order" about a priest involved in sexual misconduct (his superiors conspired to cover it up). There was

another episode that year about a “devout Catholic” woman who kills her baby, confesses her crime to a priest in the confessional, and learns from the priest that it was God’s will that she murder her child. Furthermore, the sacrament of reconciliation was ridiculed by a detective when he said, “How many Hail Marys would one be assigned for this crime?”

In 1997, we learned of a “devout Catholic” mother who, according to her son, “held a rosary in one hand and beat the crap out of me with the other.” In 1999, we met a “very orthodox nun” who murders a young woman after a botched exorcism. Another episode that year (this time on “Law and Order: Special Victims Unit”) featured a woman who is raped on a Catholic college campus where all school officials appear weak and disinterested. And then on October 17, viewers were introduced to a priest who is guilty of lying, embezzlement, womanizing and the murder of his son.

In a statement to the press, William Donohue commented as follows: “One wonders what those at ‘Law and Order’ have been inhaling that alters their thinking. More likely is the possibility that they like anti-Catholicism. All of which is quite revealing. Every day there are reports that in the wake of September 11, Hollywood is rewriting scripts and changing scenes so as not to rattle the sensibilities of the public or to show disrespect to Muslims. But when it comes to bashing Catholics, it’s business as usual. They never miss a step.”

We are asking members to write to Dick Wolfe, executive producer, “Law and Order: Criminal Intent,” P.O. Box 62, Hudson River and West 23rd Street, New York, New York 10011 and to Robert Wright, CEO, NBC Television Network, 30 Rockefeller Center, New York, New York 10122.

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HATE ADS LOSE AGAIN

The Eternal Gospel Church, a splinter group of the Seventh Day Adventists, has placed its last anti-Catholic newspaper ad in the pages of the *Daily Commercial*. The ads, which demonize the Catholic Church with charges so absurd that even Phil Donahue might not believe them, have been popping up all over the country. Every time they do we go after them in a flash and in most instances we're successful.

The *Daily Commercial* serves the area of Leesburg, Florida, and on October 14 they made the mistake of running the hate ad. We protested, as did local Catholics, and the result is that Jim Perry, the publisher, apologized.

Congratulations to Jim Perry for seeing the light. Would that the Eternal Gospel Church finally do so as well.

“KILL IT!” BUT KILL WHAT?

With only two weeks to go before the election, New York mayoral hopeful Mark Green was so far in front of his Republican challenger, Mike Bloomberg, that his victory seemed like a slam dunk. Then the bottom fell out on Green as he made one stupid move after another.

It really isn't fair to say that Green's moves were stupid. More accurately, they were unethical. For example, Green tried to tag Bloomberg with being insensitive to women. He charged, without ever offering any proof, that Bloomberg had once told a pregnant woman to get an abortion by screaming, "Kill it! Kill it!"

Green put these words on TV screens all over New York hoping to trigger voter revulsion. He succeeded. But what he didn't count on was that he would be the target of the revulsion.

What fascinates the Catholic League about this is that many of those who were turned off by this unseemly tactic were never asked to explain the source of their angst. If abortion isn't the taking of innocent human life then why should it matter that anyone would counsel a woman to "Kill it"? Moreover, it is impossible to kill that which is not alive. No one says of a desk or shoe, "Kill it!"

So we're perplexed. What exactly is being killed when a pregnant woman is advised to "Kill it"?

DEZELL'S DEMONS

Maureen Dezell is not particularly fond of the Catholic Church. This explains why she writes for the *Boston Globe*. She fits like a glove.

Dezell takes a shot at the Church any chance she gets.

For Example, in her column of October 21, she spoke positively about the inveterate Catholic-bashing playwright, Christopher Durang. Durang is famous for "Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You." Dezell writes that when this play opened in Boston a number of years ago, it was criticized for "anti-Catholic bigotry." She puts quotes around the term so the reader knows she doesn't think the play is anti-Catholic. This makes perfect sense given that she doesn't acknowledge the existence of anti-Catholicism in the first place, this despite her own contributions to it. Or perhaps we should say her blind spot exists *because* of her own contributions.

After mentioning that the Catholic League protested the play when it opened, Dezell calls the league "a headline-grabbing group that has no official connection with the Catholic Church and represents the views of a minority of the church's members." Spoken like a true mountebank.

What Dezell failed to mention was that our "headline-grabbing" protest of the play was joined by the ADL, the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the American Jewish Committee. Unlike her, they were able to recognize the explicit and malicious anti-Catholic bigotry in the play. What she also failed to mention is that while the Catholic League is an independent, non-profit organization, it is also listed in the Official Catholic Directory.

More important, if we represent no one but a minority of the Church's members, why is she so bothered by us? She has attacked us before and will do so again. Which is testimony

not only to our strength, but to the fact that we've gotten under her skin.

You can contact her at the *Boston Globe*, P.O. Box 2378, Boston, MA 02107. We're sure she'd like to hear from you.

GIOVINO SCORES IN JERUSALEM

Catholic League research analyst Louis Giovino scored in the pages of the *Jerusalem Post* when the newspaper published his letter taking another critic of Pope Pius XII to task.

Giovino was not too happy with the glowing review that the newspaper gave to Susan Zuccotti's book, *Under His Very Window: The Vatican and the Holocaust*. He noted that the author curiously admits in her book that the Catholic Church was responsible for rescuing many Jews. Yet she argues that this was done without any input from the pope.

"The usual canard is that Pius had such a tight grip on everything that nothing happened without him ordering it," Giovino said, "yet it is proven that a massive rescue operation by Church personnel of Jews all over Europe was in place and Zuccotti claims the Pope didn't know anything about it." With justified sarcasm, Giovino offers, "So Pius is blamed for the supposed inactivity of the Vatican but when proof of the heroic deeds of Catholics to rescue Jews are found, the Pope gets absolutely no credit."

He ends his letter by exclaiming, "It seems there is a hole in Zuccotti's thesis through which her agenda is showing." Exactly.