

“MERRY CHRISTMAS” RETURNS; CULTURE WAR CONTINUES

The culture war over Christmas got off to a flying start in November when Wal-Mart and other department stores said they would invoke “Merry Christmas” this year instead of the secular greeting “Happy Holidays.” Everyone credited the Catholic League with the turnaround, save, of course, for Bill O'Reilly who once again took credit for our win; that's why we call his show the “O'Shameless Factor.”

Last year we launched a boycott against Wal-Mart because of its discriminatory practice of treating Hanukkah and Kwanzaa with respect, while showing nothing but disrespect for Christmas. Not only was Christmas not acknowledged on Wal-Mart's website, a statement about its alleged pagan roots was promoted by an employee and was then defended by its top public relations officer. We sought an apology, a withdrawal of the offensive statement and a revision on its website. All three demands were met within 48 hours of announcing the boycott; it mattered to Wal-Mart that we had contacted 126 religious organizations across seven faith communities to join us.

Others stores have gotten the message as well. Macy's, Kmart, Kohl's and Target are emphasizing Christmas this year. Last year, we initially had a problem with Lands' End because of its “Holiday” promotions; this year it has both “Holiday” and Christmas catalogues. Customers at Sam's Club and Wal-Mart are being greeted with “Merry Christmas,” and in many stores Christmas carols are being piped in for shoppers to enjoy. According to one report, there is a 60 percent increase in seasonal “Holiday” merchandise being renamed “Christmas.” We know of only one store, Best Buy, that still refuses to acknowledge Christmas.

While this is encouraging, the same old fight is going on in the schools, the workplace and in parks; a particularly vicious assault on Christmas was found on a prominent atheist website (see p. 12). So the Catholic League is not ready to declare victory.

We are working this Christmas season in tandem with Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R. on a "Christmas Watch" program (see p. 2). In addition, on November 28 we hit the pages of the *New York Times* with our provocative ad on celebrating Christmas and diversity (see p. 13).

POPE VISITS TURKEY

Pope Benedict XVI got a bad rap in September from those who tried to paint his speech in Germany as anti-Islam. That is why his trip to Turkey, a mostly Muslim nation that is nominally secular, is so historic. To be sure, the pope has grave reservations about the readiness of Turkey to join the European Union, but he is not a foe of any world religion.

One of the cardinal precepts of a free and democratic nation is respect for religious freedom, and on this score Turkey fails. The Catholic Church is forbidden by law to operate a seminary or publish religious literature. Worse, many Christians live in fear for their lives.

Conditions are so bad that upwards of 100,000 Christians have left Turkey in the past few years. Of those who remain, most are afraid to go to Mass on Sunday. As reported in the *New York Times* in October, "Over the past three and a half years, Christians have been subjected to a steady stream of church bombings, assassinations, kidnappings and threatening letters slipped under their doors."

What this represents is incredible intolerance for the “infidel,” the pernicious name applied to non-Muslims. It’s no wonder Christian women wear Muslim head scarves to avoid intimidation at the hands of Muslim zealots trying to impose a rigid Islamic dress code.

The pope’s courage makes him a role model for the leaders of all nations.

DEMANDING RESPECT

William A. Donohue

The late comedian Rodney Dangerfield, was famous for his one-liner, “I don’t get no respect.” If many Catholics, and Protestants, feel the same way today—that we don’t get the respect we’re due—it may be time to look inwards and ask why.

Jews and Muslims get respect. Why? Because Jews, having been kicked around a lot throughout history, demand it. As for Muslims, they get respect because others fear them. Christians don’t demand respect and no one fears them. So they get dumped on, especially at Christmastime.

The Catholic League, I am proud to say, is an exception. We get respect, and that’s because we demand it and others fear us (but not for the same reasons that Muslims are feared). Ask Wal-Mart. When Wal-Mart senior vice president Julie Roehm was recently asked about the Catholic League boycott of 2005, she said: “We learned our lesson from last year that the majority of people wanted to hear us say Christmas, and we’re saying Merry Christmas this year...”

It’s too bad more Christians don’t toughen up. Bernie

Goldberg, a former CBS employee, is the author of *Bias*, an insider's account of the way many senior media executives think. He recently commented on Rosie O'Donnell's anti-Christian remark comparing Christian conservative activists to Muslim terrorists: "Given that the media, including management, are left of center in this country, they won't—they're not going to get too anxious about making a correction over something that offends the one group you can easily offend with no fear of repercussion, which is American Catholics." If she had ripped gays, Goldberg said, "she would have [had] to apologize. If it is about Catholics, don't hold your breath."

In September, the creators of "South Park," Matt Stone and Trey Parker, admitted that they can abuse Christians with impunity. Commenting on their cartoon which showed Jesus defecating on the president, Stone said, "we kind of agree with some of the people who've criticized our show because it really is open season on Jesus. You know, we can do whatever—we can do whatever we want to Jesus." In October, Parker confessed that fear of violence forces them to lay off Muslims, so "if the Catholics don't want us ripping on Jesus anymore, they should just threaten violence and they'll get their way." In other words, appeals to ethics don't matter to these guys—just the prospects of death.

The same fear mentality is prevalent in England. It was reported in October that "A number of BBC executives have reportedly admitted the organization is dominated by left-wing liberals who favor multiculturalism over Christianity." Indeed, they even said that they "would allow a Bible to be thrown in the garbage, but not the Koran for fear of offending Muslims." No wonder a veteran BBC official said his colleagues are now reluctantly conceding that "we may have gone too far in the direction of political correctness."

Now here's an example of how this plays out in real life. Two years ago, a lawyer for a synagogue in Wellesley,

Massachusetts threatened to sue the town for refusing to display a menorah during Hanukkah. His threat succeeded and a menorah was erected. This year the town will display a menorah, crescent and Christmas tree, meaning that Jews and Muslims will get what they want and Christians will not. When a Catholic woman asked to have a nativity scene, it set off a furor: the local clergy was then polled about the issue. When this same Catholic said it was a conflict of interest to have a woman do the polling who was also the president of a local synagogue, she was sharply denounced by a local Jewish politician.

And what was the reaction of the Catholic and Protestant clergy? A Catholic priest said his parish council understood that a crèche is more representative of Christmas, but “they wanted to be sensitive to the fact that there’s diversity within the Christian community.” Similarly, one Protestant minister said that while he prefers a crèche to a tree, “I do not favor making this an issue.” Another minister agreed, saying that a fight over religious symbols “does not respect the spirit of Christmas.”

In other words, Jews got what they wanted, and Christians got nothing, all because Jews made a stink and Christians walked away.

Respect has to be earned; it is not awarded. Moreover, respect for diversity should begin at home: Christians who tolerate disrespect for the kind of diversity that Christmas represents have sold out.

The Catholic League does not listen to those Christians who are too cowardly to act. Indeed, it is fair to say that the Catholic League is behaviorally Jewish: we fight for what we want.

Merry Christmas!

TWILIGHT OF THE SCANDAL

By Kiera McCaffrey

The Catholic League would never defend the indefensible. That is why we praised the media for putting the spotlight on the Church's sex-abuse scandal in 2002. Without journalists breaking the story, the Church may have been slower to clean house and a greater number of adolescents may have been harmed. Similarly, we have never criticized those victims of abuse who file legitimate lawsuits against the church, or lay groups that truly are focused on helping the reform process. Nevertheless, recent events have forced us to reconsider our earlier assessment.

It is obvious to us that there is a growing problem of late with trial lawyers, advocacy groups, certain segments of the media and even lawmakers seeing the sex abuse scandal not as a problem that has largely been corrected, but as an unending supplier of money, ratings and attention. Moreover, individuals from these various fields are joining forces, not to protect young people—if that were the goal, calls for reform would begin with the public schools—but to bludgeon the Catholic Church.

Ideally, victims' groups provide an atmosphere of support for those who were molested as minors and suggest ways in which the Church can ensure the safety of others. However, two elements, bitterness and lust for power, have corrupted many of these groups, which have taken up a new agenda of stripping the Church and her priests of the same rights enjoyed by the rest of America.

The bitterness comes from a projection of the acts of a few

onto the entire Church. The lust for power comes not from problems within the Church, but from reforms made subsequently. When the scandal first came to light, the media looked to victims' groups for commentary and background information. Now, at the twilight of the scandal, when abuse cases have declined, the media have less cause to seek out the spokesmen of such groups. Accustomed to the limelight, these organizations are finding it harder to stay in the public eye without becoming increasingly extremist in their endeavors. They often turn to allies for help with such work.

The ethics behind victims' groups accepting donations from lawyers who represent group members in the wake of traumatic events are questionable. Some advocates for abuse victims realize this and act accordingly. Survivors First, a Boston-based group created in the aftermath of the scandal, has a policy that it will not "accept money from anti-gay groups, anti-Catholic groups or plaintiff lawyers." However, as *Forbes* magazine's Daniel Lyons first made clear in 2003, such scruples are not shared by other organizations.

For instance, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) touts itself as "the nation's largest, oldest and most active support group for women and men wounded by religious authority figures...an independent and confidential organization with no connections with the church or church officials." Notice this statement says absolutely nothing about SNAP's connections to trial lawyers.

David Clohessy, SNAP's national director, admitted this year that approximately 18% of the group's \$500,000 to \$600,000 budget comes from lawyers' donations. Jeffrey Anderson, notorious for his outrageously broad-sweeping suits against the Church (e.g., filing suit against the Vatican and every single U.S. bishop), is one of those hefty donors. Anderson has made tens of millions of dollars from lawsuits against the Church. And each time he takes a cut from a settlement he negotiates or trial he wins (attorneys may receive between 25%

and 40% of the money awarded in each ruling), he is in a better position to write the big checks to his friends at SNAP. And SNAP, of course, is often on hand to support him in his legal efforts.

One way for attorneys and victims' groups to open the Church to more suits is to ask judges to demand the Church turn over personnel files. Digging through these confidential documents, they may discover or claim to discover new incidents of crimes or cover-up. However, it is not only through the courts that they can ensure the Church is more vulnerable to lawsuits; changes in legislation can make it possible to file suit for abuses that allegedly happened many years ago. And a whole slew of folks are working to see that such changes in fact come about.

SNAP spends 10% of its annual budget to promote legislation the group deems in its interest. Just this October, SNAP joined the newly-formed Foundation to Abolish Sex Abuse in urging the Pennsylvania legislature to pass a bill which would give those alleging they were sexually abused before the age of consent until their fiftieth birthdays to file charges. (Current law allows individuals to file suit only until their thirtieth birthdays.) The group has petitioned for similar changes in statute of limitation laws in many other states.

Voice of the Faithful is another organization that targets clergy at frequent occasions. Formed in 2002, the group purports to seek a "Spirit-driven dialogue toward a stronger Catholic Church." However, as is evident from an amicus brief the group filed with SNAP in a case in Maine, Voice's idea of a stronger Catholic Church evidently means one where the Church is forced to turn over files on deceased priests who have had molestation claims made against them. Besides stripping rights away from priests, Voice has been criticized for advancing ideas that go against Church teaching. Though the group's spokesman, John Moynihan, has stated they are "neutral" on the issues of abortion, homosexuality and the

all-male priesthood—troubling enough for a supposedly Catholic flock—Voice meetings and literature have played host to speakers and articles espousing heterodox views time and again.

Another group, Healing Alliance (formerly known as Linkup), turned to Jeffrey Anderson to educate them about effective lobbying techniques. Those gathered at the 2003 annual meeting of the victims' support group were instructed by the lawyer-turned-showman that teddy bears are the key to influencing elected officials. He told them that, should an advocate call on a legislator who is not in his office, the advocate only needs to leave one of the stuffed toys with a staffer in order to turn a missed opportunity into a successful appeal: "You tell them it represents the innocence of a child—the innocence that's been stolen—and I guarantee they'll remember you."

But when it comes to changing public policy, Anderson isn't content to give a few pointers and then leave the driving to the advocates. He and Larry Drivon, another attorney specializing in claims against the Church, helped draft a bill in California that opened a one-year window during which the statute of limitations for bringing civil suits on sex-abuses cases was abolished.

Colorado Senate President Joan Fitz-Gerald later based her own legislation, which would have opened a two-year window and would have permitted civil actions to be brought against those who are "deceased or incapacitated," on Anderson and Drivon's work. Helping Fitz-Gerald draft this legislation was another attorney, Marci Hamilton. Hamilton, a professor at the Cardozo School of Law in New York, was referred to Fitz-Gerald by SNAP; she works for the group as an expert on behalf of victims and is a strident critic of the Catholic Church.

Victims' groups have lobbied for similar legislation in other states as well. Despite the fact that witnesses die and memories fade, there is a continued push to do away with the

safeguards built into our laws. It is not only statute of limitation laws that are targeted by legislators; several states have considered bills that would mandate priests to report cases of molestation learned in the confessional. Though none has become law, the fact that legislators, lawyers and advocacy groups have even advanced the idea is testament to their hostility toward the Church.

If Catholic officials even speak up about such matters, they make themselves vulnerable to a volley of criticism. The Colorado Catholic Conference learned this when it argued that the Fitz-Gerald bill should apply uniformly to all institutions, including public schools. Despite the fact that it was opposition from public schools that sunk the bill, Catholics bore the brunt of the blame. Favoring soundbite over substance, state Senator Ron Teck whined that "the phrase 'What Would Jesus Do?' was being ignored [by the Church] for the sake of secular society and benefit.'"

People like Teck know that such trite clichés have a certain appeal, much like Anderson's teddy bear shtick. Not only do they sway the folks at home, but for the newsmen, they make great copy. And the media are always hungry for a story about abuse in the Church: no sooner had the scandal broke when the papers showed their own interest in getting a look at confidential clergy personnel files. Papers such as the *Boston Globe*, the *New York Times*, the *Hartford Courant* and the *Washington Post* appealed to judges to release confidential documents related to civil lawsuits against the Church.

Catholic leaders have seriously undertaken the good work of protecting minors in recent years (for which the bishops have received little credit). When the media, lawyers, lawmakers and advocacy groups are able to look past the desire to punish the Church—which is increasingly hard to do as they become more and more dependent on it for their livelihoods—they can help with that good work as they have in the past.

Instead, the reputations of these victims' advocates are seriously tarnished. Since they are entangled with trial lawyers out to make a buck or advance positions inconsistent with Catholic teaching, groups like SNAP and Voice of the Faithful can only be viewed with suspicion. When politicians turn to money-hungry attorneys to craft the laws, it's hard to trust that they're really looking out for the best interests of their constituents. And when the media cares as much about filing news-making lawsuits as reporting the news, there are few places for people to learn the straight facts.

The Catholic Church has cleaned up its act. Many others need to follow suit.

DENVER ARCHDIOCESE HIT BY WITCH HUNT

On November 2, five organizations, including Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and Voice of the Faithful, held a news conference in Denver demanding that the Denver Archdiocese release "all church documents relating to clergy sex abuse."

Those who made this absurd demand blew their credibility and should be dismissed as witch hunters. To begin with, it is absurd for any institution to simply dump confidential personnel files on the lap of strangers. To take but one industry—the media—there is not a single newspaper (beginning with the *Denver Post*), magazine, television network or radio station that would hand its personnel files over to the Catholic League. Ergo, what's good for the media is good for the Catholic Church.

Second, the letter sent to Archbishop Charles Chaput contains a major lie: it says that had Colorado lawmakers succeeded earlier this year in passing legislation regarding the victims of sexual abuse, some of the truth about priestly sexual abuse would have been revealed. The lie is this: Archbishop Chaput *was in favor of such a law provided it included all institutions*. The reason he rightly insisted on uniform application was due to the fact that when this issue was originally taken up, public schools were exempted! It is only when the proposed laws were amended to include the public school industry that the teachers unions went ballistic, thus killing the legislation.

For SNAP and Voice of the Faithful to imply that the Denver Archdiocese is responsible for the failure of Colorado lawmakers to pass this legislation is scurrilous. If they were really interested in protecting all minors, they'd begin by demanding that the Colorado Association of School Boards, the Colorado Association of School Executives and the Colorado Education Association stop their obstructionist tactics.

Archbishop Chaput has the courage and wisdom to see right through this and will not be bullied by those who harbor an agenda.

GREEN BAY JUDGE SMEARED BY BIGOTS

On November 6, Green Bay Judge Mark Warpinski refused to recuse himself from a case involving a lawsuit against the Diocese of Green Bay. The civil case involves sexual molestation committed 18 years ago by a priest who is in

prison. Attorney Jeffrey Anderson of St. Paul, Minnesota, filed a motion, demanding that Judge Warpinski step down because a) he is a Catholic and b) he served on the Board of Education of Notre Dame Academy.

Imagine the media reaction if a Jewish judge who was active in his local yeshiva were asked to step aside in a trial involving a synagogue. Yet when it comes to a Catholic judge who was active in a local Catholic school being asked to recuse himself from a case involving his diocese, there is no outrage at all. The fact that we have become literally anaesthetized to anti-Catholicism is a damning commentary on American society.

And look who the players are. No attorney has made more money suing the Catholic Church than Jeff Anderson; three years ago it was estimated by the Associated Press that he'd won \$60 million in settlements from Catholic dioceses. He will stop at nothing: he has tried to sue the Vatican; he has attempted to use the notorious RICO statute against the Church; and he has called the seal of confession a "loophole." He is also one of the most generous benefactors to SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests). And for greasing SNAP, Anderson gets what he wants—SNAP issued a press release on November 4 demanding that Judge Warpinski step down. All because the judge is a Catholic.

Judge Warpinski should never have been subjected to this kind of personal assault. But in today's climate, where any Catholic who is associated in any way with a sexual abuse case is considered suspect, justice often proves to be elusive. This is especially true when fat-cat lawyers with agendas team up with professional victims' groups.

“ROCKET MAN” CRASHES

There are few entertainers in the world as gifted as Elton John, and few who are as confused. The “Rocket Man” really went off the deep end in November when he confessed that if he had things his way, “I would ban religion completely.” John, a practicing homosexual, admitted that “there are so many people I know who are gay and love their religion,” not realizing, obviously, that he just undercut his own argument.

Bill Donohue told the CNN Headline News entertainment program “Showbiz Tonight” that bad as Sir Elton’s comments were, he’s still not as bad as Rosie O’Donnell. John may be confused, but O’Donnell is malicious.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE POLL:

***SHOULD ORTHODOX JEWS BE ALLOWED TO EAT HAM SANDWICHES?
SHOULD MUSLIM WOMEN BE ALLOWED TO WEAR MINI SKIRTS?***

On November 15, Bill Donohue announced why he was launching this poll:

On the ABC website for “Good Morning America,” a poll is being taken that asks, “Should Catholic Priests Be Allowed to Marry?” This is a great idea—Catholics very much want to hear from non-Catholics what they think about the Catholic Church’s internal strictures. In fact, the idea is so good that it ought to be extended to Jews and Muslims. So in the spirit of inclusion, the Catholic League is asking two questions: a) Should Orthodox Jews Be Allowed to Eat Ham Sandwiches? and b) Should Muslim Women Be Allowed to Wear Mini Skirts?

The ABC poll on Catholics offers three possible responses:

- Yes. It is unfair to prevent them from experiencing one of life's joys: companionship.
- No. The vows are founded in religious doctrine and tradition and should not be changed.
- I'm not sure.

Accordingly, we would like to amend the affirmative option regarding Orthodox Jews to read:

- Yes. It is unfair to prevent them from experiencing one of life's joys: pork.

Regarding Muslim women, the affirmative response is:

- Yes. It is unfair to prevent them from experiencing one of life's joys: being a sex tease.

Send your responses to James Bogdanoff, the supervising producer of "Good Morning America" via e-mail at james.bogdanoff@abc.com, or write to him at ABC, 147 Columbus Avenue, New York, New York 10023-6201. Tell him to be more inclusive next time.

WE'VE GOT CLOUT

When a shopper in a Macy's store in Queens, New York sought to purchase a Christmas gift card, she was dismayed to learn that none were available. While she could buy a card reading "Happy Hanukkah," there was nothing to represent this major Christian holiday. The shopper, however, didn't just shrug and buy one of the available winter-themed cards. She called us.

We quickly discovered that Christmas gift cards were not only missing from the New York store, they were absent from the Macy's web catalogue as well. Not content to ignore this disparity of holiday treatment, we quickly left a message for one of the department store's directors of publicity informing her of our discontent. We heard back from the executive a short time later, and she reported that due to a manufacturing error, the Christmas cards were delayed in production and would eventually be available.

To ensure that Macy's would make haste to give Christmas its fair due, we also called a vice president at the store's parent company, Federated Department Stores. He told us right away that he knew of the Catholic League and why we were calling. He assured us that the company was working to correct the error and make Christmas cards available as soon as possible. His promise was fulfilled the very next day.

It is to Macy's credit that they reversed the production error so quickly, and the Catholic League's credit that they were so attentive to our inquiries. Were it not for the diligence of the league's friends who keep us aware of what they see and hear, we would not be able to be such a prevalent force in the War on Christmas.

MISSOURIANS DECEIVED ON CLONING INITIATIVE

On November 7, Missouri voters amended their state constitution to protect all forms of stem cell research that are legal under federal law. The Missouri Stem Cell Research and Cures Initiative, Amendment 2, passed by the slimmest of

majorities, with 51 percent of Missouri voters favoring it. What triggered a big debate was whether human cloning would be allowed or prohibited under this measure. Many voters were confused on this point, with proponents of the initiative presenting misleading information. Such practices are, unfortunately, not unheard of.

When whites were given a literacy test as a requisite for voting in parts of the South 50 years ago, they were asked such questions as, "Who was the first president of the U.S.?" By contrast, blacks were asked to cite verbatim the Preamble to the Constitution. We had the same kind of vile trickery played in the 21st century, only this time the victims were the voters in Missouri: stealth and wealth corrupted the democratic process.

The 100-word initiative on stem cell research in Missouri was not merely a summary of a 2,000-word statement—it collapsed the truth along with the verbiage. The initiative says that "No person may clone or attempt to clone a human being." But when the fine print is read, it actually allows for therapeutic cloning.

What therapeutic cloning does is to create a human embryo for the purpose of extracting stem cells, and in doing so it kills the embryo. However, in Missouri the conversation was not about therapeutic cloning—it was about "somatic cell nuclear transfer" (that's the Orwellian euphemism preferred by the Stowers Institute, the financial source of almost all the \$29 million spent on this stealth campaign). As bioethicist Wesley J. Smith has written, "biologically, the act of human cloning is asexual reproduction performed via somatic cell nuclear transfer, or SCNT. This act of cloning culminates in the creation of a new human embryo."

Researcher William L. Saunders has said that SCNT, or what he calls "experimental cloning," violates the Nuremberg Code. He is correct: Article 5 bars experiments "where there is an a

priori reason to believe that death or disabling injury will occur....” Because SCNT deliberately creates life for the purpose of destroying and harvesting it, it violates the Nuremberg Code.

Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis wasted no time in responding to the election result. He said, “The experience of the campaign is a clarion call to all Catholics and other men and women of good will to rededicate ourselves to prayer and work,” to create a culture of life in Missouri. Archbishop Burke also pointed out that the Church “had the privilege of praying and working with many individuals and groups of faith and good will to speak the truth about the intrinsic evils of human cloning and the destruction of human embryos for research enshrined in Amendment 2.”

While Archbishop Burke preaches the truth, the cloning advocates seek only deception. It’s unfortunate that Missouri voters were on the receiving end of the latest deceit. Hopefully Missourians, and people elsewhere, will now follow the archbishop’s call for respect for “the inviolable dignity of every human life, from the first moment of its existence.”