

WALMART BOWS TO PRESSURE; ONLINE PROTEST SCORES

It only took a couple of days for Walmart to buckle. Under pressure by the Catholic League to pull three indefensible Catholic Halloween costumes, the megastore did just that. Had it not been for those who receive our email news releases, and who let Walmart know of their displeasure, there would have been no victory.

A few days before Halloween, Walmart, in deference to plus-size women, decided to pull a line of "Fat Girl Costumes." That inspired us to see how the store treated Catholics. Here is a list of the Catholic costumes made available by Walmart:

Jesus; Joseph; Mary; Virgin Mary; Monk; Cardinal; Priest; Nun; Saint; Joan of Arc; Pope; Angel; Adult Confessional; Adam and Eve; Catholic School; School Girl (the last two feature "Sexy Miss Prep School Girl" costumes).

Most of these costumes, we determined, were not in bad taste. There were three, however, that crossed the line: "Scary Mary Adult Halloween Costume" came with a mask of Our Blessed Mother showing blood dripping from her eyes; "Adult Evil Religious Nun Scary Men's Halloween Costume" showed a nun in habit wearing a mask with a skeleton's face; and, "Adult Confessional Costume" featured a priest with a mock confessional unit over his head extending to his waist (his face was shown in the middle of the confessional box).

Not wanting to be hypersensitive, we asked Walmart to pull the three offensive costumes, not registering an objection about the others. At first, we got nowhere. But we persisted, making the case that Walmart had no problem pulling the "Fat Girl" wear, or apologizing to women who were offended. We also noted that the few Jewish costumes were inoffensive, and there were

no Muslim outfits.

On Halloween, we received notice that Walmart was going to pull the three costumes in question, though by the weekend it had yet to do so. When we returned to work on November 3, they were gone. It is safe to say they will not be reordered for next Halloween.

Here is what Walmart said about the offensive Catholic outfits: "This never should have been on our site. It is unacceptable, and we apologize. We have removed it and ensure this never happens again."

We don't know exactly what triggered Walmart to do the right thing, but we have reason to believe they took notice of what Bill Donohue said to the public: "With the busiest shopping days of the year upon us, we hope Catholics look elsewhere this Christmas season."

This is the second time in ten years we have battled Walmart, winning both times.

SANITIZING SANTA

The politically correct police are always out in force during the Christmas season, and this year they made an early splash in Marshfield, Massachusetts and Montgomery County, Maryland.

In Marshfield, the School Committee decided it would not listen to its constituency: it voted 3-2 against changing "Holiday Break" back to "Christmas Break." Though hundreds protested, the elites said that the phrase "Christmas Break" was too "archaic" for the 21st century.

Almost everyone in Montgomery County, Maryland likes it when

religious holidays for Christians and Jews are recognized as such in their schools. But after Muslims complained that their religious holidays were not being observed, the School Board voted to punish everyone equally: all mention of religious holidays were deleted. Even the Muslims protested that this was not their intention.

Efforts to toy with Christmas took a different course when Dillard's, a department store chain, decided to pull a sign in the little girl's department that read, "Dear Santa: This year please give me a big fat bank account and a slim body. Please don't mix those two up like you did last year. Thanks."

We can't help note that while efforts to neuter Christmas are ongoing here, in Communist Cuba they recently approved the construction of the first Catholic Church to be built in 55 years; it being funded by Cubans from Tampa, Florida.

In the next edition of *Catalyst* we will report on the latest attempts to sanitize Santa.

SELECTIVE SENSIBILITIES

William A. Donohue

Almost 8 in 10 Americans are Christian and approximately 96 percent celebrate Christmas. That makes for few Scrooges, though one would never know it given the corrosive effect that militant atheist groups, and their multicultural allies in the public and private sectors, have had on our culture. There is something terribly wrong when we have to be on our guard about offending someone for simply wishing him a Merry Christmas.

We have become so politically correct, so insistent that

everyone walk a linguistic tightrope, that it makes for boring conversations; people are afraid to speak their mind lest they offend someone.

It's so phony. Haven't we all told a joke that stereotypes others? Who is so virginal that he hasn't laughed at a good-humored ethnic joke? Why, then, have we become so outrageously uptight, scared to death that we may say the wrong thing?

To be honest, the observations I just made do not have universal application. For example, it doesn't apply to those who relentlessly, and maliciously, stick it to Catholics. They can bash all night long on late-night TV, and in the comedy clubs, and not have to worry about offending anyone. That's because most Catholics have learned to take their lumps in stride. Some say this is a mark of maturity. I call it cowardice.

Here at the Catholic League we have to confront bigotry, without also becoming hypersensitive. That's why we did not object to most of the Walmart Halloween costumes: dressing up as a priest or a nun is not proof of anti-Catholicism; it can be done in a good-natured way. But when we learned that Walmart could not stomach "Fat Lady" costumes, we wondered whether it sold offensive Catholic garb. It did (depicting

Our Blessed Mother with bloody eyes is not funny) and that is why we objected, limiting our concerns to the few that crossed the line.

If we can take a joke—accepting Halloween costumes that poke fun at priests and nuns—why can't politically correct secularists return the favor? Why are their sensibilities so selectively employed? We don't lack for examples, as this edition of *Catalyst* proves (please see the stories on pp. 4 and 6 to make sense of the following examples).

During the Vietnam War, I spent four years in the U.S. Air Force at Beale A.F.B. in Marysville-Yuba City, California.

Religion was not a big subject of discussion, but not because it was taboo: everyone was free to express his convictions, one way or the other; it's just that young guys tend to talk more about girls than God. Today, much has changed.

When an officer is dressed down for merely mentioning Jesus' name, something is terribly wrong. It's not normal. The Latino soldier was praising his mother's reliance on Jesus, citing it as a positive resource for him growing up. Astonishingly, he was told that his essay, published in the base newspaper, was offensive and in violation of military policy.

When a woman in her 60s is fired for saying "God bless you"—she had the audacity to say this to voters after they had cast their ballot—we have another case of madness. Believe it or not, she actually invoked this phrase after someone sneezed. It's true. Why she wasn't guillotined is not certain.

What is even worse about these examples of religious bigotry, and political correctness run amok, is the venue: in both instances it was government agents who levied the punishment. So what freedoms is the officer fighting for? Freedom of speech doesn't count for him. Neither does freedom of religion. Ditto for the woman who performed her civic duty by being a ballot monitor.

Our culture has changed, but not for the better. To be sure, we can be justly proud of the tremendous progress made by minorities and women. But when it comes to the content of our norms and values, we have taken a giant leap backwards. When the sacred and profane are reversed—when what was sacred is now profane, and when what was profane is now sacred—we are regressing. Not to admit to this problem is to assure its survival; unfortunately, that is what many do.

Cultures change, but only because some get involved, and that is where you come in: being a spectator is what most people settle for, but it is only the gladiators that determine the

outcome. Can one person make a difference? Of course—parents do all the time. In terms of changing a culture, it typically takes the combined effort of like-minded persons. But to win, they must be determined.

We must never forget that those who succeeded in silencing the officer and the poll watcher did so because they were determined to do so. It must also be said, however, that their victories are capable of being repealed; it depends, in part, on the determination of those who object. Similarly, those who succeeded in supporting an organization that got a megastore to stop disrespecting Catholics with their offensive Halloween costumes—that would be YOU—were able to prevail because they were dogged in their effort.

On that happy note, I bid you all a very Merry Christmas!

JESUS VIOLATES MILITARY POLICY

Below is Bill Donohue's letter of November 4 to U.S. Air Force Commander Colonel Craig Baker of the 180th Fighter Wing in Swanton, OH; a copy was sent to the Air Force Chief of Chaplains.

I am writing to you in my capacity as president and CEO of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, and as a veteran of the U.S. Air Force. My reason for writing is the reaction to an essay written by Col. Florencio Marquez in the September edition of the *Stinger*. The article has been removed from this Air National Guard newsletter because it violated military policy; alleged "sensitivities" were cited as triggering the decision.

After a careful reading of Col. Marquinez's essay, and the operative Air Force policy, it is clear that military policy has been violated. But it is not Marquinez who is the guilty party; rather, it is those who made the ruling against him. The plain language of Air Force Instruction 1-1 leaves little doubt about whose rights were violated.

Nothing in Col. Marquinez's article comes even remotely close to violating AFI 1-1, Sections 2.11 and 2.12. Ironically, the latter Section not only protects his religious rights, it is the basis of my position: Section 2.12 was violated when his essay was withdrawn. Let me begin by addressing Section 2.11.

Section 2.11 draws a reasonable balance between the free exercise of religion and prohibitions against the establishment of religion by the government. This is consistent with the First Amendment, though I hasten to add that the Framers sought to protect individuals from the reach of government; they did not seek to protect the government from religious expression. This Section also says that those who exercise religious expression must not "degrade morale, good order, and discipline in the Air Force or degrade the trust and confidence that the public has in the United States Air Force."

It is simply incomprehensible to maintain that a tribute to one's mother could in any way destroy the morale, order and discipline of the U.S. Air Force, or somehow manage to enervate the public's trust and confidence in it. Col. Marquinez was not using this forum to proselytize or to demean non-believers: he was simply explaining how his mother's trust in Jesus acted as a positive resource for him growing up in troubled times.

Surely the morale, order and discipline of the U.S. Air Force is not endangered by making such an innocuous statement. Nor can it be persuasively said that if the public read this sensitively crafted essay that it would erode their trust and

confidence in the Air Force. But it could be reasonably argued that the trust and confidence of the American people would take a hit if they learned whose “sensitivities” were being honored, and whose were being disrespected.

Section 2.12.1 says that “All Airmen are able to choose to practice their particular religion, or subscribe to no religious belief at all.” Surely one conventional way that the faithful choose to practice their religion is to talk about it, or to write about it. If the forum were a classroom, and Airmen were being required to adopt the religious tenets of their instructor, that would be objectionable. But to scrub the *Stinger* clean of a man’s tribute to his mother, citing religious reasons for doing so, is hardly analogous. No one’s rights are being violated if someone invokes the name of God as part of his sincerely held convictions.

The removal of Col. Marquez’s article is a flagrant violation of his right to practice his religion. It also sets a very dangerous precedent: What else will be subjected to censorial edits? Will the mere mention of God be cause for punitive action?

I am not raising this issue to be facetious. The Declaration of Independence expressly promotes a particular theology. In fact, it has four specific references to God. God is the author of the “laws of nature and nature’s God”; He is the “Creator” who “endowed” us with inalienable rights; He is “the Supreme Judge of the world”; and He provides “the protection of Divine Providence.”

Given the sanctioning of Col. Marquez for expressing his mother’s reliance on God, and how it affected his life, it makes me wonder: Would it be permissible to reprint the Declaration in the *Stinger*?

The U.S. Constitution protects the rights of the minority from the tyranny of the majority. But it also protects the majority

from the tyranny of the minority. It is the latter issue that is in play in this case, not the former.

NEW RELIGIOUS RIGHTS FOR AIRMEN

On the opposite page [[click here](#)] is Bill Donohue's letter to military leaders about the dismal state of religious rights for Air Force personnel. We are happy to report that just before we went to print, the objectionable rules were revised; they are a major improvement.

The most invidious language of the old rules has been stricken, and a much more positive, pro-religious expression, policy has been adopted. Donohue commended the Air Force for acting so justly, and hopes that the worst abuses of religious liberty are behind us. We will continue to monitor this issue.

U.S. MUST ACT AGAINST MUSLIM SAVAGERY

Recently, an innocent Christian man, his wife, and their unborn child were tortured and burned alive in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. There has been no public response from the U.S. Below is an excerpt of Bill Donohue's letter of November 11 to President Obama.

One week ago today, an innocent Christian man, woman, and her

unborn child were tortured and burned to death by a Muslim mob in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. They were charged, falsely, of desecrating the Koran, an act which violates the nation's blasphemy laws. Yet so far there has been no public condemnation of this outrageous tragedy, either by you or the State Department. I implore you to do so immediately.

What happened cannot be understood without referencing Islam and Christianity, but it would be helpful, nonetheless, to assess this barbaric event untainted by religious considerations.

Consider, for the example the following explanation absent any reference to religion:

A woman cleans her father-in-law's home, burning some waste materials. A man claims she was burning a few pages from a book. He spreads the word to neighborhood elites and soon the news is being spread by loudspeakers. The woman and her husband try to flee and manage to hide in a room housed in a commercial establishment.

Hundreds of angry men arrive on tractor trolleys and motor bikes looking for them. They rip open the building's thatched roof, pulling them out. After parading them around naked in the street, the mob—which is now numbering into the thousands—then stone them. Next they are burned alive in a brick oven; she is wrapped in cotton to facilitate the burning.

This is an act of pure madness. Worse, it is hardly unknown in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

This savagery has been condemned by many Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim leaders. It is precisely because there has been no U.S. response that Dr. Nazir S. Bhatti, president of the Pakistan Christian Congress, wrote to you on November 9. Here is what he said:

“It is surprising that neither the U.S. Administration under your honor nor U.S. State Department bothered to condemn this horrific crime of burning alive of [a] Christian couple in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which is receiving billions of dollars in aid from U.S. taxpayers.

“I would appeal your honor to put pressure on the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to end misuse of blasphemy laws against Christian, Ahamadia and other religious minorities and make any further U.S. aid to Pakistan conditional on that country’s human rights and repeal of blasphemy laws.”

I agree wholeheartedly with Dr. Bhatti’s statement. I especially support his call to link foreign aid to a repeal of Pakistan’s blasphemy laws. Any nation that allows humans to be burned alive—for whatever reason—does not deserve a dime from American taxpayers. It is even sicker when false accusations are made in the name of religion.

CHRISTIANS ATTACK CATHOLICS

Over the past several weeks, a wave of crazed Protestant activists attacked Catholic churches in Washington and Maryland. They shouted anti-Catholic slogans with their bullhorns, passed out vile literature attacking the teachings of the Catholic Church, harassed parishioners going to Mass—they even stormed churches prior to the beginning of Mass.

These Nazi-like tactics, carried out by fundamentalists, should be widely condemned by everyone, including, most especially, evangelical and fundamentalist leaders.

Aside from the *Washington Post*, the media expressed no

interest in this story. Why is that? Were those on the left unmoved because they greet anti-Catholicism with aplomb? Were those on the right unmoved because they do not want to rupture the Catholic-evangelical relationship? Neither reason is persuasive. Bigotry must be condemned, and this is doubly so when the basic right to attend religious service without intimidation is jeopardized.

It is sad but true that there are still pockets of anti-Catholicism in the Protestant community, especially among those aligned with conservative causes. No alliance in the culture war is worth looking past this problem and that is why Catholics need to stand fast against attempts to brush instances like this aside.

FIRED FOR SAYING “GOD BLESS YOU”

A New Hampshire Catholic woman was recently fired as a ballot clerk for saying “God bless you” as voters left the polls. Below is a copy of Bill Donohue’s letter sent to New Hampshire Secretary of State William Gardner.

November 7, 2014

Mr. William M. Gardner
Secretary of State
State House, Room 204
107 North Main St.
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Secretary Gardner:

It has come to my attention that ballot clerk Ruth Provencal was fired on October 30 by Renee Routhier, chairman of Derry's Supervisors of the Checklist. Ms. Provencal was terminated for violating New Hampshire state law, RSA 659:44. The law reads as follows: "No election officer shall electioneer while in performance of his official duties. For the purposes of this section, 'electioneer' shall mean to act in any way specifically designed to influence the vote of a voter on any question or office. Any person who violates this provision shall be guilty of a misdemeanor."

The law is entirely reasonable. The application of it in this instance is entirely unreasonable: Ms. Provencal, a practicing Catholic, was fired for saying "God bless you" to voters as they left the polls on primary day September 9. She has also been known to say "God bless you" when a voter sneezes.

As president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, I would like to know what part of this law was violated by Ms. Provencal? Has any voter registered a complaint? If so, how did her remark influence the voter's decision? Moreover, because Ms. Provencal made her allegedly offensive remark after voters had cast their ballot, it would be instructive to know how she could have influenced their decision. Perhaps Ms. Routhier can explain. I would be happy to publish her comments in our monthly journal, *Catalyst*.

The U.S. Supreme Court opens every session by saying, "God Bless the United States and this Honorable Court." Now if saying "God bless you" is proof of undue influence on a voter's decision, it seems logical to conclude that the Justices of the Supreme Court are compromising their rulings by allowing this invocation.

In all honesty, Secretary Gardner, are not these two examples demonstrative of borderline insanity?

More seriously, any fair-minded person, including committed

atheists, would no doubt conclude that the offender in this case is not Ms. Provencal—it is Ms. Routhier.

I look forward to your response. Thank you for your consideration.

CATHOLICS ABANDON DEMOCRATS

Just two years ago, Catholics voted for President Barack Obama by a margin of 50 percent to 48 percent. On Election Day, they abandoned Obama's party: 54 percent voted for Republican candidates and 45 percent went for the Democrats (60 percent of white Catholics chose GOP candidates). What is most startling about the Catholic vote is that it represents an exact turnaround from 2008: 54 percent voted for Obama and 45 percent cast their ballot for Senator John McCain.

Catholics are pragmatic. Until the McGovernization of the Democratic Party in 1972, they were among the most reliably Democratic voters in the nation. Since that time, they have been politically homeless, which is why both parties vie for their vote so aggressively. Catholics are a bellwether: whoever wins their vote, generally wins the election. By contrast, Protestants vote Republican and Jews vote Democrat.

Asians are another group to watch. Not only are they the fastest growing minority in the U.S.—they constitute 3 percent of the electorate—they are up for grabs by both parties. In the last presidential election, Obama captured 73 percent of their vote. But not this year: Asians voted 50 percent to 49 percent, choosing Republicans over Democrats. This is a huge turnaround in just two years.

Some things never change. Most Americans are either high

school graduates, have attended college, or are college graduates: they voted Republican, by a wide margin. So who voted for the Democrats? High school dropouts and postgraduates. That would make for a great "60 Minutes" segment: Why is it that those who know nothing have so much in common with those who think they know everything?

One final note:
Sandra-I-want-you-to-pay-for-my-contraceptives-Fluke got whipped by 22 points in her bid for a state senate seat in California.

ANTI-CATHOLIC POLITICAL AD IN WASHINGTON ST.

Shari Song, the Democratic candidate who ran for a state senate seat in the state of Washington, recently illustrated how she reacts to bigotry. Her tolerance for intolerance is stunning. The man she ran against, Mark Miloscia, was the victim of rank anti-Catholicism, and she took it in stride.

Mark Miloscia is a former Democratic state legislator in Washington who switched to the Republican party because of his dismay with the way Democrats treat people of faith. The former Southerner had no idea just how hateful some in his former party are, but now he knows.

Some Democratic operatives tried to whip up anti-Catholicism by posting a doctored photo of Miloscia on a website: it showed him dressed as a bishop holding a rosary, including captions that depicted him as a stooge for the Vatican. The inscription alongside the doctored photo read as follows:

“Republican Mark Miloscia came from the Deep South...with *plenty* of baggage.

“‘Mississippi Mark’ has always worn his church on his sleeve. Rather than represent the people of Federal Way, he has best represented the people of The Vatican.”

Below this statement was a list of six positions attributed to him, including one that said, “*Lobbyist for the Catholic Church.*”

It’s a throwback to the days when the Know Nothing Party of the 19th century challenged the loyalty of American Catholics, portraying them as giving their allegiance to Rome, not the nation.

Instead of condemning this bigotry, the best Song could do was to say that the website was “a little bit misguided.” She literally defended those responsible for this anti-Catholic statement saying, “I don’t believe they are anti-Catholic or intended it to be that way.” So just what would it take, Ms. Song, for you to brand someone anti-Catholic?

One Democratic activist tried to walk it back, saying, “A couple of local Democratic legislative district members got together and did it on their own. I don’t know all the names of who’s involved...We’ve had to talk to them to try to get them to fix it.” Nice to know this guy was comfortable giving advice to strangers. More important, the local media continued to miss the many facets of this remarkable story.

There’s more. On October 22, Song and Miloscia were at an event hosted by the *Federal Way Mirror*, the local newspaper. Held at the Twin Lakes Country Club, stacks of the anti-Catholic flyers were placed on a table set aside for each candidate’s literature; they were placed alongside Song’s material. Neither she, nor anyone from her staff, objected.

Public officials who cannot honestly represent all the people

have no legitimate role to play in a democratic society. The Catholic League is happy to report that the anti-Catholic campaign waged against Miloscia failed; he has been elected to the state senate seat in Washington that he was vying for.