

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE TAKES SWIPE AT CHURCH

On November 24, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* ran a front page story on the vote in Ireland to allow divorce. Senior editor Peter Benesh commented on how times have changed for Ireland “and its omnipresent church.” He then posed the question, “Should clerical pedophiles be allowed to dictate Irish family values?”

Now imagine a senior editor of any newspaper writing a news story—not an editorial—commenting on how things have changed for Israel “and its omnipresent synagogue.” Or imagine a news story that questioned, “Should Hollywood degenerates be allowed to dictate American family values?”

The question we put to the newspaper was slightly different. We asked, “Should anti-Catholic bigots be allowed to write stories about Catholicism?”

MILK AD LEAVES SOUR TASTE

A milk ad produced by the Dairy Management Association triggered a critical response by the Catholic League and an apology from the company. The television ad showed a priest making a buffoon of himself in front of a nun while trying to eat cake and access milk from a vending machine at the same time.

The “Vending Machine” commercial was part of a “Got Milk?” television campaign. It will be reviewed with an eye toward discontinuing it in the first quarter of 1996.

POOR CALVIN KLEIN

In a survey conducted by *USA Today* of 20 of the advertising industry's top ad makers, the Calvin Klein jean ads that generated so much negative publicity last summer was voted the worst ad of the year. It was the Catholic League that led the attack on the ads and that called for a boycott of Calvin Klein products. The ads, which featured under age models in sexually suggestive poses, were withdrawn by Calvin Klein within weeks of the league's protest.

Still reeling from the league's attack, Calvin Klein announced in December that it would not run any more sexually outrageous ads in the U.S. Why the rest of the world will still be subjected to Klein's depravity, no one said.

OFFENSIVE CHRISTMAS CARD DRAWS APOLOGY

The *New York Law Journal* carried a story on December 18 on the distribution of 1500 Christmas cards to the friends and associates of a New York law firm, Rudolph & Beer. Playing off the name of the firm, the card showed a picture of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer dressed as one of the three Wise Men, bringing a foaming mug of beer to the baby Jesus. The Catholic League failed to find the humor in all this and let the law firm know it. An apology was granted within 24 hours.

LAW AND ORDER PROMOTES NEGATIVE STEREOTYPE

The NBC show, *Law and Order*, seems to have a growing interest in the Catholic Church. In its November 29 episode, it featured a devout Catholic woman who confesses to a priest that she smothered to death her own child and then put the baby in a furnace. Throughout the program, those Catholics who appear to be the most well adjusted are also the ones who tend to be the most critical of Church teachings, while those who are the most loyal to the Church seem to have a problem.

This doesn't mean that the program was anti-Catholic, but it does raise an interesting question: why is it that television producers more frequently portray practicing Catholics in a negative light while putting a positive spin on dissidents? Could it have anything to do with their own predilections?

One thing is certain: there is increasing evidence that Hollywood looks upon Catholicism the way Catholics (or at least Catholic League type Catholics) look upon Hollywood. The latter phenomenon is easy to understand, but we're still not sure what we've done to cause the former.

DISNEY GETS PRESENT FROM

CATHOLIC LEAGUE

Michael Eisner, the chairman of Disney, received an unexpected gift from the Catholic League during the holiday season: he was mailed thousands of petitions protesting the Disney-Miramax movie "Priest." Upwards of 100,000 persons signed the petition, letting Mr. Eisner know exactly what they thought of his foray into Catholic bashing.

Because of the bad publicity that the Catholic League helped to generate for Disney, and because the movie was a flop at the box office, we do not expect to be greeted with "Priest II" anytime too soon.

WE DIDN'T WATCH IT, BUT....

Somehow we missed it, but reading about it in *TV Guide* seemed like we hadn't. Here is how the magazine described the HBO program, "Mr. Show," which aired on November 24: "Spoof of 'OJ' trial that finds the Pope eluding officials in the Popemobile and a bloody ring that doesn't fit." Perhaps if the nouveau creative types at HBO stopped sipping their cappuccino long enough to look up, they might discover that common decency has eluded them.

ANN (S) LANDERS LASHES OUT AT POPE AND POLISH PEOPLE

In an interview with Christopher Buckley in the December 4 edition of the *New Yorker*, gossip columnist Ann Landers lashed out at Pope John Paul II and the Polish people. After first making a favorable comment about the Pope, Landers remarked, "Of course, he's a Polack. They're very antiwomen." In a carefully worded statement, Landers later apologized for the crack about the Pope, but made no direct apology for her snide comment about the Polish people.

The Catholic League sent its own comments to the *New Yorker* and further disseminated its views via a news release and radio interviews. The league said that "The irony is that by blaming all Polish people—including the Pope—for being misogynists, Ann Landers reveals herself as the true bigot."

The hypocrisy of the nation's elites to the Landers attack was also noted by the league: "If Landers were treated by the elites in our society the way people like Al Campanis, Jimmy the Greek or Marge Schott were, she would be subject to far more than `40 lashes with a wet noodle.' She would either be terminated or shipped off to some mind-control sensitivity training workshop."

It should be noted that in the wake of this controversy, at least one newspaper, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, has decided to drop Landers' column, beginning in 1996.

“PICKET FENCES” CARICATURES CATHOLIC TEACHINGS

The December 8 episode of the CBS program, “Picket Fences,” caricatured Roman Catholic teachings on marriage and sexuality. The show involved the arrival of Pope John Paul II in the fictional small town of Rome, Wisconsin. During the parade, a man is shot. The death is listed as a suicide. However, the Pope testifies in court that he saw a man shoot the victim.

At the trial, the defense attorney seeks to establish bias on the part of the Pope and thereby discredit his testimony. The victim was married, divorced and is gay; the accused was his lover. The bias that the attorney seeks to uncover extends to the Catholic Church’s teachings on sexuality.

At the request of William Donohue, David E. Kelley, the show’s producer (and writer of this episode), sent him a copy of the tape for previewing it. The following statement was then released to the press:

“David Kelley tells me that this episode ‘is not about tenets of Catholicism, the target is not Roman Catholics. The target is the American Criminal Justice System.’ He is only partly right.

“Mr. Kelley is correct to say that the principal target of the show is the American Criminal Justice System, but the program also provides a caricature of Church teachings on sexuality that helps promote a negative stereotype of Catholicism, thus feeding the apparently insatiable appetite that some Americans have—many of whom work in Hollywood—for lambasting the Catholic religion.

“It needs to be said one more time: the Church teaches that sexual expression outside the institution of marriage is

wrong. Gays are excluded from marriage because they do not hold forth the potential of creating new life. Married infertile couples are not barred from sex, any more than the aged or infirm are, precisely because nothing unnatural has been done to prohibit procreation.

“Furthermore, those who violate Church teachings are not ipso facto ‘morally evil’ persons. Indeed the sacrament of reconciliation allows for the forgiveness of any act, no matter how morally evil.

“Mr. Kelley’s long-standing fascination with Catholicism has already been noted by the Catholic League. It is hoped that he will satisfy his urge next time by getting the facts straight.”

After receiving the Catholic League’s news release, David Kelley wrote to Dr. Donohue defending the show by saying that the points made in the news release “were not only included in the program, they were made quite expressly, I thought.”

DIVERSITY INCLUDES ANTI-CATHOLICISM ON NATION’S CAMPUSES

Few colleges have not embraced the concept of multiculturalism. In theory, multiculturalism means greater tolerance for the diversity that the nation’s many races, ethnic groups and religions bring to our society. But in practice, it often means a curious tolerance for certain types of bigotry: bashing whites, men and Catholics are some of the most prominent exceptions.

This past fall, two colleges, one in Illinois (Highland Community College) and the other in New Jersey (Middlesex County College), not only showed remarkable tolerance for anti-Catholicism, they seemed to justify it as an expression of multiculturalism, properly understood. Both instances triggered a response from the Catholic League. Because of Gov. Christie Todd Whitman's past record of tolerating anti-Catholicism in New Jersey, the league took its case directly to her.

The October-November edition of the Highland Chronicle, the newspaper of Highland Community College, featured an illustration by a student of a naked woman crucified to a cross with the inscription, "Bad Faith," placed above her head, and the words, "The Denial of Women's Rights," alongside her. On November 13, Dr. Donohue wrote a letter Highland Community College president Dr. Ruth Mercedes Smith asking her to join with him in denouncing this bigoted attack on Catholicism.

Dr. Donohue answered her reply with the following letter:

December 4, 1995

Dr. Ruth Mercedes Smith
President
Highland Community College
2998 West Pearl City Road
Freeport, IL 61032-9341

Dear Dr. Smith:

Thank you for your remarkable letter of November 20. It was of great interest to learn that anti-Catholicism is used on your campus as a "learning situation" and that it enhances "the growth of students." It certainly has been a learning situation for me to know that a college president has such an open mind about bigotry. But I'm still a little confused. Aside from tolerating Catholic bashing on your campus, are

there any other forms of prejudice that you think add to “the growth of students”? Let me offer a few examples.

Will you now allow your students to “grow” even further by introducing them to the pedagogical value of bashing Jews? Surely an illustration that offended African Americans might provide grist for discussion. The cultural heritage of Native Americans offers much fodder for insult and caricature. And while you’re redefining the meaning of multiculturalism for the benefit of Roman Catholics, will you now invite your students to share their “philosophies, ideas, and insights” regarding an invidious portrayal of homosexuals?

You say, too, that you want students to see “all sides” of an argument. Accordingly, you should not hesitate to share with me how students on your campus are presented with both sides of the following issues: slavery; serial killing; incest; genocide; segregation; apartheid; and rape.

It is not every day that I am afforded a glimpse at the mind-set of an unrepentant relativist. Just one more question: how can you be sure of anything I have just written? That should provide hours worth of entertainment just trying to deconstruct it.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President