

TAMPON NATIVITY SCENE IS A HIT

“Have a holly, jolly, bloody good Christmas with these tampon crafts.” That was on the homepage of tamponcrafts.com: the website offers instructions on how to construct nativity scenes out of tampons, including Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and the Three Wise Men. Indeed, it advises the reader to “Gather ‘round the manger for the Christmas Miracle. These three kings come bearing gold, frankincense, and...fresh-scented feminine hygiene products.” To show how inclusive the designer is, there were also guidelines on how to make a menorah out of tampons.

The tampon nativity scene, which has been around for several years, was the source of much humor this year. NPR liked it so much that one of its correspondents asked Martha Stewart about it. Some bloggers loved it so much they could hardly contain themselves. Indeed, the site’s Facebook page had almost 21,000 “likes.”

In any event, American Atheists and the Freedom From Religion Foundation did not say whether they would sue a municipal government that displayed a tampon nativity scene on public property. Our guess is they would fund it.

GAYS CONDEMN SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army was under attack from homosexual activists this Christmas season for merely holding Christian beliefs on marriage and the family—it does not discriminate against anyone. The war extended to a formal resolution by the

Associated Students of the University of California at Berkeley calling for a ban of Salvation Army donation boxes on campus; university officials considered the request.

An organized effort to boycott the Salvation Army was also called by a pro-gay website, watermarkonline.com. It asked its readers nationwide not to give to the charitable organization. Gays in Chicago launched their own campaign to withhold donations. The net result is that more of the needy went without needed assistance this Christmas season, thanks to the efforts of these homosexuals.

Not only does the Salvation Army not discriminate in hiring, and in whom they serve, it does not lobby for any cause. Indeed, its only agenda is serving the dispossessed.

Yet to those driven by a lust for power in the homosexual community, it makes sense to sacrifice the poor for the purpose of advancing their agenda.

It is too kind to say this is another example of political correctness: It is nothing less than an attempt to punish thought. This, of course, is one of the ugliest traits of the totalitarian mindset. That its intellectual home is the University of California at Berkeley, should come as a surprise to no one.

We asked for our members to give to the Salvation Army this past Christmas season. We wanted to let the organization know that we support their charitable goals, as well as their courage in standing up to these ideological bullies.

CHRISTMAS IN THE WORKPLACE

A piece by Richard Fausta was recently posted on the website of *Business Review Europe* commenting on how Brits should celebrate Christmas in the workplace. It certainly had application to Americans during Christmastime.

Fausta said "Office decorations during the Christmas season is seen as one reason toward the notion that employees can lose focus." For example, he noted, "Talking with co-workers about Christmas preparations, discussing shopping, parties and decorations can be perplexing to any manager dealing with staff productivity." We asked Catholic League vice president Bernadette Brady about this. "We can't relate to that," Brady said, "Partying is precisely what allows us to focus."

Fausta advised that "It's best for employees to keep any highly religious displays inside the walls of cubicles." We can't relate to that Brady said. "We all have windowed offices."

"If one of your colleagues wants to put up a picture of Jesus, but he works next to a Buddhist," Fausta advised, "there may be some sensitivities involved to deal with." We can't relate to that Brady said. "We don't hire Buddhists."

Ever sensitive, Fausta observed that "What smells like a beautiful mix of holiday smells of cinnamon, baked apples, and gingerbread may make your Indian colleague keel over in convulsions." We can't relate to that Brady said. "We don't hire Indians."

"One survey found 85 percent of companies that decorate their offices have had to adjust policies as a result of complaints about the decorations," Fausta said. We can't relate to that Brady said. "We only hire Catholics."

When Bill Donohue addressed this, he said, "In other words, to

avoid complaints of discrimination in the workplace, be sure to discriminate when hiring. Either that or tell the whiners to get a life.”

CHRISTMAS VANDALS NEVER QUIT

Every year at Christmastime, incidents of vandalism are rampant, and while 2012 was not as bad as 2011, there still were too many instances. The following towns and cities were hit by vandals this year:

Birmingham, AL; Madison, AL; Live Oak, CA; Longmont, CA; San Diego, CA; Torrington, CT; Frostproof, FL; South Bend, IN; Granger, IN; Quincy, MA; Menominee, MI; Mt. Pleasant, MI; Angus, MN; Warren, MN; Dover, NH; Shrewsbury, MA; New York, NY; Portland, OR; Carlisle, PA; Chambersburg, PA; Spartanburg, SC; Nederland, TX; Ulster, NY; Forest, VA; St. Albans, VT; Covington, WA; Federal Way, WA; Beloit, WI; Clintonville, WI; Moundsville, WV.

The worst incident this year occurred in Huntington, WV, where a hand-painted baby Jesus figurine was stolen and defaced with sexual obscenities, anarchy symbols, anti-religious statements, the numbers 666, and an upside-down cross; horns were drawn on the head, and offensive markings were inscribed on the face, chest and groin.

It is our hope that law enforcement officials distinguish between random acts of vandalism, often committed by drunken teenagers, and what happened in Huntington, WV. The latter was pure malice.

MARK THOMPSON GETS A PASS

Former BBC chief, and current *New York Times* Company president, Mark Thompson, was cleared of wrongdoing in the BBC case involving Jimmy Savile following a lengthy report that was issued in December.

It is entirely plausible that Mark Thompson had nothing to do with spiking the BBC “Newsnight” story on BBC child rapist Jimmy Savile. It is entirely implausible to believe that when Thompson told his BBC lawyers last September to write a letter on his behalf that he knew nothing about its contents: the missive threatened *The Sunday Times* with a lawsuit if it ran a story implicating Thompson in the Savile matter. Indeed, only a fool would contend that he who authorizes his lawyers to write a letter on his behalf wouldn’t know what he was authorizing.

Last February, British pundit Guido Fawkes wrote that Thompson was told about the axed “Newsnight” report at a Christmas party. Yet on October 7, Thompson said he “never heard any allegations or received any complaints” about Savile’s predatory behavior. On October 10, Lord Patten, the chairman of the BBC Trust, said that Thompson was involved in the decision to kill the Savile story (the next day Patten inexplicably said he “misspoke”). On October 24, we learned that BBC foreign correspondent Caroline Hawley also told Thompson about the “Newsnight” story at the 2011 Christmas party. These October revelations were subsequent to the letter which Thompson authorized, the contents of which he says he knew nothing about.

Thompson should have said from the get-go that while he had heard rumors about Savile for years, and had learned of the

spiked report last Christmas, he had nothing to do with the decision to nix the story.

As for the *New York Times* itself, it deserved credit for the way it handled matters. Arthur Sulzberger, Jr. didn't stand in the way of either his reporters or the public editor, all of whom acted responsibly.

It is our hope that the *Times* covers the Catholic Church with the same degree of fairness.

POPE'S TWITTER ACCOUNT SCARES FOES

Much of the world's reaction to the pope's use of Twitter was extraordinarily positive, but his enemies had a field day.

The *Kansas City Star* and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* have long been among the most anti-Catholic newspapers in the nation. So it is not surprising that their love for abortion rights and the right of two men to marry would lead them to suffer apoplexy over the pope's Twitter account. This is why their respective cartoonists, Lee Judge and Rob Rogers, exploded in anger at the pope; they used these issues to hammer the pope's use of Twitter to advance his views.

No one will stop the Holy Father from championing the rights of children, born and unborn, and the integrity of marriage and the family. Those who find his positions objectionable have every reason to be scared: the more people learn how abortion kills, and homosexual marriages dilute the privileged position of traditional marriages, the more they are likely to embrace the pope's idea of civil rights and the common good.

BISHOP FINN AND THE CATHOLIC LEFT

The Catholic Left has been trying to unseat Kansas City-St. Joseph Bishop Robert Finn for well over a year. Their effort recently received a boost from the *New York Times*. We decided to respond.

The *Times* said that Finn's misdemeanor conviction "stemmed from his failure to report the Rev. Shawn Ratigan to the authorities after hundreds of pornographic pictures that Father Ratigan had taken of young girls were discovered on his laptop in December 2010." That is factually wrong.

On October 15, 2011 the *Times* mentioned there was "a single photo of a young girl, nude from the waist down," and "hundreds of photographs of children" showing "upskirt images and images focused on the crotch."

Clearly anyone who takes such pictures is disturbed. But it also needs to be said that crotch shots are not pornographic. Moreover, the diocese described the "single photo" of a naked girl to a police officer who served on the diocesan sexual review board, and he said it did not constitute pornography. So why would the *Times* say that "hundreds of pornographic pictures" were found in December 2010? The record shows that it was not until *after* the diocese called the cops in May 2011 that child porn was found on Ratigan's computer.

On February 23, 1998, a *Times* editorial railed against those who try to equate "nude photographs of children" with child pornography. So it is more than just a little hypocritical of the *Times* to all of a sudden feign indignation over a single photo of a nude child.

Under Bishop Finn, the review board was contacted, the authorities were notified, and an independent investigation was ordered (the Graves Report). In short, Bishop Finn deserves better. The attack on him, coming exclusively from the Catholic Left, smacks of an agenda.

HHS MANDATE TAKES A HIT

In December the U.S. District Court handed down a ruling which allowed the Archdiocese of New York to proceed with its lawsuit against the Health and Human Services (HHS) abortifacient mandate.

Not only did the Obama administration lose, it received a well deserved lecture from the bench: it was taken to task for misrepresenting the current burdens that the HHS mandate has placed on the New York Archdiocese.

The Obama team tried to have it both ways, and it failed. On the one hand, it ordered Catholic entities to get ready to implement the mandate, and on the other hand it said that because some modifications may yet be made, complaints that the mandate has already burdened the archdiocese are baseless. But U.S. District Judge Brian Cogan wasn't buying it.

Judge Cogan said the Obama administration's arguments "ring hollow." He quoted the HHS Interim Final Rules back to the Obama lawyers; they hung themselves with their own wording. The Rules made clear that "these interim final regulations require significant lead time to implement," emphasizing that "in order to allow plans and health insurance coverage to be designed and implemented on a timely basis, regulations must be published and available to the public well in advance of the effective date of the requirements."

It is impossible to improve on Judge Cogan's ruling when he said "the First Amendment does not require citizens to accept assurances from the government that, if the government later determines it has made a misstep, it will take ameliorative action. There is no 'Trust us, changes are coming' clause in the Constitution. To the contrary, the Bill of Rights itself, and the First Amendment in particular, reflect a degree of skepticism towards government self-restraint and self-correction."

The battle over the HHS mandate is not over, but what happened in December bodes well for those who believe in religious liberty.

OBAMACARE RELIGION ISSUE RESURFACES

The U.S. Supreme Court recently ordered the Fourth Circuit of Appeals to hear the constitutional issues involved in two provisions of ObamaCare, formally known as the Affordable Care Act. Previously, the circuit court ruled that a challenge by Liberty University to ObamaCare was premature, but now the high court has vacated that decision.

The key aspect of ObamaCare for the Catholic community has always been the religious liberty issue, not the question of universal health care coverage; the Catholic Church endorsed universal health care more than 80 years ago. The contentious part of ObamaCare, as stated by the bishops, is the Health and Human Services mandate forcing Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, contraception and sterilization.

There is reason to believe that despite the reluctance that

some Supreme Court judges may have in revisiting this subject, the high court will eventually rule on the religious liberty issue; it was not addressed last June when ObamaCare was decided. It now signals to the Fourth Circuit that it cannot dodge this matter.

In her own opinion on ObamaCare, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg held that although the congressional legislation was constitutional, its implementation may still cross the line. “A mandate to purchase a particular product would be unconstitutional if, for example,” she said, “the edict impermissibly abridged the freedom of speech, *interfered with the free exercise of religion*, or infringed on a liberty interest protected by the Due Process Clause.” (Our italics.)

Ginsburg did not pen those words without reason. Which is why we remain cautiously optimistic about the fate of the religious liberty issue.

“MEA MAXIMA CULPA” IS A FRAUD

The HBO produced film, “Mea Maxima Culpa,” recently completed its New York City run. Full of fallacies, the documentary is nothing less than propaganda.

Director Alex Gibney would have us believe that he has proven a “direct connection of the Vatican” to the homosexual scandal, though his effort fails miserably (the horror-film soundtrack is laughable).

As one review of the movie said, “All the reports of sex abuse in the church since the 1960s went directly to the current pope, Benedict XVI, to the time when he was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.” Wrong. There was no central command center until

2001 when Ratzinger took over. And that's when things really began to change—just the opposite of what Gibney would have us believe.

Much of the movie focuses on Father Lawrence Murphy, a serial abuser from Wisconsin. Here are some facts that undercut Gibney's misinformation: Murphy's crimes extend to the 1950s; the civil authorities were not asked to investigate until the mid-1970s; following the probe, the case was dropped; the Vatican wasn't notified until 1996 (it could have ignored the case because the statute of limitations had expired); a trial was ordered; the priest who presided over the case between 1996-1998 has said that in all the meetings he had in the U.S. and in Rome, "at no time...was Cardinal Ratzinger's name ever mentioned."

Gibney touts Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert Weakland for trying "as no other cleric did—to push for the canonical trial" of Murphy in 1996. But we have proof that Gibney's hero—who had to resign after his male lover revealed that the archbishop paid him \$450,000 to settle a sexual assault lawsuit—knew about Murphy's crimes at least as early as 1980. So why did it take Weakland 16 years to contact the Vatican?

At one screening in New York City, Assemblywoman Margaret Markey pushed her sex abuse reform law. She was a perfect fit with all the other frauds—her bill doesn't apply to the public schools.