

CHRISTMAS WARS ABATE; PROGRESS EVIDENT

There are signs that the “War on Christmas” is abating. That the Catholic League has had something to do with it is questioned by no one.

In 2013, we laid down our anchor, sending a message to militant atheists: we will not allow you to occupy the public square unanswered. To be specific, we displayed a gigantic Christmas billboard in Times Square, and we posted digital billboards along two New Jersey highways. We are proud of the fact that we have led the pro-Christmas side of the Christmas wars for two decades.

In 1994, we scored our first major victory when we successfully pressed Barneys, the upscale clothier on Madison Avenue, to remove an obscene manger scene from its storefront window. We erected a nativity scene in Central Park a year later, something we’ve done every year since. In subsequent years, we’ve been actively engaged in scores of skirmishes, winning some and losing some.

An examination of Catholic League activities in the “War on Christmas” is not dispositive, but it is an index of what has been happening in the dominant culture. Our records show that our involvement peaked in the years 2005-2007. Those were the years when we took on Wal-Mart, exacting an apology after we threatened a boycott following revelations that the mega-store was discriminating in its treatment of Christmas. Things got so bad that Jackie Mason and other Jewish leaders joined with us in protesting anti-Christmas attacks.

In 2013, we saw a clear downward tick in attempts to bash Christmas. Indeed, even vandalism was down: the number of nativity scenes being trashed was relatively low. But not all

was well. As usual, public schools and public parks were targeted.

As compared to previous years, the “War on Christmas” in 2013 was led more by national organizations, and less by local activists, than ever before. American Atheists, Freedom from Religion Foundation, the Secular Humanist Association, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation led the way.

This past Christmas, a decided pushback was evident, involving local residents: they took things into their own hands, pressuring local authorities to accede to their reasonable demands.

Contrary to those who sell the bogus idea that the “War on Christmas” is not real, Christians who are fighting back are not obsessed with who is saying “Happy Holidays,” and who is saying “Merry Christmas.” On the contrary, they are fighting those who are bent on banning, trashing, and diluting the public expression of Christmas.

MSGR. LYNN FREED

Two days after Christmas, a Pennsylvania appeals court overturned the conviction of Philadelphia Monsignor William Lynn; he was later released on bail. Msgr. Lynn should never have been prosecuted in the first place: he was charged *ex post facto*; a 2007 amendment to the 1972 Pennsylvania child endangerment statute had no application to him.

The guilty parties that worked overtime to convict an innocent man—they include attorneys, judges, newspapers, professional “victims’ groups,” activists, TV talking heads—have been

disgraced. This is a monumental win for justice, and a tremendous setback for anti-Catholic bigots. Their goal is to “get a bishop,” and if that doesn’t work, then they settle for the next in line.

Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham began this witch-hunt—she was authorized to pursue sexual misconduct in all religious communities, but instead she selectively chose to focus exclusively on Catholics—and then she passed the baton to her successor, Seth Williams. All of them knew that Msgr. Lynn did not know, or know of, the drug-addicted, lying, scheming, accuser, Billy Doe.

Msgr. Lynn spent 18 months in prison because of dishonest people who harbor an anti-Catholic agenda. D.A. Williams pushed to declare him a “flight risk,” as if Lynn is going to hop a plane to Rome. He is being unfairly monitored.

Congratulations to Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput and attorney Thomas A. Bergstrom for staying the course.

APES AND ABORTION

William A. Donohue

For many decades, Steven Wise has been promoting the rights of apes. To be specific, he would like to see chimpanzees awarded “legal personhood.” He is most known for championing the Great Ape Legal Project, seeking to represent little King Kongs in court. Last month, on December 2, he got a little closer to his dream: he filed a writ of *habeas corpus* in New York State Supreme Court for Tommy, saying the ape is being held unlawfully by his owners.

Wise credits Peter Singer, author of *Animal Liberation*, with inspiring him. Singer also champions the Great Ape Legal Project, and he contends that gorillas should have the same rights as humans. But this is where it gets tricky: he also thinks it should be perfectly legal for parents to kill their children up until 28 days after birth (I'm sure that if he were pressed, he would round it off to a month).

Wise teaches at Harvard and Singer teaches at Princeton. Moreover, they have been awarded titles that tell us a great deal about these Ivy League institutions: Steven Wise is the founder of Harvard's Center for the Expansion of Fundamental Rights, and Peter Singer teaches at Princeton's Center for Human Values. Ironically, the Harvard institute dedicated to expanding fundamental rights doesn't include the rights of the unborn—unborn humans, I should specify. Nor does Princeton's established interest in human values extend to boys and girls *in utero*. But both Centers are very sensitive to orangutans.

How did we get to this state of affairs? The anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* is upon us, and while more Americans are pro-life than ever before, in many quarters—not just in elite universities—the rights of animals trump the rights of kids.

A decent society will protect animals from abuse, but it makes no sense to award them rights. Animal welfare is a noble cause, one that St. Francis pioneered, but animals at every stage of life are incapable of exercising responsibilities, and cannot therefore be held morally culpable for destructive behaviors. A decent society will award infants with human rights, a cause first pioneered in history by the Catholic Church; it will also grant rights to human life from its beginning, namely at fertilization.

There is nothing new about animal welfare in the U.S. In 1900, the Lacey Act was passed, protecting bald eagles by making it a federal offense to take, possess, transport, sell, import, or export their nests, eggs and parts that are taken in violation

of any state, tribal or U.S. law. No one has ever found this to be controversial; if the goal is to protect a species, it makes sense to do so from the beginning of life. Well, humans have nests and eggs—we call them wombs and zygotes. At least back then they didn't say the birds possessed rights; they simply took preventative measures to safeguard their welfare.

We got to this perverse stage where human life is devalued, and animal life is overvalued, when rights mania gripped the nation in the 1960s. It started with good intentions: the civil rights movement, led by Rev. Martin Luther King, was long overdue. But in its wake came a never-ending series of demands, including rights for prisoners, delinquents, miscreant students, and illegal aliens. Abortion was illegal, but feminist stirrings to legalize it had begun; in 1973, they won. Two years later, Singer's *Animal Liberation* was published. The timing was not coincidental.

Unborn kids lost not because they cannot represent themselves; neither can chimps. No, they lost because rights mania was tied to the cultural celebration of narcissism: self-centered women, and especially single men, want sex without consequences, and that means a preference for abortion-on-demand. It also suits their self-absorption to comfort themselves with pets. That is why women with kids in strollers are an uncommon sight in cities, but men and women walking their dogs—or those paid to walk them—is so common.

In 2001, Wayne Pacelle, senior vice president of the Humane Society, stood up for the rights of pigs. It was one thing for him to say that pigs deserve more space to move around, but it was quite another to learn that he invoked human values. "Emotionally," he said, "they experience severe boredom and emotional trauma." That's exactly how I feel when watching MSNBC, but I'm able to get over it. So can Porky.

Forgive me for sounding cynical, but just a few years ago I debated an official from People for the Ethical Treatment of

Animals (PETA) on CNN. I asked her how she could pretend to be interested in animals when it is an indisputable fact (see the report by the Center for Consumer Freedom) that PETA kills 95 percent of the adoptable pets in its care. She refused to answer, even though I pressed her a second time.

Don't get me wrong. Personally, I love dogs. But I also love children. We should be able to attend to the needs of dogs while at the same time protecting the rights of the unborn. It's not a zero-sum game. But if Tommy gets human rights, I hope the big ape takes my place the next time I'm called for jury duty.

POPE STEPS LEFT AND RIGHT

The following article by Bill Donohue was published by Newsmax on November 27:

Pope Francis has an uncanny ability to excite the passions of the left and the right; he has done so again in his apostolic exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel."

The pope begins by outlining his principal interest, evangelization, calling on us to avoid being consumed by material pleasures that harm our interior life; when this happens, we shut out the voice of God. He asks us to maintain good relations with Jews and Muslims, and beckons us not to judge Islam by the violence done in its name. He hastens to add that the persecution of Christians in Islamic nations must end. He also reminds us that evangelization is "first and foremost about preaching the Gospel *to those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him.*" (His italics.)

The pope is opposed to "excessive centralization," and to that

end he implores us not to view the parish as “an outdated institution.” He sees a vital role for the laity, who constitute “the vast majority of the people of God.” The Holy Father asks us to give more attention to the special role that women play in the Church and in society. However, he also says that the Church teaching on an all-male priesthood is “not a question open to discussion.” Motherhood, he insists, is a status conferred on women, one that allows them to exercise their special gift of serving others.

On economic issues, the pope posits a clear animus toward unbridled capitalism, a view shared by his predecessors. But he is more pointed, rejecting “trickle-down” theories. Pope Francis is not rejecting a market-based economic model in favor of a socialist one—indeed, he restates Catholic teaching on subsidiarity—but he is warning us against greed and the single-minded pursuit of profit.

“The private ownership of goods is justified by the need to protect and increase them,” Pope Francis says, “so that they can better serve the common good; for this reason, solidarity must be lived as the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them.” This is welcome, but his focus on the structural causes of poverty, to the exclusion of the cultural causes, suggests an incomplete understanding of this issue. He is very much in the Latin American mode of thinking on this subject.

On abortion, Pope Francis flatly says that “the Church cannot be expected to change her position on this question.” Indeed, he says it is not “progressive” to resolve problems “by eliminating a human life.” This has surely been the thinking of many elites: the way to resolve the urban problem is to promote abortion, especially in black neighborhoods; Planned Parenthood has been doing this for decades.

The Holy Father’s comments on the family are telling. “Marriage tends to be viewed as a form of mere emotional

satisfaction that can be constructed in any way or modified at will,” he says. This is a clear shot at gay marriage, the proponents of whom have been quick to say that marriage is all about love. Nonsense, he says. The pope cites French bishops that marriage is about “the depth of the obligation assumed by the spouses who accept to enter a total communion of life.”

Pope Francis warns of the dangers of “secularist rationalism,” and the radical individualism that it entails. He lays down a strong anchor by exhorting Catholics not to allow the forces of secularization to silence them; the Church cannot reduce itself to “the sphere of the private and personal.” He wants a public, and full-throated, exercise of religion. “Who would claim to lock up in a church and silence the message of Saint Francis or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta?”

Catholic League members will like the pope’s criticisms of our “media culture and some intellectual circles.” These segments of the population would like activist Catholics to muzzle themselves, keeping their hands off the normative order. But when Catholics bend to these militant secularists, they lose. “They end up stifling the joy of mission with a kind of obsession about being like everyone else and possessing what everyone else possesses.”

Pope Francis is neither liberal nor conservative. He’s simply Catholic, and a towering champion of its many causes.

HHS MANDATE QUESTIONED

On New Year’s Eve, just hours before the Health and Human Services mandate went into effect, forcing Catholic entities to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, contraception and sterilization in their health plans, U.S. Supreme Court

Justice Sonia Sotomayor halted the edict until the Obama administration responded to her order.

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, is seeking to have the Supreme Court agree to hear a case involving Catholic non-profits; it has already agreed to hear two cases brought by for-profit Christian organizations.

A few weeks earlier, a federal district court judge ruled that Catholic non-profits in the New York area had religious liberty rights that Obamacare was trespassing on, and could not therefore proceed.

Catholics are looking to the Supreme Court to resolve this issue once and for all. Approximately 90 lawsuits have been brought over this matter. At stake is the right of Catholic-run institutions not to pay for services it deems immoral. Other religions are watching carefully as the final outcome has bearing on their constitutional rights as well. We are cautiously optimistic.

CANCEL BILL MAHER

Special Note to Members by Bill Donohue

There is no bigger anti-Catholic bigot in the entertainment industry than Bill Maher. We have detailed some of his assaults branding all priests as child rapists going back to the 1990s (please go to our website to read our report). The final straw came on November 22 when he invited another raving anti-Catholic bigot, Dan Savage, to rip the pope.

That did it for me. I not only contacted the board of

directors of Time Warner, the parent company of HBO (Maher's show airs on Friday nights on Home Box Office, a pay-per-view channel), I wrote to over 400 bishops asking for them to contact Time Warner, as well. Many have.

Here is what I told the press:

"The board of directors at Time Warner cannot distance themselves from Bill Maher any longer. On Friday night, Maher teed up Dan Savage, another anti-Catholic bigot. What happened was particularly vicious.

"Maher commented on gay couples who adopt children, alleging that a Hawaiian bishop said these kids had a greater chance of committing suicide. Here is how Savage responded: "That's total bulls***. He's confusing children of gay parents with children who are raped by Catholic priests. Sorry, I am just done being lectured about children and their safety by Catholic-f***ing bishops, priests, cardinals." Shortly thereafter, Savage again remarked about "kiddie-f***ing Catholic priests."

"We are sending to every member of Time Warner's board of directors a copy of 54 anti-Catholic statements made by Bill Maher on TV. Friday's show concluded the season. The time has come to close this show once and for all.

"The new season of "Real Time with Bill Maher" is scheduled to begin January 17. I am writing to every bishop in the nation requesting that they write to Jeff Bewkes, Chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO, Time Warner, Inc. The show deserves to be cancelled.

Everyone else is urged to e-mail Keith Coccozza, VP, Corporate Communications:

keith.coccozza@timewarner.com."

What You Can Do

Please either email Keith Coccozza, or write a letter to the man who heads Time Warner:

Mr. Jeff Bewkes
Chairman and CEO
Time Warner, Inc.
One Time Warner Center
New York, New York 10019

Martin Bashir was dropped from MSNBC for speaking about Sarah Palin in a vile way. Phil Robertson, of "Duck Dynasty" fame, was suspended by A&E for remarks he made about homosexuality. What Maher has said is far worse, both qualitatively and quantitatively. He is a foul-mouthed bigot who would have been canned a long time ago had he used obscene language to denigrate any other group, over and over again.

The time for Maher to go is now.

WHY ACLU IS SUING USCCB

Recently, a lawsuit was filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) against the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

In 2010, a pregnant woman went to a Catholic hospital after her water broke. She later claimed that she was never appraised of possible dangers to her health, and the option of choosing an abortion. The ACLU is suing the USCCB because it says the bishops' conference is responsible for the Michigan hospital's decision not to discuss the abortion option. The baby died shortly after birth.

It makes perfect sense for the ACLU to sue the USCCB over

abortion: it has been pro-abortion and anti-Catholic for decades. It became officially pro-abortion in 1967, six years before *Roe v. Wade*.

Subsequently, when Rep. Henry Hyde introduced legislation to restrict federal funding of abortion, the ACLU dispatched an agent to spy on him in a Catholic Church; he was reported going to Communion amidst “pregnant women and children” who bore “gifts for life.” A judge threw the case out—the ACLU was trying to show the nefarious effect of Hyde’s Catholicism on his bill. When asked about this tactic, the Illinois congressman said, “I suppose the Nazis did that—observed Jews going to synagogue in Hitler’s Germany.”

The ACLU is so radical in its defense of abortion that it has held auctions to pay for them. It is so radical in its hatred of Catholicism that it championed the Freedom of Choice Act, a bill that would have required Catholic hospitals to perform abortions or lose federal funding; it never made it to President Obama’s desk, though he pledged to sign it.

There is one more reason why the ACLU is now suing the bishops: its friend in the White House sponsors pro-abortion causes and anti-Catholic policies. The dots are not hard to connect.

OKAY FOR BISHOPS TO SAY THE ROSARY

“The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU),” Bill Donohue recently charged, “is suing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) because the bishops are pro-life.” Its pretext is a case involving a pregnant woman who visited

the only hospital in her area, and claims she was not given information about the option of aborting her baby. The *New York Times*, which *always* sides with the pro-abortion industry against the Catholic Church, thinks the ACLU is doing yeoman work. But the first sentence in a recent 520-word editorial, along with the last two, prove why Donohue's first sentence is accurate.

The first sentence said that beyond state efforts to restrict abortion, there is "another, if quieter, threat [that] is posed by mergers between secular hospitals and Catholic hospitals operating under religious directives from the nation's Roman Catholic bishops." What scares the *Times* is diversity: it is resolutely opposed to the pro-life position of Catholic hospitals, and wants every hospital to perform abortions. Whenever there is a merger between secular and Catholic entities, the *Times* maintains that Catholic First Amendment rights should yield to the non-constitutional rights of secular entities.

"The bishops are free to worship as they choose and advocate their beliefs. But those beliefs should not shield the bishops from legal accountability when church-affiliated hospitals following their rules cause patients harm." These sentences are a gem: in effect, the *Times* stated that it is okay for the bishops to say the Rosary. They can even advocate their beliefs! What they can't do is act on them. This is what the *New York Times* believes are sufficient constitutional rights for Catholics in 2013.

Freedom to worship, promoted by the Obama administration, is a neutered rendition of the more robust, and constitutionally protected, right to religious freedom; it has a public dimension. As Pope Francis recently instructed, Catholics should never settle for less.

BIGOTED PLAY PERFORMED IN OKLAHOMA CITY

"The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told" opened in early December at the Oklahoma City Civic Center; and lasted until Dec. 22. When it opened in the East Village in New York in 1998, Donohue said, "it sounds like a routine homosexual play: full-frontal male nudity, filthy language, discussions of body parts, butch lesbians, effeminate gay men, ranting about nature, damning God for AIDS, etc." The play was a flop, never making it to Broadway. In December, the taxpayers, both nationally and in Oklahoma, paid for it.

The play is a gay rendition of the Bible, focusing mostly on the Old Testament. It opens with two men in jockstraps (of course) in the Garden of Eden, one of whom identifies himself as a Jew. They run into a self-described bull dyke and her lesbian lover. This masterpiece is the work of Paul Rudnick, a homosexual "Jew from New Jersey." His goal, he said, was to mock religion: he was angry at God for allowing AIDS. Naturally.

The play was being performed at a city-owned venue, and was being presented by the Oklahoma City Theatre Company. The latter receives funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Oklahoma Arts Council; the Arts Council refused to fund this play, but contributed \$18,000 to other productions during the 2013-2014 season.

It is against federal and state laws to fund religion, making absurd the notion that the public must pay for attacks on it. Civic Center officials said the play did not contain full-frontal male nudity. However, it did include simulated sex

acts, and the Arts Council is explicitly prohibited by state law from funding such fare (money being fungible, it is).

Rachel Irick, the director of the Theatre Company, says “We need to build our diverse audience and offer a different Christmas story.” Well, Rachel, anti-Semitic bigots have some great ideas on how to write a play that trashes Jews. Any interest in a “different Hanukkah story”?

“PHILOMENA” IS PURE PROPAGANDA

The movie “Philomena” recently opened in movie theaters across the United States.

A half-century ago, an Irish woman gave birth to a son out-of-wedlock, and gave him up for adoption; he was born in an abbey, a venue that allowed the mother to avoid being stigmatized.

There is nothing particularly startling about this, other than the fact that film reviewers are now all aghast about the “horrors” these fallen women experienced; many are making reference to the Magdalene Laundries. As Donohue detailed earlier this year, it’s bunk. Those who are neither scholars nor principled observers have swallowed this propaganda, so debased is their appetite for anti-Catholic fare.

There was one reviewer who was exceptionally fair, Kyle Smith of the *New York Post*. He is worth quoting at length:

“The film doesn’t mention that in 1952 Ireland, both mother and child’s life would have been utterly ruined by an out-of-

wedlock birth and that the nuns are actually giving both a chance at a fresh start that both, indeed, in real life, enjoyed. No, this is a diabolical-Catholics film, straight up.”

Kyle Smith’s closing remark says it all:

“A film that is half as harsh on Judaism or Islam, of course, wouldn’t be made in the first place, and would be universally reviled if it were. ‘Philomena’ is a sucker punch, or maybe a sugary slice of arsenic cake.”