

NPR GETS NASTY

On December 6, the astute atheists at National Public Radio (NPR) decided that the Brooklyn Diocese's outreach program to millennial "hipsters" was worth a few jokes on a game show, "Wait Wait Don't Tell Me." After all, it was Christmastime, so why not choose Catholicism for ridicule?

Most of the exchange between the characters was so inane that it is not worth repeating. There was a cheap shot taken about transubstantiation, and the Hail Mary was the source of laughter. By far the most offensive statement was made about Jesus. Here is what somebody who goes by the name of Sagal said:

"You can take a selfie with Jesus. The Catholic Church preaches that Jesus is always with us, in fact he's right behind you. So this new app—Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn shows a woman sitting by herself. She's holding out her phone to take a selfie like the kids do, but in the picture you see this woman and this bearded beatific man smiling behind her. It's not some rando creepo who got into the church, it's the Son of God. This raises all sorts of questions for the woman. For starters, why didn't Jesus offer just to take the picture himself? His hands were occupied."

Our friend Tim Graham of Newsbusters offered the following response to the closing part of this statement: "Is that a reference to his hands being nailed to the cross? Or is it a more sexual reference to the Savior's hands being on himself (as could be joked about considering the image)."

Tim is too kind. Those who work at this taxpayer-funded entity have a record of bashing Catholics. In 2013, NPR reviewed a movie about a "devout" Catholic woman who masturbates with a crucifix. It scored the flick "recommended." So we know which message it sought to convey: being low class is NPR's natural

step.

After Bill Donohue issued a news release on December 8 objecting to the offensive episode of "Wait Wait Don't Tell Me" that aired December 6, he also asked those on our email list to contact NPR. Many did. As a result, NPR responded to complaints about the offensive episode.

Here is how NPR responded to its critics. "Wait Wait is a comedy show that pokes fun at the news. The goal is always to make people laugh. I regret that we did not succeed in this case."

The "news" that NPR decided to deride was neither a major national or international story. More seriously, NPR is very selective about who it wants its audience to laugh at. For example, never once has NPR come even close to mocking Muhammad, and no sexual references have ever been about him, including on "Wait Wait."

When the Danish cartoons that poked fun at Muhammad were published in 2005 and 2006, NPR refused to publish them on its website. NPR explained its decision to self-censor by saying, "the cartoon is so highly offensive to millions of Muslims that it's preferable to describe it in words rather than posting it on the Web...By not posting it on the Web, we demonstrate a respect for deeply held religious beliefs."

We are asking House Speaker John Boehner to take up the issue of defunding the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the parent company of NPR. Until Catholics are afforded the same degree of respect for their "deeply held religious beliefs," they should not have to subsidize attacks on their religion. This is hardly the first time that NPR has ridiculed Catholics, but doing so at Christmastime makes it all the more egregious.

MINNESOTA PUBLIC RADIO IS A SCAM

National Public Radio is no friend of Catholicism, but usually it tries to hide its bias. By contrast, Minnesota Public Radio (MPR) is so thoroughly anti-Catholic that it makes no attempt to be fair. Truth be told, it is a scam: its politics is pervasive. Here's the latest proof.

On December 8, a jury acquitted Father Mark Huberty, a Twin Cities priest, of criminal sexual conduct; a woman claimed he took sexual advantage of her during counseling sessions.

Three media outlets in Minnesota had been tracking this story from the beginning: the *Pioneer Press*, the *Star-Tribune*, and MPR. When news reports surfaced clearing Father Huberty of wrongdoing, the two newspapers gave the jury verdict complete coverage. But not MPR.

For many years now, MPR has specialized in issuing lengthy reports on alleged priestly abuse; it ran a long story a few weeks ago about a former priest. When a priest is found not guilty, however, that is of no interest to MPR. To wit: In 2013, MPR did four lengthy stories on salacious accusations against Father Huberty, but when he was recently exonerated, the best it could do was to offer a 134-word AP story. It had no motivation to recount its previous reporting, or to present its own story.

This is yellow journalism: the only Catholic news that excites MPR is dirt.

CHINA LOVES OUR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

A delegation of top Chinese educators wanting to learn about the achievement of U.S. elementary and secondary schools decided not to visit a single public school district. Instead, they recently ventured to West Virginia to learn more about the stunning success of schools in the Catholic Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

An entourage of educators from Wenzhou, China visited Wheeling Central Catholic High School, the Challenger Learning Center at Wheeling Jesuit University, and St. Michael Parish School in Wheeling. They came to observe classes and learn more about curricula, teacher training, student development, and school safety. They also sought to foster a student exchange program between the two cities.

The Chinese dignitaries chose the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston schools because of the academic excellence that they provide. As is true nationwide of Catholic schools, almost all the students in the diocese graduate and are accepted in a college or university. Its students consistently score higher on standardized tests than both West Virginia public school students and the national average.

Chinese educators will never visit the public schools in Paterson, New Jersey. Figures released a few weeks ago show that of a total of almost 26,000 students in grades K-12, exactly 19 of them earned SAT scores that are considered college ready. That is a success rate of .0007 percent. Moreover, 66 employees who work in the Paterson school district earn at least \$125,000 a year.

The most reliable socio-economic ladder in the U.S., especially for minorities, is the Catholic schools. The Chinese Communists know it. So why don't minority leaders and urban mayors, as well as the president? Why do they continually oppose vouchers for Catholic schools? They may not intend to keep minorities in their place, but what they do surely has that effect.

WHOOPI PROTECTS COSBY

Twenty women allege that Bill Cosby raped or otherwise sexually assaulted them, often drugging them first. Taking his side is his friend, Whoopi Goldberg. A few weeks ago, Cosby thanked her publicly.

Cosby's tweet came in response to remarks made by Goldberg on the November 17 episode of "The View." Speaking about Barbara Bowman, one of the first to accuse Cosby, Goldberg wanted to know why she didn't avail herself of a rape kit, or seek medical help. Then she addressed other charges against him. "No one has met these other women as of yet. And quite honestly you know, look, having been on both sides where people allege that you do something, it doesn't matter now. The cat is out of the bag, people have it in their head..."

Then the question of settlements was raised. "Settlements don't necessarily mean you're guilty," she said. "You generally settle because you just don't want to put your family through it again..."

When Rosie O'Donnell said it is difficult to discuss an accusation made against a friend, Goldberg answered rhetorically (though it is obvious she had Cosby in mind). "Well," she replied, "you say listen this is a friend of mine

and I don't know. This is not the person I know, but we'll wait and find out what happens."

Goldberg's reaction is at least defensible. When serious accusations are made, serious evidence should be offered; settlements are indeed a common way for innocent people to move on; and when an accusation doesn't fit the profile of a personal friend, doubt lingers.

The problem Bill Donohue has with Goldberg is her duplicity: when sexual abuse allegations are made against priests, she reflexively assumes they are true. But we know for a fact that is simply not the case. Priests deserve better, from Whoopi, and from many others.

ROLLING STONE'S ROGUE AUTHOR HAS A HISTORY

Amid a media outcry *Rolling Stone's* editor has been forced to apologize for "mistakes" and "discrepancies" in a recent article about a young women, "Jackie," who claimed she was raped at a University of Virginia fraternity house. The sensational story described in detail the woman's claims and the lack of any response from university officials. After the story was published, fact-checkers found that it just did not add up. The article in question was written by Sabrina Rubin Erdely.

This is not the first time Erdely has published this type of article with outlandish accusations, wild dramatization, and a lack of accuracy. The September 15, 2011 edition of *Rolling Stone* included an article by her, "The Catholic Church's Secret Sex-Crime Files," in the same vein as the University of

Virginia story. That story focused on “Billy Doe” who claimed he was raped by two priests and a lay school teacher in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

In 2011 Erdely took the word of “Billy” and used it to smear Philadelphia priests, including three cardinals. Indeed she took the occasion to slam priests in general. When the article was published, Bill Donohue issued a lengthy retort: he pointed out the discrepancies, mistakes, lack of facts, and innuendo. There was no apology from *Rolling Stone’s* editors. There was no media outcry about the lack of journalistic integrity.

POPE RIGHT ON CUBA

President Obama made the right decision on Cuba. Kudos also to Pope Francis for working to break the stalemate between the United States and Cuba. While a lot of foolish things have been said by those on both sides of this issue, the fact is that the only losers in this gambit are the Communists in Cuba.

Cuba’s economy is in deep trouble, and its patrons in Venezuela are in no position to help them. The amount of traffic that this opening will bring—look for hoards of Cubans and non-Cubans to line up for travel to Cuba—will ineluctably whet the Cuban appetite for more freedom. Once Cubans learn more about the lifestyle of their relatives in the U.S., and the freedoms they enjoy, they will press for more changes.

Economic liberty does not guarantee political liberty, but it does work to undermine the forces of repression. More important than markets is the exchange of ideas that this rapprochement will bring. And no idea is more threatening to a

dictatorship than liberty. While no one expects a Jeffersonian democracy to appear overnight, historically these kinds of thaws work to undermine the tyrants. Given the proximity of the two nations, the vector of change will move more quickly toward freedom.

Ever since Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba in 1998, the Catholic Church has been gaining more breathing room there. The recent decision by the Cuban government to allow Cubans from Tampa, Florida to fund the construction of a Catholic Church on the island is a good omen. There will be more such opportunities. As with economic liberty, religious liberty also works to facilitate political liberty.

Fidel Castro was a wealthy man who did more to punish the poor than any of his predecessors. A true Communist—he once begged Herbert Matthews of the *New York Times* to stop calling him an agrarian reformer and start labeling him a Communist—he is the ultimate loser in this development.

POPE CHALLENGES EUROPEANS

Pope Francis' address to the European Parliament was one of his signature statements. He beckoned his audience to recover their religious moorings, focusing on the positive link between Christianity and Europe. This means an appreciation of what he called the "transcendent dignity" of the human person. Dignity is given recognition in the respect for inalienable human rights, and this, he stressed, extends to the right to profess one's faith.

The communal aspects of Catholic thought were evident in the way Pope Francis addressed liberty. We are not "monads," or disconnected atoms, nor are we "absolutes"; rather, we are

“beings in relation.” Sounding very much like his two predecessors, he said, “unless the rights of each individual are harmoniously ordered to the greater good, those rights will end up being considered limitless and consequently will become a source of conflicts and violence.”

Speaking of violence, the Holy Father spoke out against Christian persecution. In an obvious reference to Muslims, he said, “Communities and individuals today find themselves subjected to barbaric acts of violence: they are evicted from their homes and native lands, sold as slaves, killed, beheaded, crucified or burned alive, under the shameful and complicit silence of so many.”

Pope Francis also condemned “selfish lifestyles” and the Western “throwaway culture.” But he did not lash out against a market economy. Instead, he called for a balance between the pursuit of profit and the needs of workers. We need to find “new ways of joining market flexibility with the need for stability and security on the part of workers.”

Furthermore, we should embrace the Christian contribution to the “social and cultural formation” of Europe, he said, and not see it as a “threat to the secularity” of nations or the independence of its institutions.

Pope Francis has given many significant statements. This one is Bill Donohue’s favorite, thus far.

ROGUE LAWYERS FAIL TO NAIL

PRIEST

In September, Fr. Ronald Domhoff was placed on administrative leave by the Archdiocese of Louisville after he was accused of sexually molesting a minor. He was cleared of all charges on December 16 and returned to active ministry the following day as pastor at St. Peter the Apostle in Louisville. What happened in the interim is the real story.

The accuser said he was molested between 1985 and 1989 at a local Catholic high school. The priest was investigated and subsequently cleared by the Louisville Metro Police Department Crimes Against Children unit. The archdiocese conducted two investigations: one by the Sexual Abuse Review Board and one by a private investigator. Both exonerated the priest.

Here is what the law firm that sued Fr. Domhoff said when he was charged: "Our client is willing to share details of his abuse with the press in order to encourage other victims to come forward." Attorney Gregory Owen added, "These monsters must be found and punished." The firm asked other alleged victims to contact them, not the police!

As it turns out, the monsters who should be punished are these lawyers. The Archdiocese of Louisville contacted the accuser asking him to provide the details that his lawyers promised, and neither he nor his attorneys provided a scintilla of evidence.

When he was cleared, Fr. Domhoff told his parishioners, "The last few months have been the most terrifying experience of my 42 years as a priest." We encourage all falsely accused priests to fight the merchants of greed and hate.

“JUDGMENT DAY” AT PLANET FITNESS

Recently, a 70-year old man went to his Planet Fitness gym in Orange City, Florida wearing a T-shirt that said, “Abortion Kills a Person.” Although he has worn the shirt many times before, this time he was told to leave. The next day he showed up wearing a shirt that read, “Pray to End Abortion.” He was booted again.

Planet Fitness says it allows local franchises to determine its dress code. But it does have a mission statement that is binding on all fitness centers. “We at Planet Fitness are here to provide a unique environment in which anyone—and we mean anyone—can be comfortable.” Except for Mike Amoroso: he made one of the gym’s employees uncomfortable and that is why he was sent home.

The mission statement also says, “As we evolve and educate ourselves, we will seek to perfect this safe, energetic environment, where everyone feels accepted and respected.” Except for Mike Amoroso: the censorial employee who showed him the gate failed to evolve and educate himself when Mike returned with his “Pray to End Abortion” shirt.

Just a few weeks ago, Chris Rondeau, the CEO of Planet Fitness, was asked about bringing his franchise to Canada. “What’s your culture like?” His response was precious: “Very strong. The ‘judgment free zone’ is really true to everyone’s heart. That is the most important in my eyes because once you believe in it, you’ll always do the right thing for the customer.” But the guy who kicked Mike out obviously doesn’t believe in it, and he still has his job.

Looks like “Judgment Day” has finally arrived at Planet Fitness.

DETROIT ARCHDIOCESE BANS DISSIDENT

Detroit Archbishop Allen Vigneron recently decided to ban dissident speaker Francis DeBernardo from speaking at an archdiocesan church.

The way some Catholic activists and media outlets are spinning this story is simply dishonest. They would have us believe that DeBernardo is not welcome to address parishioners because of his gay-rights views. Not quite. News Ways Ministry, under his leadership, is organized to oppose the teachings of the Catholic Church. Worse, it falsely sells itself as a Catholic entity. Here is a quick history of its run-ins with the Vatican:

- 1984 – James Cardinal Hickey, Archbishop of Washington, “informed them that they could no longer undertake their activities within the Archdiocese.”
- 1984 – Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life ordered its two leaders to “separate themselves totally and completely from New Ways Ministry.”
- 1999 – Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger issued an order at the approval of Pope John Paul II that “permanently prohibited” the two leaders “from any pastoral work involving homosexuals.”
- 2002 – Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, wrote that “New Ways Ministry does not promote the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church.”

- 2010 – Francis Cardinal George, then president of the bishops’ conference, said that “in no manner is this organization authorized to speak on behalf of the Catholic Church or to identify itself as a Catholic organization.”
- 2011 – Donald Cardinal Wuerl and Bishop Salvatore J. Cordileone issued a statement reaffirming Cardinal George’s 2010 statement.

If someone who rejects the editorial page positions of a newspaper requested office space at the paper’s headquarters—for the express purpose of informing employees how wrong the editorial board is (all the while selling himself as a legitimate spokesman for the media outlet)—we know what would happen. Kudos to Archbishop Vigneron for speaking the truth.