

WONDERS NEVER CEASE

The pop star, Madonna, has said that she expects to bring up her baby a Catholic. This is the same Madonna who has made obscene gestures with a crucifix during performances, has called Catholicism “disgusting” and has been denounced by the Vatican. It’s a long shot, but we hope she reconsiders her past attacks on Catholicism before she raises her child.

APOLOGY FROM JAY LENO SHOW

On his April 29 show, Jay Leno crossed the line by saying the following: “Chicago is so in love with pizza that even the Catholic Church is serving up deep dish Communion.” The league wrote a letter of protest to the Tonight Show and on May 9 a spokeswoman from the show called Dr. Donohue to apologize.

NOTHING FUNNY ABOUT WORLD’S FUNNIEST VIDEOS

The league complained to World’s Funniest Videos about an April 25 episode which showed a priest in Rome twice dropping the Host while giving Communion to a man; the priest was ridiculed for doing so.

The response from the show was unpersuasive: “Under no circumstances did World’s Funniest Videos ever intend to use

any material that was insensitive to any religion.” We even learned that the owner of the company and the executive producer of the show is a *Catholic* (their emphasis). As if that makes the cheap shot any less offensive.

JUSTICE PREVAILS IN CHURCH-STATE DISPUTE

Donations made by church members who later become bankrupt may not be seized by the government during bankruptcy proceedings, a federal appeals court has ruled. Relying on provisions of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), a panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit has determined that contributions given a church by members who later filed for bankruptcy may not be taken by the bankruptcy trustee for distribution to creditors. To allow recovery of these funds would substantially burden the debtors’ free exercise of religion, the court said. Two lower courts had ruled in favor of the trustee.

Bruce and Nancy Young were devoted members of the Crystal Evangelical Free Church and they made yearly contributions as tithes to their church. After they filed for bankruptcy, the bankruptcy trustee tried to recover money given to the church in the year prior to the bankruptcy. The trustee argued that the debtors did not receive “reasonably equivalent value” “in exchange for” their contributions, and therefore the contributions were “avoidable transfers” under the Bankruptcy Code and recoverable for payment to the Youngs’ creditors.

Although the appeals court concluded that the debtors’ contributions were avoidable transfers and recoverable by the

trustee under bankruptcy law, it found that requiring the church to return the debtors' contributions would violate the RFRA. The court held that the recovery of the contributions would substantially burden the debtors' free exercise of their religion and would not be in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest.

This case addressed an issue of critical importance for all churches and charities and the decision was a welcome validation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The Catholic League joined a friend of the court brief filed by the Christian Legal Society in support of the church.

COLUMBUS DISPATCH APOLOGIZES FOR AD

On May 10, the Columbus Dispatch published an ad by WBNS TV that was blatantly unfair. There was a picture of a woman with her hands folded in a prayer-like fashion, draped with rosary beads. In large letters, the following inscription ran above and below the picture: "We Found Sexual Discrimination In The Most Unlikely Of Places. Church." In smaller letters, it was written that "For many, the Church is the center of their lives. But for some women of the Catholic faith, their foundation is being rocked...rocked by doctrine that dictates their very lives."

The Catholic Diocese of Columbus and the Catholic League wrote to both the newspaper and the radio station. Although we have yet to hear from the radio station, the Columbus Dispatch issued an apology, stating that "it should not have been published." We agree and are grateful for the unequivocal

response. Would that WBNS follow suit.

LEAGUE SUCCEEDS IN DEFENDING CALIFORNIA PRIEST

In April, the Catholic League was notified about an egregious offense committed against a Catholic priest in California that took place in November 1995. The league intervened in the case and it was favorably resolved. But for several reasons, we have decided not to disclose the actual names of the parties involved or the institutions that were implicated. Therefore, the names of the parties and the institutions that will be discussed are fictitious, though the account of what happened is accurate.

Printed below is the letter sent by William Donohue to the person in charge of the institution where the incident occurred; it explains the case in full.

April 11, 1996

Mr. Robert Smith
CEO, St. Anne's Hospital
1 Main St.
Central City, CA 90000

Dear Mr. Smith:

I am writing to you about a most serious violation of professional ethics and civil rights that has occurred at St. Anne's Hospital. To be specific, this case involves the miscreant behavior of Rev. John Doe, the coordinator of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), and the irresponsibility

of Ms. Jane Fox, Director of Pastoral Care. The person who brought this case to our attention is Fr. Thomas Jones, who is also the subject of the incident in this case. On November 28, 1995, in the Clinical Pastoral Education course taught by Rev. Doe, a Lutheran minister, a student (Sally Cook) expressed her disappointment at not being selected for a Catholic chaplaincy position in a Catholic hospital. Rev. Doe indignantly shouted, "Those f---g priests." Fr. Jones protested, saying "I resent that remark." Ms. Fox, a supervisor-in-training, and the six students in the class all heard the exchange.

Fr. Jones, obviously shaken by what happened, considered several courses of action, including notifying you. But before he decided on doing anything, Rev. Doe and Ms. Fox began badgering him in a subsequent class, asking Fr. Jones to explain his "anger." Fr. Jones told the class that he considered this to be a matter between himself and his supervisor.

Ms. Fox insisted that Fr. Jones discuss his "feelings" in class, explaining that she considered his "anger" to be "group" material. Fr. Jones, who spoke reluctantly, said he wanted Rev. Doe to clarify his remark and asked Ms. Fox to say whether she condoned Rev. Doe's comment. He also asked for an apology. But Rev. Doe and Ms. Fox not only refused to yield, they made it clear that they resented being asked such questions by Fr. Jones. When Fr. Jones met with Rev. Doe, he informed him that he was giving consideration to filing a grievance. Rev. Doe said he could lose his job if such action were taken, thereby admitting culpability. Fr. Jones then said that if an apology was granted in class, and a pledge was made never to repeat the offense, he would consider dropping the matter altogether. Rev. Doe made good on his apology in class, but prefaced his remarks by saying that he was threatened with a grievance by Fr. Jones, thus vitiating the apology.

When Fr. Jones met with Ms. Fox, he asked her if she approved of Rev. Doe's comment about "those f—g priests." She was evasive and showed more interest in discussing Fr. Jones' "feelings."

The result of this series of encounters was predictable: in his final evaluation of Fr. Jones, Rev. Doe said: "I would be hard pressed to recommend to Tom to do more CPE." He came to this determination absent any reference to Fr. Jones' actual clinical ministry which was performed (with permission of Ms. Fox) at St. Anselm's Medical Center. Rev. Doe came to his conclusion by selectively choosing comments from Fr. Jones' class participation, family history and written reports so that the reader's impression of Fr. Jones' work would yield the expected results. Incredibly, Rev. Doe actually mentioned what happened on November 28 and labeled it a "significant encounter." Indeed, he admitted using "a four letter word, generically addressing priests," stating that it was an example of the "stormy relationship" he had with Fr. Jones. Rev. Doe then added that Fr. Jones was "the only one who saw the remark as offensive," which, of course, belies his own fear that if a grievance were filed, he could lose his job. Adding insult to injury, Rev. Doe stated in his evaluation that Fr. Jones "did not explore" what made him angry, contending that he doesn't know why Fr. Jones was offended.

I understand that in order for a Catholic priest to minister in hospitals that it is imperative to complete four units of CPE. This was Fr. Jones' first unit.

The Catholic League is making this case a priority. We will not rest until justice has been done. That would seem to require two things: a) action must be taken against Rev. Doe and Ms. Fox that is proportionate to the offense they have committed and b) a reevaluation of Fr. Jones' CPE course work, and his suitability to continue in the program, must be made.

As president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, it is my job to defend individual Catholics and the institutional Church against defamation and discrimination. We do this in many ways: through lawsuits, news releases to the media, contacting officials in government, religion and education, etc. Indeed, our monthly publication, Catalyst, reaches every Bishop and Congressman in the country, as well as our more than 200,000 members nationwide.

I am also disturbed by what happened for another reason. I have spent 16 years of my professional career as a professor. I know what academic freedom means and what it doesn't. I also know what academic responsibility means. As an active member of the board of directors of the National Association of Scholars, I also know what certifying boards of education look for when the accrediting process begins. Nothing would please me more than to have this case resolved without any public fanfare. I await your reply.

Sincerely,
William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President

cc: Fr. Jones; Patrick Foye, General Counsel; Steve Balch, president, National Association of Scholars.

Ten days after this letter was sent, Dr. Donohue received a letter from the vice president of the institution stating that Rev. Doe's comments "were inappropriate," and that he has received "disciplinary counseling." It was also said that Rev. Doe "regrets the incident and is aware of the serious consequences of similar future behavior." In addition, Ms. Fox "has agreed to include reviews of Fr. Jones' performance at St. Anselm's Hospital and to present a course evaluation which is honest and mutually agreed between the CPE program and Fr. Jones." The league is satisfied with this response and considers the case closed.

WILLIE BROWN REACHES COMPROMISE

In the June Catalyst, we reported that the Catholic League requested that San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown intervene in a dispute between the city's Arts Commission and Roman Catholics. The Arts Commission wanted to replace a monument that showed an Indian at the feet of a conqueror with a plaque that read: "With their efforts over in 1834, the missionaries left behind about 56,000 converts—and 150,000 dead. Half the original Native American population had perished during this time from diseases, armed attacks and mistreatment."

The league asked Mayor Brown not to defame Roman Catholics while bending to the climate of political correctness. Mayor Brown worked out a compromise with Archbishop Levada, and now the plaque will read: "With their efforts over in 1834, the missionaries left behind about 56,000 converts. As the result of colonial occupation, half the original Native American population had perished from diseases, armed attack and mistreatment."

The league is pleased that the unfair onus put on the missionaries has been corrected.

THE CRAFT ASSAULTS

CATHOLICISM

The movie, *The Craft*, a box office hit this past spring, is the sordid story of four teenage girls who are witches. Even though it has nothing to do with the plot, it just happens that the girls attend an unnamed Los Angeles-area Catholic high school. The girls dress in Catholic school uniforms and wear rosaries around their necks. They are portrayed as sex-crazed drunkards and the priests and nuns are shown as being wholly incompetent. To top it off, there is even a mockery of a Catholic Mass.

Fortunately, serious movie reviewers panned the film as utter trash. Unfortunately, most didn't address the anti-Catholic bias that was evident in the production.

CHAPTER NEWS

San Antonio chapter president W. Patrick Cunningham issued a joint statement with the Southwest Region of the Anti-Defamation League and the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation condemning a Ku Klux Klan rally that was scheduled for June 1 in New Braunfels, Texas. It read, in part: "[W]e categorically reject their efforts to spew hatred and cause division in the community."

North-Central Jersey chapter president Terence Kenny and executive assistant Barbara Moskal attended a luncheon at Jersey City's City Hall. The guest speaker invited by Mayor Bret Schundler was Daniel McGroarty, author of *Break These Chains*. His book tells the story of the Milwaukee voucher and school choice program and how it affected the families whose children have benefited from it. The North-Central Jersey

chapter is vigorously supporting Mayor Schundler's voucher plan.

Long Island chapter president Charles Mansfield, Jr. contacted Winthrop-University Hospital on behalf of an employee who was terminated because he saw and removed a cartoon from a bulletin board that was disrespectful toward the Holy Family. He then sent a brief message over the computer system asking that all such displays be removed. The league has made some progress in dealing with the hospital but is waiting final resolution of this case.

San Diego chapter president Carl Horst wrote to the Blue Tattoo nightclub, urging that an offensive ad using the term "Sunday Mass" be discontinued. The promotional flyer also showed artwork that, in combination with the ad's language, proved offensive to Catholics.

Also, Horst wrote to KNSD (channel 39) about an ad the San Diego Union-Tribune accepted about an investigative series the station's news section was doing. Called "Lie, Cheat & Steal?" the promotional ad read "You'll be surprised what happened when we put felons, nuns and cops through the honesty test." Under the words was a picture of two men, one dressed as a felon, the other as a policeman, and a woman in full habit.

The Baltimore chapter registered a protest against Johns Hopkins University for three times flagging the work of anti-Catholic bigot Christopher Hitchens.

LEAGUE PUBLICATION OFFICE

RELOCATES

by William A. Donohue

This is the last issue of Catalyst to be released from the league's publications office in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. In a move to consolidate, the publications office will move to New York.

The Catholic League was founded in 1973 by Fr. Virgil Blum, S.J. A professor at Marquette University, Fr. Blum naturally chose the Milwaukee area as the site of the publications office. In 1990, when Fr. Blum died, the national headquarters moved to Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania, but the publications office remained in Wauwatosa. Then, in November 1992, the national headquarters moved to its present site in New York City; the publications office remained unchanged.

When I took over as president of the Catholic League in July, 1993, the board of directors closed several chapters around the country that had been funded by the national headquarters and replaced them with volunteer chapters. The Operations Director who worked with the chapters was C.J. Doyle, stationed in Boston. But in the fall of 1994, Doyle left to found the Massachusetts Catholic Action League. That left the publications office as the last remaining satellite office. The move to consolidate, then, is part of the natural evolution of the organization.

The Catholic League has been served with distinction by John Pantuso, the chief of the publications office, and by his staff, including, most especially, attorney Nancy Gannon. Many thanks to all of them for a job well done. Members should send all correspondence to the New York office. We hope that everyone will bear with us while we accomplish this difficult transition.