

CINNAMON “NUN BUN” ADS WITHDRAWN

Following a protest by the Catholic League, Cinnabon, the national chain of food stores that sells cinnamon buns, recently withdrew all of its ads that featured a nun character. And Bongo Java, the creator of the cinnamon bun which resembles Mother Teresa, has halted production of its bun.

The Cinnabon ads featured an elderly stern-looking nun in a habit brandishing a ruler; she had rosary beads draped around her neck. The ads were pulled June 15 from some 350 stores around the country.

After receiving several complaints from league members about the Cinnabon ad, Dr. Donohue wrote to the president of the company, Dennis Waldron, asking him to retire the offending ads. Waldron called Donohue and listened to his complaint, explaining that he would get back to him within a few days. He was courteous and concerned.

When they spoke next, Waldron pledged that the ads would all be withdrawn. In business for 12 years, Waldron said he had never experienced any type of bad publicity and was not about to start now. Donohue was impressed with Waldon's sincere and professional manner, as well as with his decision.

In the Bongo Java case, the league previously pressed the company to stop production of its cinnamon bun that bears a likeness to Mother Teresa; we also objected to the T-shirts, mugs, etc. The official word from Bongo Java, as determined by reading its web site statement and by phoning the company, is that production of the “Mother Teresa” bun has stopped. Yet the website still sells some of the items that the league found objectionable.

The league is pleased that Mother Teresa and her lawyers appealed to Bongo Java to stop production of the bun, as well as the other items. But much of the credit in this case must be given to Catholic League members themselves.

The April *Catalyst* ran a story about this issue and listed the name and address of someone to contact. Well, league members did just that: when we phoned the company, we were told that “tons of letters” were sent taking Bongo Java to task.

The league is delighted with the results in both cases and is especially delighted that its members played such a vital role in the Bongo Java case.

LEGAL SOFTWARE OUTLET CHANGES LOGO

A San Francisco-based legal support software company, Legal Summation, has agreed to accede to the Catholic League’s request to change its logo from one that resembled the Sacred Heart of Jesus to one that bears no clear relationship.

The logo in question was a heart with the word “Summation” draped across it; flames emanated from the red and blue design. The league called to the company’s attention the likeness of its logo to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and asked that it make modifications that would remove all similarities. The league also mentioned that it had fought successfully with the House of Blues to have the nightclub chain change its “Sacred Heart” logo.

Paul Thompson of Legal Summation called William Donohue to

discuss the matter and was most considerate of the league's position. Indeed, Thompson made a decision on the spot to alter the logo.

On May 19, a letter from Legal Summation was sent to Donohue confirming Thompson's decision, saying that the company "has agreed to revise our tattoo motif to remove the flames that caused the artwork to be likened to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and hence cause offense." A copy of the new logo was sent to the league for confirmation and it was found acceptable.

We commend Mr. Thompson for his forthright understanding of the league's position and his willingness to alter his company's logo.

CATHOLIC CONVULSIONS

William A. Donohue

The Catholic League is dubbed "pathetic" by Father Andrew Greeley and is called "semiparanoid" and "un-American" by David Carlin of *Commonweal*, a journal of liberal Catholic opinion. Both claim to be exercised about anti-Catholicism and yet neither has a good word to say about the one organization that has done more to combat it than any other. What explains such Catholic convulsions?

Not for a moment do I doubt that Greeley and Carlin have no tolerance for anti-Catholicism, but neither do I doubt that their sincerity stops short of defending the Church as it exists. The problem comes down to this: what Greeley and Carlin see in the Catholic League is an organization that defends the status quo, and that is the root cause of their animus against us. Their perception is accurate and their

position is deplorable.

As our mission statement proclaims, the Catholic League defends individual Catholics and the institutional Church from defamation and discrimination. It does not reach into the past to defend the Church the way it was, nor does it extend itself into the future to defend the Church the way it might evolve. It is quite content with doing its job defending the Church of 1997.

But Greeley and Carlin will have none of it. To them, to defend the Catholic League is to defend today's Church and, given their politics, that is not something they can stomach. So it is better to bash us even at the risk of giving succor to Catholic bashers.

There are no Greeley's and Carlin's in the ranks of African Americans and Jews and that is because the NAACP and ADL fight exclusively for the rights of their people. The league fights for the Church, as well as for individuals, and that means that it defends the teachings of the Church. There's the rub for Greeley and Carlin: there are some teachings they strongly reject, hence they reject organizations that defend them.

Don't get me wrong. It is not impossible to protest both anti-Catholicism and the Catholic League. For example, I reject sexism *and* the National Organization for Women, but I do so because I disagree with NOW's agenda: for me, child abuse begins in the womb. But the league has no agenda other than a defense of Church.

If the Catholic League more typically defends the Church from attacks on the left than on the right, it is because that is where most of the attacks are coming from these days (the challenge to the Church's teachings on sexual ethics does not emanate from right-wing sources). And if that is a problem for Greeley and Carlin, then let them say so right out in the open.

I am especially taken by Carlin's worry that the Catholic League "may actually succeed" in driving anti-Catholicism "underground." He even goes so far as to say that the league's strategy acts as a deterrent to the kind of "explicit, head-on attack on Christianity" he seems to prefer. Is that what he tells blacks, to relax in combating racism and rejoice at the sight of the boys in their white sheets?

Carlin also worries, and no doubt Greeley does as well, that "there is something un-American in Donohue's attempt to silence critics of Catholicism by labeling them bigots." Now it would make sense for me to respond to this charge if only Carlin could provide just one example. But he can't.

For the record, as I have said over and over again, there is a profound difference between criticism on the one hand, and disdain, disparagement, contempt and insult on the other. We draw those distinctions all the time and those who claim we don't ought to put up or shut up.

Moreover, we never question an offender's motives—what we respond to is an offense, whether intended or not. Naturally, we decide whether we've been offended, and we have no intention of e-mailing Father Greeley or Mr. Carlin to ask whether they've been offended.

Here's a challenge to Greeley and Carlin I'd like to make. Let them outline what a model Catholic anti-defamation organization ought to do and then let them see how much interest there is among their ideological allies about establishing one. Good luck and wake me when the game's over.

Meanwhile, we at the Catholic League will keep on doing exactly what we've been doing. And we'll do it with a smile. After all, winning is fun.

AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS CENSORS LEAGUE

On May 21, two New York Jewish organizations censored literature supplied by the Catholic League for a conference on prejudice. The Bi-County Conference for Educators, a group from Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island, held a conference entitled, "Reducing Prejudice: A Matter of Education." It was principally sponsored by the American Jewish Congress Center for Prejudice Reduction and the Suffolk Association for Jewish Educational Services.

When the Catholic League learned of the event, it sought inclusion in the conference. Along with several other civil rights and educational organizations, it was welcomed as a co-sponsor and was told that it could distribute its literature to interested teachers and school administrators. But just two days before the event, Chuck Mansfield, who heads the Long Island chapter of the league, was informed by officials from the two Jewish organizations that *Catalyst* and our *Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism* were not allowed to be displayed; only our brochure was deemed acceptable for distribution.

Upon learning of this decision, William Donohue contacted the American Jewish Congress (AJCongress) and asked to speak to the director of the Center for Prejudice Reduction, Amy Levine. Levine was unavailable, but Donohue learned that it was decided that the league's journal and annual report were "too strident." In addition, the cartoons in the annual report were judged to be "offensive." Donohue told the woman to whom he was speaking that what was really offensive was the decision to censor the Catholic League; he promised to contact the media and blow the conference out of the water.

Donohue tried to reach Amy Levine again but she never returned his phone call. But when later contacted by the *Jewish Week*, Levine said that she had spoken to Donohue. Donohue wrote to the newspaper saying that the *Jewish Week* had been lied to: never had he spoken to her (his letter, along with another one he wrote, was printed). In a press release on the subject, the Catholic League said the following:

"The decision to remove Catholic League material—literature that proves the prevalence of anti-Catholicism—from a conference on prejudice, is surely one of the most incredibly ironic and demonstrably anti-Catholic statements that has been made in recent times. After accepting the league's money to join as a co-sponsor, we are now told that our journal and annual report are too much for the teachers to take. This act of censorship shows the depth of anti-Catholicism that affects even those educators who purport to be concerned with prejudice and discrimination." On the day of the conference, Bill Lindner, a member of the league's board of directors, distributed copies of the press release to the attendees; he also met with Amy Levine.

The directors of the two Jewish organizations wrote a letter to Donohue explaining their reasons for censoring the league's material and AJCongress answered the league's press release with one of their own. Donohue's reply to Amy Levine is reprinted here. Dear Ms. Levine:

You say that the Catholic League's *Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism*, as well as its monthly journal, *Catalyst*, were not allowed to be distributed at the conference on prejudice reduction because they "serve to review your organization's implementation of your specific organizational agenda." As a result, you only allowed distribution of our brochure.

Your argument is disingenuous at best. According to your logic, the one league item that should have been disallowed was the brochure: it promotes the agenda of the organization.

Catalyst, and in particular the Annual Report, merely provide evidence of anti-Catholicism. Just how we are to educate the public about the prevalence of anti-Catholicism without offering concrete examples is not explained.

Your argument is also undercut by the literature that you allowed. Examples abound of bigotry against blacks, Jews and gays and yet you had no problem with any of this. Obviously, you have a double standard when it comes to Catholics and this is why I continue to maintain the charge that I first lodged against you: at a conference on prejudice reduction you are offering a textbook case of prejudice—and discrimination—against Catholics. Your letter also says that it is your desire to “keep this program free of political agendas” and that all participants in the conference agreed to “park [their] politics at the door.” That’s great. Now would you please be specific and identify the “political agenda” of the Catholic League as represented in its censored literature?

It is you, Ms. Levine, who has a political agenda and here is my evidence. From conversations that my staff has had with you, your office and the press, the following reasons were offered for censoring the league’s literature: a) the cartoons were offensive b) the league is pro-voucher c) the league is pro-life d) there was an entry in our *Annual Report* regarding a Jewish person who complained about a crucifix in his Catholic hospital room e) teachers wouldn’t use our material because it is “too strident” f) our literature promotes religion.

The cartoons were included in our report precisely because they were offensive. Are you suggesting that we delete examples of anti-Catholicism from a report on anti-Catholicism simply because some might be offended by what they see or read? You honestly don’t expect me to believe you. Do you?

The league believes that choice means allowing the poor to send their children to the school of their choice—just like

the rich do. You obviously think otherwise and that is your right. But to suggest that we are political for supporting Catholic parental rights on this issue and you are not political for opposing such rights is patently absurd. The hypocrisy that you exhibit is driven home even further when one considers that you allowed the distribution of a pamphlet that attacks the concept of choice in education (see the catalog, *Rethinking Schools*, p.4).

As an anti-defamation organization, we defend the right of the Church to say whatever it wants, including statements on abortion. Simply because AJC is aligned with the politics of the pro-abortion movement gives you no right to censor the literature of those who disagree with your position. Whether you think that the inclusion of the entry regarding the Jewish person who protested a crucifix in a Catholic hospital merits our attention is irrelevant. What is relevant is that we think it merits inclusion. So let me ask you this: do your censors have the right to veto any entries they don't like? If that is the case, then it is clear that you have submitted our work to a political litmus test, indicating once more that it is you who has the political agenda.

If teachers don't want to use our material, that is their right. But it is not your right to censor our literature simply because you think they won't use it.

The Catholic League is a civil rights organization that defends individual Catholics and the institutional Church from defamation and discrimination. If that makes us "religious" then what would you call ADL, AJC, the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the Islamic organizations that were allowed to distribute their material? I also find it striking that the award you gave to Mr. Gaffney was for his veto of legislation that would have mandated English-only in Suffolk County. Was that not a bald act of politics? No doubt that had he taken the opposite position he would not have received the award, because to do so would have been contrary

to *your* politics.

The Catholic League has often presented its material at conferences on prejudice. We did so recently at a major national conference on education in Florida. And guess what? No one has ever even attempted to censor our work. That prize goes to you.

I have no problem with people on the left and right promoting their politics in public, but I do have a problem with those who try to mask their agenda and then have the gall to brand others for being political. It gives me great comfort to know that you “certainly recognize [our] right to print and distribute [our] materials.” It gives me even greater comfort knowing that your contribution to anti-Catholicism will be noted in our monthly journal and in next year’s annual report.

Please refund our money for the conference. Sincerely, William A. Donohue, Ph.D. President

Since this exchange took place, the Catholic League filed a complaint with the Commission on Human Rights and AJCongress refunded the league’s contribution.

The league considers this incident to be one of the most telling examples of bigotry, politics and hypocrisy that it has witnessed in some time. The league is grateful for the intervention of Rabbi Yehuda Levin who, at Donohue’s request, tried to dissuade the AJCongress from its decision to censor.

MEDIA FLAG “EX-ALTAR BOY”

STATUS OF DEFENDANT

In May, two 15-year-olds, a boy and a girl, were arrested for the Central Park murder of a Manhattan man. Nothing unusual about that, but there was something unusual about the way the New York media played the story: newspapers, TV and radio news shows all cited the “ex-altar boy” status of defendant Chris Vasquez.

On May 26, the New York *Daily News* presented the story in a headline that read, “Shock over altar boy turned suspect.” The headline in the May 29 edition of the *New York Post* read, “Ex-altar boy declared ‘fit for trial’ after suicide watch.” The *New York Times* did not flag the boy’s former status in a headline, but it did mention it in a news story on May 26 that Vasquez was “a former altar boy at St. Francis De Sales Roman Catholic Church.” Even the Associated Press ran a story nationwide on May 27 citing the “former altar boy” status of the accused.

There are several aspects of this story-within-a-story that are fascinating. To begin with, the boy did not attend a Catholic school: he was enrolled in the fashionable Beekman School. So why didn’t the headlines read, “Preppy School Boy Arrested for Murder”? Also, why was it reported that the girl, who also attended an elite non-sectarian school (Columbia Grammar and Preparatory School), formerly attended Loyola School, described by the Times as “run by the Jesuits”?

Since when was the prior status of the accused more newsworthy than the defendant’s current status? The league raised these questions with the New York newspapers. It was glad to see that *Newsday*, the Long Island daily, was alone in not citing these irrelevant facts (it should be noted that a few years ago the league protested to *Newsday* its coverage of an “ex-altar boy” on trial story; apparently, the message sunk in this time).

As the league asked the editors of the offending newspapers, "Had the offender been bar-mitzvahed would you have mentioned that as well?" We also asked, "If an ex-altar boy cop saves someone's life do you mention his previous status?" Everyone, including those who reported this story in the electronic and print media, knows the answer. Pity that ethics means so little to so many.

DONOHUE ON EWTN

League members will now be able to get quick updates on what we're doing by watching the news segment on EWTN. William Donohue started taping short commentaries on the league's work in June; his remarks will be broadcast several times a week.

The first five shows were taped by a camera crew that EWTN recruited in New York. Donohue will do three or four shootings per month, depending on cost. The league hopes to raise needed funds for this venture in its August appeal.

CHICAGO CLUB EXPLOITS CATHOLICISM

A new nightclub called Convent opened in Chicago on May 9. When it opened, it is was evident that the thematic element to the club was Catholicism and the treatment that it was accorded was decidedly irreverent. The club was adorned with Catholic imagery and the bartenders and waitresses were

dressed in Catholic garb.

As part of its marketing strategy, Convent hosted a preview of the club on May 7. Patrick Cremin, the president of the Chicago chapter of the league, was in attendance and what he saw was disturbing. Accordingly, the national headquarters of the Catholic League asked the owners of the club to make certain modifications.

The Catholic League issued the following press release on the club:

"The Chicago nightclub Convent takes liberties with Catholicism that are purely indefensible. To exploit a world religion for the purpose of commercial gain is the kind of thing that no one from any religion would find acceptable. What the league is asking for is a modification of the most egregious examples of this exploitation.

"The Catholic League is asking the owners of the club to alter the dress code of its bartenders and waitresses; apparently some bartenders dress as priests and all of the waitresses dress in Catholic schoolgirl outfits. It is also asking that the mirrored crucifix in the Hell Room be removed and that such drinks as Holy Water and Confessionals be retitled.

"The Catholic League, with the assistance of the late Cardinal Bernardin, recently fought for the modification of an offensive logo sported by the House of Blues. We were pleased with that outcome and we hope that the owners of Convent model themselves on the House of Blues by making reasonable changes. In the event cooperation is not shown, the league is prepared to make this a case of national significance."

The league was glad to see that the *Chicago Sun-Times* printed a fine editorial on the club. Here is part of what it said: "It is tempting to dismiss this as just another publicity stunt. We have been here before, last November, when the House of Blues appropriated a sacred Catholic symbol to advertise

tunes and cheap booze. It outraged some Catholics and, inevitably, when the publicity cow was fully milked, the logo was changed.” [Editor’s note: league members will remember that it was the work of Cardinal Bernardin and the Catholic League that forced the House of Blues to change its logo.]

The editorial went on to say that “Catholics should be outraged by the Convent, as should people of all faiths and those who believe the spirituality of our fellow citizens should not be mocked. Jews and Muslims would be deeply offended if a temple or mosque were so belittled. Christianity is the majority religion in this democracy and no one would say it is not a subject for satire. But the Convent is not even pseudo-satire.”

The league wrote to the sisters who own the club, Shar Mansukhani and Surita Mansukhani. They responded by denying most of the charges. It appears that after the league’s protest, they removed some of the worst elements. But the tone of their letter, combined with some flip statements about Catholic schoolgirls, leave us to believe that they are not to be trusted.

Members can contact the sisters at Convent Night Club, 1529 W. Armitage Avenue, Chicago, IL 60622.

STATUE OF MARY BEHEADED IN MIAMI

When the parishioners of St. Philomena Catholic Church went to Mass on May 15, they found a statue of the Virgin Mary beheaded. The church, which is located in the Little Havana section of Miami, was the scene of what its pastor called a

“hate crime”; the police agree with Father Timothy Hopkins and have listed the crime as such.

The statue’s face received two distinct blows with a metal object, probably a sledge hammer; a third blow decapitated the statue. The mostly Nicaraguan parishioners were stunned, calling the act a “sacrilege.”

Father Hopkins reports that this is the second incident in the past few months. He believes that the violence is the outgrowth of a wave of Catholic-bashing emanating from an influx of Protestant immigrants. Indeed, he points to a local TV station, run by Protestants, that regularly encourages people to smash Catholic statues. In fact, Catholic statues are smashed on the air. The league is investigating what can be done about this.

Catholic League members will be glad to know that we donated \$500 towards the \$3,000 needed to buy a new statue of Our Blessed Mother. Prior to the league’s grant, the church had already raised \$1,800.

VICTORY IN AGOSTINI

On June 23, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Agostini v. Felton*, overturned previous high court decisions that prohibited public school teachers from offering remedial work to nonpublic school students who attended “pervasively sectarian” schools. The Catholic League filed an amicus brief in *Agostini* supporting the restoration of this previously non-controversial practice.

The league sent the following news release on this victory:

“The Supreme Court’s decision in *Agostini* made good constitutional and educational sense. Constitutionally, the ruling jettisons the argument that the mere presence of a public school teacher in a parochial school mysteriously imbues her with religious fervor. As the court said yesterday, ‘there is no reason to presume that, simply because she enters a parochial school classroom [that she] will depart from her assigned duties and instructions and embark on religious indoctrination.’ And that is why not even one teacher, in the 20 years that such programs were available, ever complained about religious indoctrination.

“The decision also brings sanity to the educational process. No more will parochial school students who qualify for remedial work be segregated in vans parked across the street from their school. The signal that such an odious practice sent was psychologically and pedagogically debased and sent an unmistakable message of second-class status to Catholic schoolchildren.

“The Catholic League salutes New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and President Clinton for their steadfast support in this effort.”

This decision was received well by almost everyone, save for the extremist groups like Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

MIXED BAG IN BOERNE

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *City of Boerne v. Flores*, *Archbishop of San Antonio* declared as unconstitutional the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. The 1993 law said that any law that imposed a “substantial burden” on someone’s religious

beliefs must serve a “compelling” government interest. When tested in *Boerne*, a case that involved the right of a Catholic parish to reconstruct its church—over the objections of town officials who held the church to be a landmark—the Religious Freedom Restoration Act did not pass constitutional muster with the court.

The league had this to say about the decision:

“The league greets the decision in *Boerne* with mixed emotions. On the one hand, it regrets what could be interpreted as a retreat from the insularity that religion has enjoyed vis-à-vis government over the past few years. On the other hand, the league feels comfortable knowing that by striking down the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the high court made no attempt to attenuate this nation’s commitment to religious liberty.

“It also needs to be said that while the Religious Freedom Restoration Act did offer some new needed protection for religious liberty, it did so while expanding the authority of Congress to determine issues that are properly the province of the judiciary. That is not something that students of the constitution can take lightly.

“Therefore, on balance, the Catholic League finds the ruling in *Boerne* acceptable. Moreover, the league believes that the preferred position that religious liberty has enjoyed in this country will prevail. And the Catholic League will be prepared to fight those who may seek to exploit today’s ruling as a mechanism to privatize religion.”