

"CORPUS CHRISTI" TO RUN IN FALL; PROTEST MOUNTS

Terrence McNally's "Corpus Christi," a play about a Christ-like character who has sex with the apostles, is scheduled to open in New York this fall. It had previously been withdrawn but then it was rescheduled; the producer, the Manhattan Theatre Club, succumbed to pressure from the artistic community and put the play back on the drawing board.

Following the announcement to cancel the play, thirty major playwrights signed a letter demanding that the Manhattan Theatre Club stick to its guns. It was signed by Tony Kushner, Arthur Miller, Christopher Durang, A.R. Gurney, Stephen Sondheim, Wendy Wasserstein and others.

From the beginning, the Catholic League has led the fight against this "gay Jesus" play. Over the summer, the league is building a coalition of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim groups who object to this blasphemy. The early support from the Orthodox Jewish community has been outstanding.

The media response to the league's objections has been incredible. Most of the reporting has been fair, but some of the commentaries have been unfair, not to say hypocritical. Leading the way in this regard was a May 28 editorial in the *New York Times*, entitled "Censoring Terrence McNally." The Catholic League answered the *Times* with an op-ed page ad of its own (see p.2).

Neither the playwright nor the producer will release a copy of the script to the Catholic League. But a story in the *New York Times* says that the script "from the beginning to the end retells the Biblical story of a Jesus-like figure—from his birth in a Texas flea-bag hotel with people having profane, violent sex in the room next door to his crucifixion as 'king

of the queers.'” It adds that the Christ-like character, Joshua, “has a long-running affair with Judas and sexual relations with the other apostles”; the Jesus-figure also has sex on stage, albeit in a nonexplicit way, with an HIV-positive street hustler.

The play ends by saying, “If we have offended, so be it. He belongs to us as well as you.” The league urges its members to write to their congressman and senators demanding an end to support for the National Endowment for the Arts (the Manhattan Theatre Club receives NEA grants). The league will unveil other strategies in due course.

DIGITAL PULLS AD

In response to concerns raised by the Catholic League, Digital Equipment Corporation of Massachusetts has withdrawn an ad that the league found objectionable.

The ad promoted Digital computers, contrasting them with a well-known competitor. What the league found unacceptable was the large graphic that featured the Inquisition: monks were depicted holding crucifixes in the face of tortured soldiers. Moreover, the word “Heresy” was printed across the illustration. The effect of the ad, however unintentional, was to unnecessarily stir prejudice against Catholicism.

In a letter to Digital, we stated that they ought to be able to advertise their product “without resorting to such a crass caricature of Catholic history.” We also sent along a recent book review of Henry Kamen’s new work, “The Spanish Inquisition.” As one reviewer of this book concluded, the “torture-mad Inquisition is largely a 19th century myth.” No

wonder: Kamen effectively debunks prevailing views on the subject, noting, for instance, the role played by foreign propaganda in the creation of the diabolic image of the Inquisition.

The letter that the Catholic League received said that “It is never the intention of Digital Equipment Corporation to offend any religious, ethnic or racial group in its advertisements. We regret that the reproduction of the famous Diego Rivera mural in one of our advertisements has caused this reaction. We have withdrawn this advertisement from further publication.”

The league is delighted with Digital’s responsible decision.

THEY REALLY DO HATE US

William A. Donohue

This past spring, while addressing the Orlando chapter of Legatus, I entered into a discussion with a man who questioned why there was so much Catholic bashing these days. I could have given him a long dissertation on the subject, but chose not to. Instead, I simply said, “Because they really do hate us.” He seem momentarily puzzled but soon got the point.

Who are the “they,” and is it fair to say that they “hate” us? To begin with, it must be said that most of those who take unfair aim at the Catholic Church do not hate us, per se, they simply reject with anger some teachings of the Church. But there is a minority within that group that definitely hates us, the “us” being the Church and those who defend it. That is the group I wish to discuss.

More often than not, “they” are men and women whose idea of liberty, especially sexual freedom, conflicts sharply with the Church’s embrace of sexual reticence. Indeed, it is no stretch to say that for those who hate us, their idea of freedom is genitally derived.

“Hate” is a strong word and can lose its force if overused. But there is no other word I know that accurately describes the reaction to the Catholic League’s protest of “Corpus Christi.” The hate mail and phone calls have been as alarming as they have been voluminous. The distortions of what we have said have kept pace with the bashing, enough so that it makes me wonder what it is that possesses these people.

The uproar over “Corpus Christi” has led to a string of radio and TV debates. Not surprisingly, those who are integrally involved with the play refuse to debate anyone from the Catholic League.

When I recently showed up at a TV studio in New York for a debate on this issue, I was told by the producer that she had contacted a long list of notable playwrights and columnists who were supportive of the play, but unfortunately they were all busy that day. In no uncertain terms, I told her that I didn’t believe it for a moment, commenting that they were all cowards. Because she wasn’t persuaded, I made her a challenge: call them every day to debate me—I’ll be there, I said—but the result will be the same. She never answered.

The person I finally debated was the vice president for People for the American Way. It wasn’t much of a debate. But I did appreciate Barbara Handman’s spin on “Piss Christ,” that artistic masterpiece by Serrano that displayed a crucifix in a jar of urine. Claiming that it was “reverential,” Handman opined that “what it was saying was that the current Catholic community was destroying the teachings of Christ.” By such logic, it could be argued that the display of a Star of David in a bowl of feces was simply a statement on how the current

Jewish community was destroying the teachings of Moses.

The need to lie is understandable. When it gets to matters like "Corpus Christi" and "Piss Christ," defenders must either run and hide, or lie. What they don't want is an honest debate, for that would mean that they would lose. Like Marx and Lenin before them, they not only lie, cheat and steal, they actually boast of the necessity to do so. The good news is that by drawing even a few of them out, we prove victorious. Consider the piece by Craig Lucas in this issue of *Catalyst*.

Lucas' defense of "Corpus Christi" is a marvelous contribution. Incoherent and absurd, Lucas wanders all over the place venting his hatred of the Catholic Church. It is a marvelous contribution because no matter how hard we try to make the case against the play, it would be impossible to improve on Lucas' offering: he has provided all the evidence we need to demonstrate that those who love "Corpus Christi" are fundamentally different from the rest of us. With logic and reason, Rick Hinshaw destroyed Lucas' argument, but with anger and hatred, Lucas exposed his motive, and there is nothing sweeter than this when it comes to debate.

Likewise, it was no shocker to learn that I was called anti-gay, anti-Jewish and anti-black, simply because I wrote the "Shylock and Sambo" ad. Tony Kushner, a prominent playwright, made such a charge, knowing full well that my piece was designed to rock those who support "Corpus Christi." So I'm a bigot for drawing this analogy and he's a free speech advocate for embracing "Corpus Christi." Gotcha.

So they really do hate us. Now where does that leave us? Obviously, we should not hate back. But we should also not hold back. We are called to defend the Church and that means we should responsibly and aggressively engage our adversaries. And win.

RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Testimony of William A. Donohue, Ph.D., President, Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights before the United States Civil Rights Commission on May 20, 1998 during a Public Hearing on *Schools and Religion*.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to testify today on the subject of schools and religion. As president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, I am disturbed by the extent to which religious expression is treated as second-class speech in our schools. In addition, I am disturbed by the degree of tolerance for anti-Catholicism that too many school officials exhibit.

There is much talk these days about religious zealots who seek to ban books from school libraries. No doubt such persons exist. But no one seems to want to talk about the book banning that civil libertarians promote. For example, the ACLU has sued in the state of Wisconsin in an attempt to ban the book *Sex Respect*. Why? Because the book advocates abstinence and, as such, "promotes a religious perspective regarding the 'spiritual dimension' of sexuality." Books that promote condoms and abortion, however, are acceptable to the ACLU because they do not advance a religious perspective. This is what I mean by religious expression being treated as if it were second-class speech.

Something similar happened in California when the ACLU opposed a bill that promoted monogamy in the schools. The Union maintained that "teaching that monogamous, heterosexual intercourse within marriage is a traditional American value is

an unconstitutional establishment of a religious doctrine in public schools.” But the ACLU has no problem with schools that promote a radical homosexual agenda and that treat marriage as an alternative lifestyle. In short, sex education that advances a secular agenda is okay but it is not okay if world religions embrace a particular teaching regarding sexuality.

Just as bad are sex education seminars and workshops that disparage the Roman Catholic Church’s teachings on sexual ethics. It is one thing to address homophobia in society, quite another to single out Catholicism for derision; this is a problem that has increasingly come to the attention of the Catholic League.

When books such as *The Bible in Pictures* and the *Story of Jesus* are banned from school libraries, we hear nothing from either civil libertarians or those who profess an interest in separation of church and state. But when books that show disdain for Catholicism are assigned to students, for example, *The Old Gringo* and *Anastasia Krupnik*, we hear a chorus of free speech from the same quarters. Moreover, when courses on religion or the Bible are introduced, the guardians of liberty raise objections, as witnessed recently in Ohio and Florida.

Perhaps the most consistent complaints regarding religious expression in the public schools that come to the attention of the Catholic League revolve around Christmas celebrations. Not only is there widespread repression of religious speech every December, it is selective in nature: celebrations of Hanukkah are usually tolerated but celebrations of Christmas frequently are not.

Just last year, the Glen Cove School District on Long Island forbade the display of a crèche in the schools (it was donated by the Knights of Columbus) but allowed the display of a menorah. The year before, in Manhattan Beach, California, a public school removed a Christmas tree from school property

after a rabbi objected that the tree was a religious symbol; however, the school allowed the display of a Star of David. In northern California, a school in Sacramento banned Christmas celebrations on the theory that Christianity “was not a world religion.”

In 1996, the Catholic League threatened a lawsuit against the Millcreek Township School District in Erie, Pennsylvania when the school district prohibited students from creating artwork that depicted a nativity scene for the annual “Holiday Card Contest.” In the same year, candy canes were confiscated from students at a public school in Scarsdale, New York, even though no one has ever alleged that such treats were in any way religious. Indeed, the same school district even took the word “Christmas” off the spelling list; even green and red sprinkles on cookies, as well as cookies made in the shape of a bell or star, were considered taboo.

In 1997, in Mahopac, New York, Boy Scout students were barred from selling holiday wreaths at a fundraiser, even though a wreath is a secular symbol; Hanukkah gifts, however, were allowed to be sold at the school’s own fundraiser.

In 1997, the Hillsborough Board of Education was more equitable in its bigotry: the New Jersey school board banned class parties for Halloween, Christmas, Hanukkah and Valentine’s Day. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, Highland High School choir director Frank Rotolo tried to appease the politically correct police by agreeing to remove Christian songs from the Christmas Concert, and he even acceded to their demand that the concert’s name be changed to “A Winter Concert,” but that still didn’t satisfy the appetite to sanitize the schools of religious expression: the choir director was suspended by the principal.

Last December, I confronted an attorney for New York City Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew regarding the practice of banning crèches in the schools while allowing menorahs. At first, she

cited the 1989 *County of Allegheny v. ACLU* decision to buttress her case, but when I pointed out that that decision undermined her case—making the argument that the high court declared a menorah to be a religious symbol, not a secular one—she quickly retreated. Such ignorance strikes me as willful.

The Catholic League has even had to intervene in securing release time for students who were penalized for attending religious instruction at night in lieu of participating in the school's concert.

The inequities cited are bad enough, but what is worse is the flagrant bigotry that Catholic students endure in some public schools. For example, in April, 1997, the art department at La Guardia High School in Manhattan authorized the distribution of fliers that depicted an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in a sexually explicit way. There was another artistic contribution that showed a sketch of a man with "HEBRO" written across his head and "EVIL JEW" scripted above the figure. An arrow was pointed at him by a man holding a large penis. The man comments "Jesus I gots a present fo' yo' preachy ass!!" There were several other works of art that depicted Catholic schoolgirls in a vile way.

In 1997, Catholic students in Danville, California had to sit through the anti-Catholic movie, *The Last Temptation of Christ*; it was shown during Holy Week and when students complained about the explicit violence, sex scenes and bigotry, they were mocked by their teacher. The Catholic League has also encountered teachers and students in Middletown Township, New Jersey, who have had to endure anti-Catholic commentary in the school district's newsletter.

This spring, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Catholic students were prohibited from wearing T-shirts with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on them. In a well-reported case, students in a Houston suburb were denied the right to wear rosaries to

school. And who can fail to recall the abuse and heckling that Christian students endured at the hands of antireligious extremists in Kentucky, a situation that culminated in the deaths of three students at Heath High School in West Paducah?

In 1995, President Clinton released a memo on religious expression in the public schools that is commendable in its clarity. The problem is that his directive, like those of the courts, have been ignored with impunity.

Not until religious expression in the public schools is given the same respect and latitude that is accorded secular speech, will we resolve this problem. In the meantime, we need to end the discriminatory practice of barring the use of public monies to promote religion while allowing public monies to be spent bashing religion. Schools that are sued for allowing "Jesus Christ Superstar" but are told to back off when objections are raised to putting on "Oh! Calcutta!" need relief, and no one needs it more than the Catholic schoolchildren who suffer through these injustices.

"SHYLOCK AND SAMBO" HITS BROADWAY

**This advertisement appeared in the *New York Times* OP-ED page
on Monday, June 15, 1998.**

"SHYLOCK AND SAMBO" HITS BROADWAY


This fall, a play called "Shylock and Sambo" will appear on Broadway. An advance copy of the script says that it features gay Jewish slavemasters who sodomize their obsequious black slaves. Though it is often vulgar, it is nonetheless a major work of art. The theater company that is producing it receives federal, state and local funding.

The response from gay, Jewish and black groups has been to denounce the play as bigotry. But an editorial in the New York Times exclaims, "That there is a native strain of bigotry, violence and contempt for artistic expression in this country is not news." Moreover, noted playwrights have rushed to defend the play, citing freedom of speech and respect for the arts.

Now if this isn't fairy land, nothing is. The artistic community would never dream of offending gays, Jews and blacks, and the New York Times would never write such nonsense. But when it comes to a play that features a Christ-like character having sex with the apostles, a different standard emerges: the Times quote that was mentioned was exactly this newspaper's reaction to the Catholic League's protest of Terrence McNally's "Corpus Christi." Not a word was uttered about Christian bashing.

Indeed, the editorial was labeled, "Censoring Terrence McNally." Question: who are the censors? Gays tried to shut down the movie, "Cruising," Jews sought to stop the publication of "A Nation on Trial," feminists blasted "Smack My Bitch Up," Puerto Ricans rallied against "Seinfeld," etc. Were any of these groups branded as censors for registering their moral outrage? So why the double standard?

The Catholic League does not want the government to shut down "Corpus Christi" (the producers should gut it). But it does want artists to put an end to their hate speech and bury their anti-Catholic hatchet once and for all. Legal rights are not necessarily moral rights. So let the debate begin, with one standard for all.

<p>William A. Donohue President</p>	
	<p>Catholic League <i>for Religious and Civil Rights</i> 1011 First Avenue, New York, NY 10022 (212) 371-3191 Fax: (212) 371-3394 <i>http://catholicleague.org</i></p>

SILENCE ‘CORPUS CHRISTI’?

<p>Yes, play is blasphemous <i>by Rick Hinshaw</i></p>	<p>No, free speech is at stake <i>by Craig Lucas</i></p>
<p>"Freedom of speech," goes the mantra from the arts crowd, as the Manhattan Theater Club – after reports in recent weeks that it was canceling a production – now declares its intention to offend Christians by staging a play that portrays Jesus as having sex with his apostles.</p> <p>But our cultural elite is quite selective in its application of the First Amendment.</p> <p>"Freedom of speech" becomes "censorship" when the Catholic League exercises it to oppose this blasphemy. And religious freedom goes out the window when the Manhattan Theater Club insists that Christians be forced to participate in defaming our own religion by funding the theater's work with our tax dollars.</p> <p>Such are the double standards by which anti-Catholic bigotry is justified by the politically correct. Was it censorship for the Anti-Defamation League to try to prevent publication of "A Nation on Trial," a book written by a foe of Zionism that challenged our conventional understanding of the Holocaust?</p> <p>Or for Puerto Rican leaders to call for a boycott of "Seinfeld" after a Puerto Rican flag was burned on one episode? Was the National Organization for Women threatening the First Amendment when it succeeded in having several stores pull an album containing the violent, sexist song "Smack My Bitch Up"?</p> <p>In 1991, WOR-TV banned a show, "The Passover," after Jewish groups protested. Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee said the show was "not in the public interest" because it contained historical and theological errors and "misrepresented the Jewish tradition, and therefore misled the public."</p> <p>Well, based on how the press has described Terrence McNally's "Corpus Christi," the play contains historical and theological errors, and clearly misrepresents Christian tradition, by portraying Jesus Christ as a promiscuous homosexual. "From the beginning to the end," according to a report in the <i>New York Times</i>, this play presents "a Jesus-like figure...in a manner with the potential to offend many people." Crucified as "king of the queers," this Jesus figure "has a long-running affair with Judas and sexual relations with the other apostles."</p> <p>Imagine a play that offered a similar portrayal of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., or one that glorified Adolf Hitler or sought to deny the Holocaust. Surely, no one would challenge the right of offended groups to use moral suasion to try to have such scripts changed or taken out of production. Indeed, it's hard to imagine such a script ever making it into production. The arts community would never dream of offending Jews or African-Americans in this way.</p> <p>Catholics, however, are fair game. From Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ," featuring a crucifix submerged in urine, to McNally's depiction of Jesus as a sexual hedonist, anti-Catholicism remains the last respectable bias, in the arts community and among America's cultural elite. And when the Catholic League expresses its moral outrage, we are maligned as "censors."</p> <p>Even more offensive have been efforts to link us to threats of violence against the Manhattan Theater Club and McNally. The Catholic League has a long history of forceful but peaceful advocacy against anti-Catholic defamation. Blaming us for the threats of a lunatic fringe is akin to blaming King for the violence of the Black Panthers. Such guilt by association is a not-so-subtle attempt to hamper our free speech.</p> <p>But the First Amendment wasn't written just for the cultural elite. Its guarantees of freedom of speech and of religion belong to all of us.</p> <p>The Catholic League will continue to exercise those rights in defense of our faith, and in defense of the right of all Catholic Americans to equal participation in our democratic process.</p> <p><i>Hinshaw is editor of Catalyst, the monthly journal of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.</i></p>	<p>The Catholic League presumes to be speaking for Christians in general and Catholics in particular when it calls for the suppression of "Corpus Christi" on the ground that the play, not yet produced, is offensive to Christians.</p> <p>Which Christians?</p> <p>Are all Christians of precisely the same mind on all subjects? I was raised Christian, and I read my Bible. At no point in the Scriptures does Christ speak on the subject of homosexuality; he embraced prostitutes and the downtrodden and was friend to all the oppressed.</p> <p>His sexual practices and orientation are never mentioned in the Bible. There are plenty of things that appear onstage, on TV, in movies and in the papers that are offensive to me and millions of other Americans; that doesn't mean we get to silence them.</p> <p>"Majority rules" doesn't mean that the minorities must all shut up and toe the line. Our democracy includes a separation of church and state, and all free citizens are permitted to speak their minds, even if their ideas are offensive to some. Anyone who wants to picket or object is also free to do so.</p> <p>When large numbers of people objected to the depiction of African-Americans in "Show Boat," "Huckleberry Finn" or "The Birth of a Nation," they picketed and published Op-Ed pieces, making their voices heard. But these works were not suppressed, and are all still available to any citizen who wishes to make up his or her mind.</p> <p>Many people object to the character Shylock in "The Merchant of Venice," others to the Hispanic character in Terrence McNally's "Love! Valour! Compassion!"</p> <p>And that's certainly anyone's right. But to call for the silencing of any voice in a democracy is itself anti-democratic.</p> <p>Not having seen or read "Corpus Christi," I won't presume to judge it. But even if it were the most sacrilegious and hateful depiction of Christ imaginable, I would still defend McNally's right, and the Manhattan Theater Club's right, to produce the play without threats of violence or censorship.</p> <p>In addition, I would like to say to the Catholic League and any other Christian calling for the suppression of "Corpus Christi," as well as to any Christian who is content with the current societal discrimination leveled at homosexuals in housing, employment, health benefits, tax law, marriage and the armed services, where is your righteous indignation about all those who break the other laws of Leviticus?</p> <p>Why aren't you loudly condemning those who wear cloths of two weaves, women who appear in public during menstruation, those who eat "unclean" meat? If McNally had depicted Christ wearing a blended-weave cloth, would you be equally outraged? Why not? The Bible is clear on this: It is an abomination equal to homosexuality, never to be tolerated.</p> <p>Is the cardinal demanding that the city withhold equal rights from women who go to work during menstruation? No, but he wants the city to deny equal rights to gays and lesbians.</p> <p>According to the Catholic League and others, the worst thing anyone could say about Jesus is that he was gay. One must wonder why some passages from the Bible are so important to obey and so deeply offensive, while others are to be ignored. Gay people, of course, are extremely unpopular, so it's easy to beat up on them and get the approval of a larger public.</p> <p>To the Catholic League, the cardinal, the Pope and anyone who call themselves Christian, I have but one message, and it is Christ's: Love thy neighbor as thyself.</p> <p>Instead of pretending that Christians are somehow a terribly maligned and oppressed minority (in a country where their numbers vastly outweigh all others), and instead of fighting to silence and oppress those with whom you happen to disagree, why don't you invest your financial resources and energy in making people's lives better?</p> <p>Christianity is an act of love. It is not a set of beliefs to be hurled at sinners like stones.</p> <p><i>Lucas is a playwright whose works include "Prelude to a Kiss," "The Dying Gaul" and "God's Heart."</i></p>

Clyde Haberman's piece appeared in the *New York Times* on Tuesday, June 2, 1998.

A SOLDIER OF CHRIST ON THE MARCH

When visited yesterday in his corner office at the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, William A. Donohue was

no burning books. He was not chopping up reels of film into celluloid guitar picks. He was not tossing video cassettes into the trash can.

That is because he is not a censor, no matter what some may say, Mr. Donohue said. All he does as president of the Catholic League, he said, is raise warning flags whenever he believes someone has gone over the top in ridiculing Christian dogma or the Roman Catholic Church.

He just happens to be a particularly vigorous flag waver.

"I believe in moral suasion," Mr. Donohue said at his normal decibel level, which is high. "I believe in whipping up public sentiment to isolate the offender. I believe in putting on a lot of pressure."

He certainly has tried to do that in his latest crusade: to get the Manhattan Theater Club to cancel Terrence McNally's new play, "Corpus Christi," planned for the fall. A recent draft shows that it is about a Jesus-like figure who has sex with his apostles and is crucified as "king of the queers."

And you wonder if the Catholic League was offended? Of course, it protested.

Somebody went much further and threatened to bomb the theater club, which caved in and dropped the play, until it came to its senses on how to deal with would-be terrorists. It canceled its cancellation.

On that score, it got no argument from Mr. Donohue. If the police find "the lunatic" behind the bomb threat, "they should put him in prison for a very long time," he said at the league's offices at First Avenue and East 56th Street.

But that did not shake his conviction that "Corpus Christi" is an "immoral" play unworthy of being performed and that the Manhattan Theater Club is not entitled to its Federal, state,

and local government subsidies. It is one thing for a fully private group to produce such a work, he said, but “nobody has a right to the public purse.”

“If it’s wrong to take public monies to promote my religion, then it’s wrong to take public monies to bash my religion,” he said.

-That goes to the heart of what Mr. Donohue has been about in the five years he has led the Catholic League, whose symbol is a sword and shield. He is convinced that “anti-Catholicism is the last respectable bias” among those who view themselves as models of enlightenment. Utter a word remotely offensive to Jews, blacks, women or gays? Heaven forbid. Yet some of those same people do not blink before mocking the Church or Jesus or Catholic sacraments.

Imagine, Mr. Donohue said, “a play called ‘Shylock and Sambo,’ about gay Jewish slave masters who sodomize their obsequious black slaves.” You would not even have to protest a work like that, he said. Its offensiveness to certain groups would be obvious. No theater troupe would produce it in the first place, not in this city anyway.

Don’t Catholics, he asked, deserve the same consideration? Instead, his league has tracked one example after another of artists and writers depicting priests as pedophiles, nuns as sex-crazed witches and the Pope as a man having sex with prostitutes. Let’s not even get into images of Jesus on a cross of penises or Mary in a G-string.

For protesting such outrages, and aggressively, Mr. Donohue has received death threats of his own. At a minimum, he is branded in some circles as an enemy of free expression. Even among largely sympathetic Catholics, there are those who wish he would soften his style.

Mr. Donohue replies that Catholics are the aggrieved ones, especially “Catholics like myself who openly proclaim the

virtues of the church.”

Returning to the McNally play, he said: “A lot of people in the gay and the artistic community hate with a passion the Catholic Church, and they don’t want to admit to bigotry. Bigotry is something in their mind which the Archie Bunkers of this world exercise.”

If this play turns out not to be offensive, “I’ll be the first guy to say I was wrong,” Mr. Donohue said. He paused before adding: “But I would be very, very surprised if in fact I’m going to have to make such a statement. No, I think this is an in-your-face, stick-it-to-Catholics play. And they wouldn’t do it to any other segment of society.”

“NOTHING’S” AGENDA EXPOSED

Now that the ABC show “Nothing Sacred” has been scraped, those associated with it are “coming out,” so to speak. And they are making our point better than we ever could: this was not just a TV show.

On May 26, Brother Michael Breault, S.J., one of “Nothing’s” writers, bared his soul to an audience of like-minded Catholics in Phoenix. He admitted that the show was based on his own experiences at St. Francis Xavier in New York City. Until recently, he said, women preached after the Gospel, the church was run by parishioners (many of whom he identified as gay), liturgies were invented, etc.

Brother Breault was most helpful to us when he made the following comment about the real intent of the show: “It was very important for us to be provocative, that is was not middle of the road. None of us were interested in that,” he

said.

We wonder what the *Commonweal* folk think now. All along they've accused *us* of being provocative, defending the show as managing to convey "a sense of the sacramental and incarnational." That's one thing nice about people like Brother Breault—their honesty is refreshing.

At the "Nothing" event, fans watched in delight an unaired episode of the now defunct and discredited show. According to Scott Ballor, who broke the story for the *Wanderer*, the show's pastor says, "I don't believe in the resurrection....I feel like I've been living my whole life for something that isn't quite real." After the parish's staff accountant rushed to save the Blessed Sacrament from a church fire, he exclaimed, "Why was I running into a fire to save some bread? What the hell am I doing? I've got to quit this job and do something more sensible." Hurry, we say.

Can anyone imagine what next season's episodes would have been like had "Nothing" succeeded like "Seinfeld"? And is there any doubt that had the show worked that its fans would have been screaming from every mountain top that this is evidence that Catholics want radical changes in the Church? The fact that it was a monumental flop, not to say embarrassment, should now be used by the rest of us as proof that the call for radical restructuring is confined to a slim minority of Catholics, many of whom have one foot out the door already.

In a related story, just in case you missed it, Father Cain and David Manson of "Nothing" infamy, released a show on TNT on May 31 called "Thicker Than Blood." The show opened with Father Larkin saying that he's going to start a new religion, one without angels and one that "doesn't use a dead young man as its logo." At that point, the priest threw a crucifix in the trash. Later in the show, Father Larkin announced from the pulpit that "I need a better God. I need a better God." This was said on Easter Sunday.

Like any organization, the Catholic League makes its share of mistakes. But it's so nice to know that we were right on the money on this one. Thanks in part to Brother Breault.

YALE CASE ADVANCES

The Catholic League's motion to file an amicus brief against Yale University has been granted in U.S. District Court. The league's brief, which supports the right of Orthodox Jewish students to challenge Yale's bizarre residency requirements (they must live on campus in sexually correct living quarters or buy their way out of this mandatory policy), is being handled by the ever-capable William Bentley Ball of Pennsylvania. Bill serves on the league's advisory board.

SDA LOSES AGAIN

The Catholic League has persuaded more newspapers not to run any more anti-Catholic ads by the Eternal Gospel SDA Church. We are delighted to report that the Los Angeles Newspaper Group, which comprises five major papers in Southern California, has agreed not to run the ads again.

The ads are placed by Christians who quarrel with the Catholic Church's designation of Sunday as the Sabbath. We have no problem with such theological disagreements, but we do object to the invidious caricatures that SDA promotes.

ROUGH AND READY?

Out west, there is a place called Rough and Ready. There is even a English professor who lives there. We know this because Timothy May listed his home town in a piece he wrote for *The Union*, a newspaper from Grass Valley-Nevada City, California. He also listed his prejudice, namely anti-Catholicism.

May was given great room to bash the Church that he used to belong to, the trigger being the Church's reconsideration of meatless Fridays. Instead of describing his hate-filled commentary, we simply want to note two things: one, only an anti-Catholic bigot would be given the right to vent on an op-ed page and two, only an self-hating ex-Catholic would be capable of writing such a screed. We conveyed our sentiments to *The Union*.