

OKLAHOMA OFFICIALS ADDRESS FLAP AT ROGERS STATE

In June, Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, along with state lawmakers and education officials, jumped into the fray at Rogers State University. The school came under fire by the Catholic League for offering an art appreciation telecourse that features anti-Catholic imagery. The resulting media fanfare, which hit big in the Sooner state, led public officials to get involved.

The league went directly to the Oklahoma media after learning of a depiction of “a Madonna with an exposed potbelly dragging a cross into a religious ceremony being led by a priest with two Devil’s horns”; cannibalism was also shown. The video is from the “Temple of Confessions” segment in an art series titled, “A World of Art: Works in Progress.”

We responded by writing to the two governing boards of Rogers State University asking them to consider the appropriateness of this telecourse. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma Board of Regents exercise considerable authority over this public institution and therefore have an obligation not to violate the public trust. “Surely there can be no public interest in using public monies to assault the sensibilities of minority groups,” we said, “and that would certainly include Oklahoma Catholics.”

We also contended that it was a perverse use of public funds to pay for a course that was designed to counter the prejudicial attitudes that some whites harbor against Latinos, and then bash Catholics in the process. “If there were a course designed to check anti-Semitism that featured art that offended Native Americans,” we countered, “everyone would see the hypocrisy in a New York minute.”

The Catholic League was pleased with the forthright response of Governor Keating. He wrote to us explaining that he is in the process of obtaining a copy of the video, adding that "I do not believe state institutions should be in the business of broadcasting patently offensive material of any kind." We also heard from state representative Kevin Calvey who promised to take a serious look at the matter.

As for Rogers State, the school fell back on the tired excuse of academic freedom. That there is such a thing as academic responsibility seems to be forgotten. The league has explicitly asked the State Regents "to get beyond legalisms" and do what is right.

VICTORY IN THE COURTS

On June 28, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that taxpayer money could be used to buy computers and other instructional aids for private and parochial schools. This was a victory that the Catholic League shared with others: Gerard Bradley and Robert George, both of whom serve on our board of advisors, filed an amicus brief on behalf of the league in this important case, *Mitchell v. Helms*.

Justice Clarence Thomas, who wrote the majority decision, emphasized that the exclusion of parochial schools from aid programs is rooted in 19th century anti-Catholicism. Such exclusion, he said, "born of bigotry, should be buried now."

The brief by Bradley and George took issue with previous court rulings in this area and sought to dispel many myths regarding Catholic schools. In doing so, they offered a trenchant Catholic analysis of recent jurisprudence on the establishment

clause of the First Amendment.

In a news release on this subject, the Catholic League also took note of other issues that touched this case:

“It is the hope of the Catholic League that those who favor school vouchers will use this decision to promote school choice. Then we can finally end this class warfare of making the poor pay for schools they expressly reject while the Bill Clintons and Jesse Jacksons of this world can afford to bypass such schools altogether.”

We are grateful for the pro-bono contributions of Bradley and George.

QUOTABLE

Catholic Press Association, Baltimore, MD, 5/25/00

WILLIAM DONOHUE: “You don’t run a civil rights organization the way you run a soup kitchen. I will be apologetic to no one about this. We confront people in the public square...Those who think dialogue is the god, go ahead and dialogue and see how far it gets you. Try to sit down with those people without the Catholic League (existing) and see how far it gets you.”

THE “AUTHORITARIAN” CATHOLIC CHURCH

William A. Donohue

One of the more common complaints about the Catholic Church is that it is an “undemocratic” institution. Indeed, many go so far as to label the Church “authoritarian.” While the first charge is true, the second is false.

If by democracy it is meant what Lincoln meant, government by, for and of the people, then the Catholic Church is not a democracy. But neither is any form of government, including governments that are regarded as democratic. While there can be government by and for the people, there can never be government of the people, not, at least, if we are speaking of large-scale societies. That is why we are a republic with a representative form of government. So, too, are all other “democracies.”

The Church, then, should not be criticized for what it cannot be. But this needs to be taken a step further: it would be wrong for the Church to even try to be a democracy. By way of analogy, consider a much smaller unit, the family.

A family of father, mother and children would be a disaster if every member had equal rights or where there was majority rule. Such a design would mean that children could veto the demands of their parents, a condition that would inexorably spell their own demise. That the well being of children is predicated on the responsible exercise of parental authority used to be regarded as common sense. But since it no longer is, it needs to be said.

It should be axiomatic that priests deserve to have more rights than their parishioners, just as it should be obvious that pilots should have more rights than their passengers.

The deference we pay to priests and pilots makes sense: it the special nature of their vocations, their level of training and our dependence on them that accounts for their privileged position. If they act irresponsibly, then they forfeit their status. But absent such abuse, we are obliged to abide by the strictures of those who occupy positions of power in any legitimate hierarchy, whether that be in the Catholic Church or the airline industry.

Christ deputized the apostles to carry out His mission of saving souls, and the bishops are properly regarded as their descendants. Such a design makes no pretense about being democratic. Indeed, it would be positively preposterous to contend that the Church, so founded, should be democratic.

To those who say that the Church is authoritarian because it is a rigid institution that relies on punitive measures, the only sane answer can be that the accuser is either ignorant or a propagandist with an agenda. Let me go further: there is no organization in the world today that allows more dissent—even to the point of insubordination—than the Roman Catholic Church. By comparison, consider the *New York Times* and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), two organizations largely seen as models of liberal democratic values.

Last fall, the *New York Times* fired 23 employees at an administrative center in Norfolk, Virginia for violating company policy prohibiting inappropriate e-mail. When an inquiring reporter asked a spokeswoman for the newspaper about the matter, he was promptly told it was “an internal matter.”

Now imagine what would happen if a bishop, after disciplining a priest for violating canon law, told an inquiring reporter that this was “an internal matter”? The reporter would go ballistic. My answer to that is: let him. So what? And then I’d tell him I learned this technique from the *New York Times*.

Similarly, last fall the NAACP fired its Colorado chapter president because he supports school vouchers. In May, the NAACP suspended one of its Virginia leaders for endorsing a Republican candidate (that the head of the national NAACP previously endorsed Clinton-Gore seems not to matter). And in June, the Oakland, California chapter president of the NAACP came under fire from the national organization for supporting George W. Bush.

By contrast, not a week goes by that we read of a priest or nun who isn't openly dissenting from the teachings of the magisterium, yet how many have been disciplined for doing so? The media would go off the deep end if the Church did what the NAACP regularly does to its heretics. But let them. Once again, all a bishop has to say is, "Well, sir, we learned that technique from the NAACP."

Or consider the outcry that greeted Gonzaga University president Robert Spitzer this past spring when he canned a speech by a Planned Parenthood speaker on campus. What Spitzer should have done was to say he learned this technique from the Democratic Party: in 1992, the late Bob Casey was denied the right to speak to the Democratic Convention because of his pro-life views.

It is high time we started to challenge the mythology of the "undemocratic" and "authoritarian" Catholic Church. There is too much at stake to put up with these lies any longer.

WILLIAM E. SIMON, R.I.P.

The Catholic Church lost a great one when she lost William E. Simon. Bill was known mostly for his entrepreneurial acumen and financial savvy, but he was much more than that—he was a

fierce defender of his faith. Indeed, it made great sense to have him serve on our board of advisors as he epitomized the style and substance of the Catholic League.

Bill died on June 3 at the age of 72; the cause of death was complications arising from pulmonary fibrosis. Over the past several years, Bill was the source of much advice and just as much praise for the Catholic League. I will never forget his phone calls: he was always charged up, going at a frenetic pace and unyielding in his demands. He was the kind of man you just didn't want to let down, which is precisely why we did everything we could to meet his objectives.

It was because of Bill's high energy that I asked him to be the Master of Ceremonies at our 25th anniversary dinner in April 1998 at the Plaza Hotel in New York. He gave a high-spirited talk that would have made every Catholic League member proud. And now he's gone, and so, too, is the man who was our Keynote Speaker at the dinner, John Cardinal O'Connor; His Eminence died just one month earlier, on May 3.

Fortunately, my last correspondence with Bill Simon was something I'll always remember. On May 24, he wrote to me asking if I would proof the statement that I had made a few years earlier about him for his memoirs. Interviewed by phone, I will restate the closing comment I made about Bill.

"There are two things that strike me about Bill Simon. Number one: There is nothing half-hearted in his comments; he speaks from the soul; he feels things very deeply, very passionately; he is a man of strong conviction. Number two: He takes the initiative. Something will hit him in the gut and he'll want to discuss it with me, want to know what we're doing about it and how he can be of assistance. His initiative and strong convictions make him stand out. He has certainly been a source of great advice and enthusiasm for me."

On May 26, I wrote to Bill back saying, "I am so honored just

offer my thoughts on your tremendous contribution to the United States. You are my hero.”

BOGUS CHARITY: CATHOLICS FOR A FREE CHOICE

The Catholic League is attempting to weaken the power base of the anti-Catholic group, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), by challenging its status as a legitimate charity. The league’s initiative was triggered by a newspaper report that said the pro-abortion entity was eligible to receive funds from the Connecticut State Employees’ Campaign for Charitable Giving. Here’s how it happened.

In June, it was reported that the Connecticut State Employees’ Campaign Committee was considering an appeal of a ruling by the state’s Commission for Human Rights and Opportunities to bar participation of the Boy Scouts in its charitable giving program; it was alleged that the Scouts discriminate against homosexuals and should therefore be ineligible. The Boy Scouts challenged this motion.

The program allows state employees the opportunity to contribute to charitable groups. Lawyers for the Scouts filed suit in federal court asking that the group be permitted to rejoin the charitable giving list. In the course of this probe, it was revealed that CFFC is on the approved list of charities. Upon learning of this, we immediately contacted the media registering our misgivings. Here is a copy of the text of our statement to the media:

“The Catholic League is making a formal appeal to the Connecticut State Employees’ Campaign Committee to drop

Catholics for a Free Choice from its eligibility list. Because this bogus group is listed as a qualified group by the Independent Charities of America, we will appeal to them as well.

“In 1993, and again in 2000, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) have charged that Catholics for a Free Choice is not an authentic Catholic voice. For example, in a statement last month by NCCB president Bishop Joseph A. Fiorenza, he said ‘the group’s [CFFC] activity is directed to rejection and distortion of Catholic teaching about the respect and protection due to defenseless unborn human life.’

Moreover, he argued that CFFC ‘promotes positions contrary to the teaching of the Church as articulated by the Holy See and the NCCB.’

“There is no way that any state program would allow Jews for Jesus the right to participate, and neither should Catholics for a Free Choice be allowed. Indeed, whatever can be said of Jews for Jesus, few would accuse it of sponsoring bigotry. The same is not true of Catholics for a Free Choice—it is expressly anti-Catholic. Ergo, it is unethical to award it state funds.”

The media reaction to our news release was instantaneous. More important, we are happy to report that one of the last decisions made by the Diocese of Bridgeport before Bishop Edward M. Egan left to become the Archbishop of New York was to support us in this effort.

As readers of *Catalyst* know, CFFC is a group the Catholic League has long considered a mortal enemy of the Catholic Church, which is precisely why we will never let up on them.

FUNDING FOR “POPE AND WITCH” HURT NEA

The Catholic League’s recent criticism of federal funds being used to support an anti-Catholic play was used as a reason to deny more money to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

This past spring the league denounced NEA support for the Dario Fo play, “The Pope and the Witch.” The play is a vicious attack on the pope, priests and nuns written by a Catholic-bashing communist. So when the NEA was looking for an increase in its budget, some congressmen sought to block the increase by citing monies distributed to the Irondale Ensemble Project and the Theater for the New City Foundation; the former performed the play and the latter hosted the event.

Congressman Tom DeLay had this to say: “When a group takes federal dollars it must not pervert that subsidy by supporting groups that directly attack the religious beliefs and cultural values of a large segment of Americans. Congress can’t remain neutral on the sidelines while the NEA is funding groups that subsidize vicious, bigoted productions.”

Similarly, Congressman Joseph Pitts cited the Fo play saying, “It depicts the Pope called John Paul II, as a heroin addicted paranoid advocating birth control and legalization of drugs. As long as this type of funding is done by NEA, we need to send them a signal and give them the modest cut of 2 percent.”

Though the NEA’s budget was not trimmed, it did not get the increase that its supporters sought. And that is a direct result of the league’s public outrage at this play and the willingness of sympathetic congressmen to cite our involvement.

“TONIGHT SHOW” MOCKS CATHOLICISM

After receiving literally scores of complaints—via phone calls and e-mail—a copy of the May 19 edition of the “Tonight Show” with Jay Leno was obtained. What angered so many people about this show was a rendition of the Catholic-baiting song, “The Vatican Rag,” performed by actor Dennis Franz and five other actors. Four of the characters were dressed as bishops, twirling huge rosary beads, and one played Pope John Paul II. The lyrics of the song contains verses such as “Try playin’ it safer, drink the wine and chew the wafer,” and “Two, four, six, eight, time to transubstantiate.”

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the league’s position in a news release:

“Jay Leno called a few years ago to apologize for a skit we charged was over the line. He told me that each year he does some 11,000 jokes and that sometimes he makes mistakes. Fair enough. But as I explained to Jay, we make distinctions between ‘Sister Act’ type humor and that which deals with the Eucharist and other aspects of Catholicism that are central to our religion. Apparently, he still doesn’t get it.”

“OVERGROWN CATHOLIC

SCHOOLGIRL"?

Linda Chavez is a brilliant commentator and a committed Catholic; she serves on the league's board of advisors. She recently quit the TV talk show, "To the Contrary," after being personally insulted by host Bonnie Erbe. In doing so, she followed the lead of Kate O'Beirne, also of our advisory board, who found the incivility of the show to be too much.

In some quarters, unless a certain line is towed, the results can be damning. Here is what happened to Chavez. The subject was the Million Mom March, a pro-gun control crusade endorsed by Erbe. Chavez broke ranks with the reigning orthodoxy by saying that she recently brought a gun at a gun show. She then explained, "If you're someone like me, who lives out in a rural area—if someone breaks into my house and wants to murder or rape me or steal all of my property, it'll take half an hour for a policeman to get to me."

Erbe blew up and hit Chavez with a remark so sexist it would have brought down the wrath of the National Organization for Women had it been said by a male: "And if you look at the statistics, I would bet that you have a greater chance of being struck by lightening, Linda, than living where you live, and at your age, being raped."

What drew the attention of the Catholic League was the anti-Catholic slur that Erbe heaped on Chavez. She called her an "overgrown Catholic schoolgirl." All this from someone who fancies herself a walking beacon of enlightenment and tolerance.

We're glad Linda walked out on the show. No one needs to be subjected to this kind of abuse. But it only goes to show that when someone can't hold his own in an argument, invective, insult and incivility is all that's left.

If you would like to support Linda Chavez in this matter,

please write to Cari Stein, executive producer, "To the Contrary," Persephone Productions, 1825 K Street, N.W., Suite 900, Washington, D.C. 20006. Or call her at (202) 973-2066.

VANDAL SUSPECT ARRESTED

Brooklyn has been plagued with a long-series of vandalizing acts carried out against Catholic churches. Literally dozens of statues have been defaced or smashed, leaving Catholics who live in this New York borough wondering whether the police will ever be able to catch the guilty. On May 16, they did.

The suspect, Primus St. Croix, 33, told the authorities that he had smashed the statues with a sledge-hammer as a protest against idolatry. St. Croix said that God had told him to do this and that the Bible suggested to him that he should not worship graven images. He is a spiritual leader of a local group of Rastafarians.

The suspect is clearly a troubled individual who needs help. Unfortunately, those who have an agenda against the Catholic Church have unwittingly played into the hands of St. Croix. To be specific, St. Croix said that his attack on a statue of Pope Pius X at a Knights of Columbus building was motivated by his watching a critical documentary about Pope Pius XII. Good thing St. Croix didn't see "Dogma" or there might not be any statues left.