

LADY GAGA MIMICS MADONNA

Recently, musician Lady Gaga released an eight-minute music video for the song, "Alejandro." In the video Lady Gaga plays Madonna wannabe, squirming around half-naked with half-naked guys and abusing Catholic symbols—they're always Catholic symbols—while bleating out "Alejandro" enough times to drive one mad.

Throughout the video, the pop star occasionally dresses as a nun in a latex red habit, flashes the cross, swallows a rosary and manages to get raped by her S&M posse of men. Hence, the Madonna copy cat has now become the new poster girl for American decadence and Catholic bashing, *sans* the looks and talent of her role model.

After her video was negatively reviewed by scores across the entertainment world, Lady Gaga defended her video and described it as "a celebration of my love and appreciation for the gay community." But if this were the case, surely she could have done so without offending Catholic sensibilities.

Like Madonna, Lady Gaga was raised Catholic and then morphed into something totally unrecognizable. In a recent interview with Larry King, the lapsed Catholic said, "I suppose you could say I'm a quite religious woman that is very confused about religion."

Saying she is confused is quite an understatement. In any event, we hope that she finds her way back home. In the meantime, Catholics will settle for her treating us like Muslims.

LOUIS C.K. : POPE RAPES BOYS

During a recent episode of the Comedy Central program, “The Daily Show with Jon Stewart,” comedian Louis C.K. concluded his interview by noting there were certain words that he could not utter on his new show “Louie” that began airing on FX in June. After offering a few examples of the verboten lexicon, he babbled out the following: “I was going to say that the pope f**** boys...” [The obscenity was bleeped out.]

It truly is a sign of cultural atrophy that so many of today’s comedians cannot exhibit humor save by insulting someone or using vulgarities. Louis C.K. is a case in point. Absent real talent, he resorts to what comes naturally to him—he descends into the gutter for laughter. Now he has decided to accuse Pope Benedict XVI of child rape.

The Catholic League appreciates debating adults, but when it comes to debating adolescents we have no interest. Which is why debating this guy would be a waste of time.

It is no surprise, however, that this gross offense was carried on a network known for two things: (a) trashing Christians with impunity and (b) censoring any offense against Muslims.

BEHAR EMBRACES GESTAPO TACTICS

In late June, a story broke in Belgium regarding the raid of Catholic Church offices by Belgian police who were searching for evidence that might have been hidden in relation to the

priestly sexual abuse of minors. Unsurprisingly, “The View’s” Joy Behar had no problem with the Gestapo-like seizure.

If the Brownshirts had created a playbook, the Belgian police would have executed it to the tee. The police detained the present bishops for over nine hours while they snooped high and low—even going so far as to drill into the tombs of two deceased cardinals—trying to get anything they could to indict the Belgian Church.

This raid was conducted despite the recent efforts of the committee set up by the Belgian bishops to investigate claims of priestly sexual abuse. The police claimed that the reason behind the operation was that they had received a formal accusation that there was information being hidden by the Belgian Church. But the way that the police carried out this search smacked of an agenda.

Of course, the women of “The View” had to chime in on this story, but as usual their commentary left much to be desired. Behar, a regular contributor to Catholic-bashing, chirped, “If you’re [the Church] not going to be forthcoming with the info, then the cops are going to come in and get it.” Whoopi Goldberg’s feeble attempt to defend the Vatican—saying that it was making strides regarding the abuse of minors—was nullified by her statement that the Church “can’t be surprised that they’re [the cops] going to come in” if they are stonewalled.

It is evident that these ladies don’t mind the Belgian police goose-stepping through Church files. But they would be the first to cry foul had a Planned Parenthood clinic been raided due to an accusation that it was hiding information regarding the number of statutory rape cases that enter. Therein lies their duplicity.

When Pope Benedict XVI addressed the Belgian incident he said that he hoped that justice would run its course by guaranteeing “the fundamental rights of people and

institutions.” But his words didn’t end there. He called the actions of the Belgian police “surprising and deplorable.” We couldn’t agree more.

CHURCH-STATE ISSUES SURROUND GRADUATIONS

Every year there is some sort of controversy regarding religion at high school graduations. Whether it be a valedictorian prayer or a graduation ceremony held in a church, the separation of church and state crowd always seem to have something to gripe about. This year was no different.

In Greenwood, Indiana students at Greenwood High School voted to have a prayer recited at the graduation ceremony, but the class valedictorian opposed the vote. With the help of the ACLU of Indiana, the student filed a lawsuit claiming that the vote violated the separation of church and state. Eventually, the U.S. district judge presiding over the case ruled that the prayer did indeed violate the First Amendment. Despite the ruling, the graduating class’ president thanked God during her speech to a roar of applause.

The ACLU of Montana asked the Board of Regents at Montana State University (MSU)-Northern to apologize for the prayers that were offered during the school’s graduation. Once again the prayers were viewed as a violation of separation of church and state. By allowing the prayer, the ACLU said that MSU-Northern had “a lack of respect for its students, faculty and staff...”

In California, Exeter Union High School buckled to the pressure applied by Americans United for Separation of Church

and State, the Anti-Defamation League and the Freedom From Religion Foundation by not allowing a student vote on whether or not to have a prayer at graduation. Instead of a prayer the school officials held a moment of silence.

The school district in New Haven, Connecticut handed graduating students their diplomas, without the phrase “year of our Lord” on the document. The superintendent said that the phrase was removed so as to not offend anyone. When asked to address this issue, Bill Donohue said: “It is unconscionable. Attempts to scrub clean any reference to our founding is a disservice to the students and their community. And to base this decision, in part, on the need not to ‘offend anyone,’ is disingenuous—it offends beyond belief the vast majority of Americans. This is political correctness gone mad.”

The strangest case came from Enfield, Connecticut. After a U.S. district judge ruled that a graduation ceremony at a local mega-church would violate the First Amendment, the board of education voted to appeal the ruling; the appellate court will hear the case next year. What made this so strange was that you had a public institution fighting to have its ceremony in a church following the ruling from a federal judge declaring it unconstitutional.

It will be interesting to see how this case pans out. One thing is for certain: you can bet that the Catholic League will be following it closely.

NEW YORK STATE ABUSE BILL

DIES

For the fifth consecutive year, a bill that would amend the statute of limitations for sexually abused minors has died in the New York State legislature. Unlike other years, this year's bill covered public institutions, as well as private ones like the Catholic Church.

Predictably, because the legislation included public schools, the bill was met with strong opposition from unions representing the public school establishment.

This is a victory for civil liberties and a loss for the vindictive forces constantly seeking to plunder the Catholic Church.

R.I.P.

We recently found out that we lost one of our most loyal members on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.

Monsignor William McKay was ordained May 7, 1949 at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois. After making his mark in Chicago, he took his considerable talents to Arizona, first in San Manuel, then Tucson, and finally in the Diocese of Phoenix; he was the founding pastor of All Saints in Mesa.

As one of his friends and greatest supporters, Margie Miranda, put it, Msgr. McKay was the Real St. Patrick!

LEXICON OF DEATH

Joseph A. Varacalli, Ph.D.

***John Paul II: Confronting the Language Empowering the Culture of Death* by William Brennan. Sapientia Press, 2008. Available on Amazon.com**

Language both shapes and is shaped by society and its social movements, organizations, and individuals. To this must be added the reality of “power”: just who and what has the ability to generate language whose message will be widely accepted and therefore disproportionately shape civilization and the consciousness of the majority of individuals?

William Brennan’s excellent and most recent volume, *John Paul II: Confronting the Language Empowering the Culture of Death*, makes clear the literally “life and death” consequences of the role that language plays in society and everyday life “for the construction and transmission of both life-denying and life-affirming definitions of the more vulnerable and marginalized individuals in today’s postmodern, technologically driven, hedonistic, and nihilistic world.” The author’s book convincingly analyses the late Pope John Paul II’s “two-pronged strategy in countering a burgeoning culture of death that is engulfing an increasing number and range of victims.” The first part of the strategy is “to employ sometimes graphic but always authentic terminology in stripping away the litany of euphemisms constructed to obscure the destructive practices used against the victims.” The second is to replace them “with a wealth of life-affirming designations founded on the Judeo-Christian ethic of equal and intrinsic value for all human lives whatever their status, condition, or stage of development.”

Making reference to *The Gospel of Life*, Brennan proceeds through the main body of his must-read book to demonstrate how

the language of what John Paul II termed the "culture of death" is promoted by a "vast network of complicity which reaches out to include international institutions, foundations, and associations" that Catholic social thought refers to as examples of "structures of sin." This network includes sectors of the powerful realms of medicine, commerce, politics, law, and ideology, all fomenting the destruction of innocent human life while masking it with duplicitous language (e.g. "freedom of choice," "quality of life," "problem pregnancy," "disease," "humane medical service," "medical procedure," "health care service," "death selection and death control," "mercy killing," "biological material," "tissue," "parasite," "non-person," "sub-human," "borderline functional people," "embryonic reduction," "therapeutic cloning," among a host of other euphemisms). This volume builds upon the insights provided in a previous work of importance by the same author, *Dehumanizing the Vulnerable: When Word Games Take Lives*. (My review of Brennan's earlier work was published in *Language and Faith*, the 1996 Proceedings of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars.)

The many themes discussed by Brennan also brought to mind some words given at the retirement party of my late mentor, Monsignor George A. Kelly, that personally changed the course of my own Catholic apostolate and led to my involvement with a host of Catholic institutions devoted to the promotion of Catholic education and Catholic social thought. Riveted into my consciousness are the words uttered by the good Monsignor "that he would never respect Catholic academics who just write; in order to change the world one has to build social institutions." While ultimately costing me many academic publications, I immediately recognized that my mentor was correct. My response was to become involved in institution building activities with the Society of Catholic Social Scientists and the Nassau Community College Center for Catholic Studies, in addition to stepping up my support for such vital associations like the Fellowship of Catholic

Scholars, The Cardinal Newman Society and The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, among others.

What's the connection between Brennan's emphasis on language and my own on Catholic institution building and support? It is that in order to be effective, language requires a base of social support. Put another way, and despite the reality that the Magisterium of the Catholic Church is on the right side of all the raging arguments over the direction of contemporary civilization and has contained within its religious and intellectual heritage an impressive array of linguistic concepts and ideas, it is losing ground in the world-wide culture war with the social forces promoting the "culture of death." How can it be that the vision of the Catholic Church, so reasonable and balanced, so eloquent and logical in expression, which possesses the Truth and pronounces a life affirming morality, be either rejected or ignored by substantial portions of the globe, especially by a Western civilization that the Catholic Church was so influential in creating? Why doesn't the perennial reality of the "natural law," written into the heart and "itself the measure of culture and the condition ensuring that man does not become the prisoner of any of his cultures" always convince civilizations and people to embrace, with both mind and heart, a "culture of life?" Why haven't the forms of argumentation of brilliant thinkers like Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI been more successfully received?

Is the answer to these hard questions solely to be found in the crystallization of an imposing "culture of death" supported by powerful institutional arrangements? If the existence of the latter is at least part of the answer, the next question, conversely, is "where are the structures and institutions, Catholic or otherwise, that support the 'culture of life?'"

I suspect that a significant part of the answer as to why the culture of death is spreading and the culture of life is

receding lies in the relative failure of the Catholic Church in two areas: 1) in creating and maintaining social institutions that can and do serve as effective carriers of both the natural law and Catholic social thought and 2) in effectively forging coalitions with groups that share the Church's vision on crucial issues of morality and public policy. In short, Catholic culture and the natural law require social movements and organizations that support its plausibility in the minds of individuals, especially those who are now, or will be eventually, part of the contemporary cultural elite. While *The Gospel of Life* is certainly correct in claiming that, objectively speaking, "no word has the power to change the reality of things," it is nonetheless sociologically necessary to provide the supporting institutional and organizational scaffolding to guide individuals to recognize and appropriate Truth.

Brennan brings up the issue of institution building, at least indirectly, by making reference to the Potsdam Conference convened by the Allies after the surrender of Germany in World War II where Stalin infamously and sarcastically quipped, "How many divisions has the Pope?" Stalin was mistaken, of course, in ignoring the very real religious and cultural authority of Pope Pius XII and the Catholic Church at the time. However, I believe that *Time* magazine writer, Paul Gray, is equally wrong when he stated, in his 1994 "Man of the Year" article, that "John Paul needs no divisions. He is an army of one, and his empire is both as ethereal and ubiquitous as the soul..." I think it far more accurate to state that while no military and other temporal powers are needed, the Papacy and the Catholic Church require powerful and organized legions (or as Stalin would put it, divisions) of individuals who willingly and lovingly accept the Catholic worldview and actualize it in both their everyday lives and promote it in both public and civil life.

In order for the Catholic worldview and the natural law to

acquire the required socially institutionalized “accent on reality,” the Catholic Church and her ecumenical and political allies must weaken significantly the present monopoly held by secularists in the public square of modern life. In the contemporary United States, this monopoly is most manifest in government, corporate capitalism, higher education, the mass media, and the arts. This monopoly sets the stage for the widespread “secular sabotage” taking place today and so clearly analyzed by Bill Donohue in his latest book of the same name. In other words, the social institutions of the public square must include at least a fair representation of serious Catholics and other orthodox religionists if one is to expect the natural law to have a chance to compete successfully in an open market place of competing ideas and linguistic formulations.

A presupposition, in turn, for a greater authentic Catholic presence in public life assumes that the present array of Catholic institutions (in education, health care, social welfare, catechesis, etc.) be purged of, at worst, the widespread dissent against and, at best, the widespread ignorance of, the Catholic religious, moral, and intellectual tradition that has rendered the reception of authentic Catholic social thought in American and world civilization almost totally impotent. (For more on this, see my book *Bright Promise, Failed Community: Catholics and the American Public Order*.) Too many nominally Catholic professors, teachers, bureaucrats, and social activists employed within the Church’s network of institutions employ similar exercises in semantic gymnastics to those of the outright secularists as discussed by Brennan in refusing to follow John Paul II’s linguistic injunction in truth-telling, i.e., “to call things by their proper name.”

Along with all others, Catholics are active producers of language and ideas. The point, however, is to make sure that the language and ideas created and used by Catholics and non-

Catholics alike reflect an objective moral order whose ultimate author is God and not those that reflect the flawed products of men who would think of themselves as gods. The necessary task in evangelization requires, then, using the language of the culture of life as found throughout the official Catholic worldview along with strengthening and rebuilding the Catholic organizational network that supports such a culture of life—brick by brick, parish by parish, association by association, social movement by social movement, and, yes, division by division.

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