

Gaming Interests Declare Open Season on the Church in Massachusetts

The *Boston Globe* took pleasure in running this cartoon by Szep in its April 14 issue.

For League response see Massachusetts Chapter president Dan Flatley's letter below.



Catholic Church opposition to legalized casino gambling in Massachusetts has made the Church a target of opportunity for the media of the commonwealth. The League's Massachusetts Chapter has been countering these attacks whenever and wherever possible. Some samples:

Letter to the Boston Globe

Response to Szep cartoon reproduced above.

Paul Szep's sordid history of Catholic-bashing has surfaced

again with yet another mean-spirited attack on Cardinal Law [cartoon above].

Since the 1970s, Szep has displayed a relentless opportunism in savaging the Catholic Church and her leaders. In doing so he has helped to create the climate where the kind of anti-Catholic bigotry prevalent in the 19th century has again become respectable in Boston.

Interestingly, Szep does not demonstrate a comparable zeal in ridiculing spiritual leaders of his own religious background, or of other denominations.

Cardinal Law's position on gambling is long-established and well-known. The attempt to impute hypocrisy to the Cardinal speaks more to Szep's visceral hostility to Catholicism than it does to any alleged inconsistency by the Archbishop of Boston.

*Daniel T. Flatley,
President, Mass. Chapter*

Letter to *The Patriot Ledger*

Response to "Casino backers:

Clergy protecting their own games, " Apr1/12.

The insulting and bigoted remarks made by would-be casino owner Bartley Kelly about Cardinal Law and the state's Catholic bishops are one more indication of the desperate determination of the gaming industry to push aside anyone who would stand between them and the windfall profits they expect from the legalization of casino gambling.

It is hypocritical, though not surprising, that someone who would exploit human weakness for monetary gain would attribute financial motives to others. Kelly's comment not only displayed disrespect for Cardinal Law and contempt for the sensibilities of Catholics, but demonstrated the futility of moral persuasion toward those whose only interest is money.

Daniel T. Flatley,

Some Catholic Thoughts on the Holocaust

The letters on these two pages seek to address some issues raised by recent Holocaust-related events. Our knowledge of the important role played by the Catholic Church in rescuing Jews during World War II continues to grow. The Catholic League will continue to address this issue from time to time as new research becomes accessible.

Two recent contributions to this discussion include the studies of Rev. Zygmunt Zielinski and the efforts of Mrs. Bozena Urbanowicz-Gilbride.

Father Zielinski, a Polish priest, recently presented a paper which revealed details of thousands of Poles who died as the result of rescuees gone awry. Close to home, the tireless efforts of Mrs. Bozena Urbanowicz-Gilbride – whose story was told in our January-February issue – have been rewarded with a singular honor. On May 3, 1994 she received the Cavalier's Cross – the highest honor a Polish citizen can receive – for her extensive work in educating people about the suffering of Christians and Jews during the Holocaust and the heroism of the Polish people in the face of their Nazi oppressors.

To the Editor:

Like so many others in the media these days, *Newsday* finds it almost impossible to write an editorial about the Holocaust without somehow blaming the Catholic Church ["Coming Together," April 11]. Following the revisionists, *Newsday* charges that Pope Pius XII "could not summon up the courage or

conviction to issue more than a pale, general statement of mild disapproval."

If this were true, then why did Golda Meir, the editors of the *New York Times*, leading rabbis, the World Jewish Congress, and others, heap praise on Pius XII, both during and after the Holocaust, for his actions? And why did the chief rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli, convert to Catholicism after the war? In short it is a distortion of history to suggest that Pius XII did nothing while Jews, and others, suffered.

William A. Donohue

President

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights

[Published in *New York Newsday*, April 22, 1994.]

Dear Mr. Donohue:

At the very time the events dramatized in the movie, "Schindler's List" were taking place, I was in Auschwitz as a prisoner of Hitler's SS.

They sent me there in October, 1941 when most of the inmates were Polish Catholics like me. Many of them were priests and members of religious orders. In fact, Saint Maximilian Kolbe, the Polish priest canonized for offering his life to save another Auschwitz prisoner, was murdered there only two months before my arrival.

Oskar Schindler is now rightfully acclaimed for his heroic efforts on behalf of the Jews he saved. Hollywood spared no effort to make his story one of the most colossal extravaganzas ever.

Because I experienced much of the anguish and the trials to which St. Maximilian was subjected before his execution, I cannot help wondering if the motion picture industry would

consider him in its next Holocaust film. After all, both men acted to save people the Nazis planned to murder.

While Schindler took some risks in doing so, altruism may not have been his primary motive since he derived some financial benefit from it. But when Father Kolbe stepped forward and told the Nazi commandant of Auschwitz to take him in place of his fellow prisoner slated for execution, his only benefit was the knowledge he would carry out God's will by making the ultimate personal sacrifice of offering his life.

The contrast between these two men is stark. Schindler was a Nazi and an oppressor while St. Kolbe was a Catholic priest and a Pole. These two categories marked him, like the Jewish people, among Hitler's main priorities for liquidation. Only ten days before he invaded Poland, Hitler ordered his Nazis to kill "without pity all men, women and children of Polish race or language."

But because he was a priest and a Pole, I hold little hope he will be similarly remembered by the people in show business. He simply does not meet the standards Hollywood has set for a typical Holocaust hero. Even the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. has not found him acceptable for any recognition.

What troubles me about "Schindler's List" is the way it either ignores or misrepresents the tragedy of Poland's Catholics. As one of them, I can truly say we shared much of the suffering the Nazis inflicted upon the Jews even though it was not identical. Of the six million Polish citizens who perished after the German invasion, three million were Polish Jews and three million were Polish Christians.

Despite the fact the Nazis marked Jews and Poles for a similar fate, we frequently found it possible to assist and hide Jews escaping from the Germans. The help given became so widespread that the Nazis had to decree a death penalty for anyone in

Poland giving such aid. In no other country the Germans occupied was such a brutal order ever given. Yet, it is estimated as many as 50,000 Poles were executed for helping Jews. Israel expressed its gratitude by designating Poles as the largest group of rescuers at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Different audiences react in different ways to Holocaust films. As someone who survived 3 1/2 years of the terror at Auschwitz, whenever I see one I can only say, "St. Maximilian Kolbe, pray for us."

Sincerely yours,
Michael Preisler
Auschwitz #22213

An Open Letter to the Editor of NEWSWEEK

Dear Sir:

Once again I find myself appalled by the ease with which writers in the mainstream press are able to publish anti-Catholic slurs. Please read the opening part of your snippet under "Short Cuts," one entitled "Rome Remembers the Holocaust," through the eyes of your Catholic readers, if you can imagine doing so:

Maybe even the pope has been inspired by "Schindler's List." This week the Holy Father is hosting a concert that – amazingly – is the Vatican's first official commemoration of the 6 million Jews killed by Hitler.

Several questions come to mind. The first is, why is it that the Vatican is singled out as not until now having had an

official commemoration of the 6,000,000 Jews killed by Nazis? Has every other religious body on earth, including the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, the Church of England, every Sunni or Shi'ite organization, every Protestant denomination worldwide, all Northern Buddhist organizations headed by the Dalai Lama, every Zen group, all Native American shamanistic groups, or all of Shinto Japan, i.e., had such an event, the Vatican being, regretfully, the last?

If so, then your "amazingly" is justified. If not, then it isn't. In that case, one must simply categorize your writer's, and your editorial staff's, attitude toward the Vatican and the billion or so of us associated with it as being burdened with assumptions as ignorant and manners as bad as those of the rest of the all-too-prevalent Catholic-baiters in American society. This allies your thinking with that of such groups as the KKK, who routinely railed against Catholics as they did against blacks and Jews, and with about as much sense and accuracy.

A few more questions: isn't it really rather nice of the Vatican to commemorate the members of an entirely separate religion who died in what is simply another of mankind's countless horrific genocidal slaughters? Is this something that the Vatican or John Paul II are really called upon to do at all? No, it isn't. So why do you seize the opportunity to cheapen the gesture? And why do you and the popular American press in general not mention the millions of Catholics who were slaughtered in the Holocaust, as well? Why is this routinely overlooked? If these victims are also remembered at the Holy Father's concert, will you report that should you cover it?

Questions again: Do you really think John Paul II or any other Catholic of good conscience needs to be inspired by Schindler's List to jog our memories of the Holocaust? Not only did we lose our own millions, among them one saint that we know of (St. Maximilian Kolbe, one of many Catholic priests

and religious who died at Auschwitz) and one beata, the Blessed Edith Stein (also murdered at Auschwitz), but Oskar Schindler was Roman Catholic, albeit hardly a saint. There has been much musing in the press over what might have caused this apparently morally mediocre man to take the heroic and dangerous actions that he did, which on the face of it could gain him nothing of apparent value. However, I have never once seen mentioned the possibility that perhaps Schindler was troubled and motivated to do what he did because of the teachings of his Church, received earlier in life – a church which, in spite of an occasionally spotty history as an institution, has always offered many examples of and given support to those who are willing to rise above the general moral mediocrity and often downright evil of the world and show heroic virtue at whatever cost.

As for your accusation (and it is that) of a “50-year-silence,” which you make later in your piece, I think that if your writers would do a little digging around, they would find that Catholics and our Church, in print and by the spoken word, have not been accepting of the mass slaughter of the Holocaust or any other genocidal episodes directed against non-Catholics. Some examples of the latter, generally ignored by the American popular press, are the treatment by the English government of the Catholic Irish during the Famine years there, the treatment of Catholic priests and religious during the French Revolution, or the actions taken against Roman Catholics by communist governments around the world. Ukrainian Catholics, in particular, who belong to one of Rome’s accepted Eastern rites, like the Lebanese Maronite Catholics recently slaughtered in their Middle-Eastern church, can wax very verbal on this point. There was precious little Catholic silence while these were taking place (when, of course, we knew that they were, or that they were as bad as they were) or afterwards. The same is true of general Catholic sentiment regarding the treatment of European Jews during the Nazi reign of Germany. Jews did not go unaided by Catholics,

Jews alone did not die, and Jews did not die alone. There is simply no sense to be found in allying the leaders of the Roman Church with someone like Hitler, Pol Pot, or Idi Amin, as has frequently been done to the late Pope Pius XII, head of the Church during the Holocaust – the canard that lies behind your writer's snide piece, as we all recognize only too well. A coworker of mine imbued with such ideas, as the writer of your piece apparently is, recently railed at me out of the blue, for no other reason than that I am a notorious mass-attender and am therefore somehow "the enemy": "Why didn't the Pope stop the Holocaust?" My answer, which seems sensible, was "The Swiss Guards aren't trained for that." In short, this sort of thing doesn't wash if you look at the facts.

-Laura Peterson, Ph.D.

Massachusetts Chapter Banquet

The Massachusetts Chapter of the Catholic League will hold its 1994 Annual Award Banquet on Wednesday, November 2, 1994 at the Sheraton Tara Hotel in Braintree, Massachusetts. There will be a reception at 6:30p.m. followed by dinner at 7:00p.m. His Eminence Bernard Cardinal Law, Archbishop of Boston, will be among the honored guests.

Be It Resolved That...

A special thank you to Massachusetts Knights of Columbus State Deputy Kenneth Ryan (a Catholic League member who serves on

the chapter board) and the other state officers for the following resolution passed at this year's annual state convention:

WHEREAS: The Catholic League, founded in 1973 by Father Virgil Blum, is the largest Catholic civil rights organization and is dedicated to combating the rising tide of Catholic-bashing prevalent in America; and

WHEREAS: The League is supported only by the voluntary contributions of thousands of Catholics nationwide; and

WHEREAS: To continue focusing attention on anti-Catholic bigotry and fighting the medias tolerance of discrimination against Catholics, they need the support of every Catholic in America; be it

RESOLVED: That the Massachusetts State Council, meeting at the ninety-ninth Massachusetts State Convention held in Springfield, Massachusetts on April 30 and May 1, 1994, encourages every member of the Knights of Columbus to join in providing financial support to the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

-Ed. We couldn't have said it better ourselves. Thank you.

Pastoral Letter Cites Anti-Catholicism

In an outstanding pastoral letter titled "You Shall Be My Witnesses," Boston's Cardmal Bernard Law challenges the members of his flock to effectively witness their Christian faith as the Church approaches its third millenium. One

particularly good segment follows:

“The tension between Church and culture has increased in this past decade. In the past, even those who disagreed with the Church acknowledged with respect the validity of her role to offer our society a vision of life which everyone understood was intended for the common good. That has changed. There is an evident anti-Catholic bias that manifests itself constantly. The Church's refusal to bend her teaching to the ways of the world has escalated the attacks upon her. What once would have been veiled has become a blatant and mean-spirited prejudice. “

Philadelphia Chapter at Retreat House

Members of our Philadelphia Chapter are conducting one-hour presentations on the Catholic League every Saturday afternoon at the diocese's Malvern retreat house. Chapter Executive Director Jim Nolan reports that the presentations are well-received..