

OBAMA NIXES JESUS AT GEORGETOWN

When President Barack Obama spoke at Georgetown University in April, the White House requested that all religious symbols and signage that might appear as a backdrop to where the president was to speak be covered up. Georgetown acceded to the request and made sure that the symbol "IHS," a monogram of the name of Jesus Christ, was not in sight. A Georgetown official said the initial backdrop "wasn't high enough by itself to fully cover the IHS and cross above the GU seal and it seemed most respectful to have them covered so as not to be seen out of context."

The cowardice of Georgetown to stand fast on principle told us more than we need to know about what is going on there, but the bigger story is the audacity of the Obama administration to ask a religious school to neuter itself before the president spoke there.

No bishop who might speak at the White House would ever request a crucifix be displayed behind him. Moreover, the same church and state fanatics who go nuts every time a polling place is set up in the basement of a Catholic school were silent over this incident.

We noted that the president is in enough trouble with Catholics—over his pro-abortion executive orders and appointees, his position on embryonic stem cell research and his war on the conscience rights of healthcare workers—that it seemed almost suicidal for his administration to push the envelope as they did at Georgetown.

Following the president's Georgetown speech, the Catholic Left organization Catholic Democrats flagged the story on the homepage of its website. Although the group covered Obama's

speech, it never once mentioned that the White House requested to cover up Catholic iconography. Instead, the group praised his speech.

For Catholic Democrats to ignore the story about the White House's request is appalling. But it came as no surprise: in the May edition of *Catalyst*, Bill Donohue warned that the Catholic Left has lost its moorings. It's simply amazing that the Catholic Left has no shame.

CONSCIENCE RIGHTS IMPERILED?

When President Obama selected Dr. Eric Goosby to be the new U.S. global AIDS coordinator and director of the Emergency Plan for AIDS relief, we were a bit concerned. The problem with this selection wasn't so much Goosby as it was the pressure he would be under to deny conscience rights to those who work for such agencies as Catholic Relief Services. Moreover, we said that the progress made under the Bush Administration combating AIDS in Africa is now in jeopardy.

Dr. Mark R. Dybul was in charge of this office under President Bush. An openly gay man, he worked to insure the conscience rights for Catholic workers and made certain that abstinence programs were not gutted in the fight against AIDS. On January 9, he was told that he had been asked by President-elect Obama to stay on the job. But as soon as Obama was sworn in, Dybul was thrown out: the day after Hillary Clinton was confirmed as secretary of state, he was notified by her staff to find another job. Why? News reports show that Dybul was accused of working too closely with the Catholic Church. Goosby's name was then floated, but because it seemed like a rush to judgment, many complained that the process was unfair. So

Goosby's appointment was held up.

Right now, agencies like Catholic Relief Services can opt out of programs that provide for condom distribution. But under Goosby, this may change. He will be under enormous pressure by radical feminists, gay activists and assorted sexologists to force faith-based organizations to get on board or get out. But Goosby should take note that a recent poll found that a great majority of Americans favor conscience right protection for health care providers.

The scientific evidence on AIDS prevention in Africa shows that nothing succeeds better than partner reduction; the Catholic Church has led the way in this effort. As recently demonstrated by Helen Epstein in *The Invisible Cure: Africa, the West and the Fight Against AIDS*, partner reduction has been more effective than condom use in fighting AIDS in Africa. Yet condom worship continues unabated, especially in the White House.

DR. LAURA GETS IT WRONG

On her April 24 radio show, Dr. Laura Schlessinger engaged a caller on the subject of priestly sexual abuse. Dr. Laura said she was "stunned" that the penalties for abuse "were not more severe." She continued by saying, "So because of that I no longer—you have not heard me in all of these years tell anybody to send their kids to Catholic school, where in the past I did all the time."

We didn't lose faith in Dr. Laura simply because she was not up to speed on this issue, but we couldn't sit back and indulge her cluelessness. Quite frankly, as anyone who has read the John Jay Reports on this subject knows, the vast

majority of abuse took place between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s, at the height of the sexual revolution. The bill may have come due in 2002—the year the *Boston Globe* exposed the Boston Archdiocese as the epicenter of the problem—but this hardly justifies the conclusion that nothing has been done to correct the situation in recent times.

Indeed, we challenged Dr. Laura to name a single institution—private or public—that has instituted a “zero tolerance” policy, save for the Catholic Church. Every staff person and volunteer who works for the Church has had to undergo the most rigorous training seminars on the subject of the sexual abuse of minors, something unmatched by any other organization. Indeed, if Dr. Laura wanted to know which institution is responsible for the lion’s share of this problem today, she would have to look no further than the public schools. And then she might investigate why so little reform has been instituted. It goes without saying that it is the teachers unions that thwart these changes.

Here is the number of credible accusations made against the over 40,000 priests in the last few years: 2008 (10); 2007 (4); 2006 (14); 2005 (9).

We ended our news release saying: “Dr. Laura’s moral compass remains one of the finest indices of sanity in the nation. Indeed, we are big fans of hers. But she does need to correct the record.”

SEX ABUSE IN THE SCHOOLS: GO

AFTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS ONLY

Rev. Anthony Evans, president of the National Black Church Initiative, supports a bill by New York State Assemblywoman Margaret Markey that addresses the sexual abuse of minors. In the April 22 edition of *Newsday*, he blamed the Catholic Church for opposing it. Evans said, "It is a shame we have to fight against the [Catholic] church in this. It breaks my heart."

The day before, State Senator Thomas Duane explained why he is in favor of the Markey bill. He said that "for one year after the passage of the bill, adults who were abused years or even decades ago as children could bring charges against the abusers...Not allowing victims to do that is a continued perpetration [sic] against them."

There are two bills before the New York State Assembly that address the sexual abuse of minors. The legislation sponsored by Assemblywoman Markey and one by Assemblyman Vito Lopez. The Markey bill leaves unamended the 90-day period wherein a minor who was abused in a public school must file suit; it opens the door for one year to those victimized in a Catholic school to file suit, even if the crime occurred decades ago. The Lopez bill treats both public and private institutions equally and does not discriminate between the two.

We said that it is a shame that Rev. Evans and Sen. Duane are interested in punishing Catholic schools while exempting public schools. So we decided to take a different approach. When speaking to the media, Bill Donohue said, "Since they [Evans and Duane] maintain that the Markey bill applies equally to public and Catholic schools, Duane should introduce a bill that would simply reverse the rules: give those who were abused in a Catholic school 90 days to file a claim, and put no time limit on those who were abused in a public school. A reverse Markey bill would also make more sense: most of the abuse has taken place in the public schools."

After weeks of pounding away at the Markey bill, *Newsday* finally seemed to catch our point. On April 26, in a Sunday editorial, the paper endorsed—with modification—the Lopez bill. It called Markey’s proposed legislation an “ill-advised bill” that would “set a dangerous precedent of allowing the emotions of the times to target a specific group or religion.”

Although this endorsement came as a surprise to us, we were grateful to the newspaper for its support. Bill Donohue wrote in a published letter to the editor: “The shame of it is that the Markey bill’s inherent bias is still not seen by every reasonable person as an outrage. Thanks to *Newsday*, the mask is coming off.”

It wasn’t only *Newsday* that came out in support of the Lopez bill, but it gained momentum in the Orthodox Jewish community as well. Even Gov. David Paterson came out in favor of it.

As this issue of *Catalyst* went to press, both the Markey and Lopez bills are still pending in the Assembly.

AMICUS BRIEF FILED

The Catholic League has filed an amicus brief in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals case, *Association of Christian Schools International, et al. v. Roman Stearns, et al.* We are supporting students who are being denied credit by the University of California for high school courses in which religious viewpoints are discussed.

Drafted by the American Center for Law and Justice, the brief argues that this discrimination is a violation of the First Amendment because it demonstrates hostility toward religion.

The state's action is unjustified since the school system cannot establish that the courses in question cause the students to be any less prepared for college level work.

The brief further contends that such discrimination, in excluding students who have studied such courses, defeats the university system's goal of diversity. Finally, there is no case law to support these actions, which do not further a compelling state interest.

The categories of courses that are disfavored include those that primarily address one religion, particularly Christianity; those that address the Holocaust's impact on the Jewish faith from a Jewish perspective; those that state God has influenced and directed human history; courses that address morality, ethics and social justice from a religious viewpoint; courses that address religious elements in a non-religious subject matter; and courses that address religious viewpoints only in one section of the course.

Our brief cites numerous examples of rejected courses. Here are some brief descriptions:

- A "History of Christianity" class was rejected even though it not only addressed Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox viewpoints, but also the Jewish roots of Christianity and the impact of Islam in the Middle Ages
- A "World History" course was rejected because it presupposed a Christian God created and governed the world
- A class called "Moral Theology: Introduction to Ethics" was rejected for addressing ethics from a Catholic perspective even though it also examined many other ethical viewpoints, such as those of the Greeks, Buddhists, Muslims and indigenous peoples
- A course, modeled after a local university's class, called "Theology in Literature, Film and Music" was rejected for

being too narrow theologically despite students being assigned a variety of movies to analyze including “Schindler’s List,” “The Color Purple,” and “My Big Fat Greek Wedding”

- A “Women’s Studies” class with readings that included Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, Anita Diamant’s *The Red Tent* and Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz’s *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* was rejected because some of the readings had a Catholic viewpoint

In contrast, the University approves courses that focus on a particular culture, such as Chinese civilization, or certain topics, like women’s history or African American history, as long as religious perspectives are absent.

A decision is expected by the end of the year.

ORLANDO FRINGE FESTIVAL BASHES CATHOLICS

The Catholic League has been criticized for bringing attention to movies like “Angels & Demons” by exposing its anti-Catholic agenda. With that movie, we felt it was important to educate the public about its myths, smears and lies. The record needed to be corrected. But not every offense is of the same caliber. We determine our approach to each anti-Catholic event on a case-by-case basis. Some offenses are not deserving of public attention. The Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival is a classic example of the league not taking the bait to give free publicity to a marginal festival.

Prior to the opening of last month’s festival, we received an email about one of its productions, “Sister Mary Ignatius

Explains It All for You.” We began an investigation and quickly realized that the director of the show wanted us to publicly object to the notoriously anti-Catholic play so that he could increase ticket revenue. We decided not to call attention to the play nor did we issue a statement to the media. Instead we contacted the State of Florida Division of Cultural Affairs and the Orange County Arts and Cultural Affairs; these entities provided public money for the festival, which also staged “Corpus Christi.”

We pointed out that we are fully aware that fringe festivals feature edgy material but noted that such events should not include bigoted productions. In addition, one of the purported aims of this annual festival is to promote diversity. By definition, that would not include showcasing intolerance. We asked for an explanation as to why public money was being used to promote Catholic-bashing plays. We have not received a response as of press time.

We used this approach so that these government agencies know that Catholics object to taxpayer dollars funding anti-Catholic bigotry with the expectation that there will be a more careful review of grants in the future. We were able to make our point without giving unwarranted publicity to those who are admittedly on the fringe. We say to those bigots: stay there!

HATE SPEECH

Below is a small sample of some of the vitriol that has been directed towards Pope Benedict XVI and the Catholic Church over the past few months. All comments appear in their original form:

Irene Monroe, Huffington Post, April 1: "But when you have a pope more invested in doctrinal debates than personal suffering, and more invested in exerting his ecclesiastical power in defrocking dissident theologians than his priestly flock of sex predators, then it's easy to comprehend why the decades-long pleas and petitions from Catholic parishioners—worldwide—to Pope Benedict XVI to do something never made anything happen."

Roseanne Barr, "Roseanne World Blog," April 3: "I am starting to think that any parent who takes their kids to catholic churches from now on should lose custody. Taking your kid where you know sex offenders hang out is inexcusable!!!"

Leonce Gaiter, Huffington Post, April 3: "Now, with evidence that the current Pope enabled the rape of children by his priests through inaction, it is appropriate to examine the Church's suitability to dictate morality and spirituality to the rest of the world."

Rosie O'Donnell, "Rosie O'Donnell Show," April 5: "I mean, if there was an organization, let's just say the- you know, the- I don't want to say that, but the Boys' Club, or one of the- you know, had the history of child abuse- you know, child torture and rape that the Catholic Church has, would you ever give money to the Boys' Club or the Girls' Club?...I'm saying that, to support an organization that- at the top of the infrastructure, are people willing to ignore the mass child abuse and torture and sexual molestation of its own constituents. I mean, it's almost like when you read about- you know, cults, Jonestown and all these cults- that they allow- you know, sexual perversity and sexual behavior."

Andy Ostroy, Huffington Post, April 7: "The Church remains cavalier in its denial and arrogant defense of itself and of its failed self-policing mechanisms. It acts as if it's above the law and shrouds itself in secrecy, and its predatory monsters are afforded leniency and forgiveness no other common

criminal would receive.”

Cindy Rodriguez, Huffington Post, April 9: “The Church not only attracts sexual deviants, it protects them.”

Derek Beres, Huffington Post, April 14: “If only these men would put down the bible and pick up a biology book, they would understand that forcing any man into celibacy as theological mandate for righteousness is physically demeaning and emotionally damaging.”

Michele Somerville, Huffington Post, April 26: “The pimping of children and the readiness to sacrifice them on the altar of Vatican public relations, the fear and distrust of women, and the compulsory celibacy for priests—are all interrelated. They’re bundled in the twisted, deep-rooted tangle of the erotic pathology that burns within and radiates outward from the College of Cardinals, pitting the Church’s venality against the gentleness of the Christ in its people. The Vatican’s megalomaniacal dysfunctions and failures of imagination—which take the forms of misogyny, homophobia, anti-Semitism, and a readiness to victimize its most vulnerable—are inextricably bound; they are low-hanging fruit of the poisoned tree of the Vatican’s commitment to ruling by fear, when it should be guiding by love.”

Christopher Hitchens, Newsweek, May 3: “The case for bringing the head of the Catholic hierarchy within the orbit of law is easily enough made. All it involves is the ability to look at a naked emperor and ask the question ‘Why?’ Mentally remove his papal vestments and imagine him in a suit, and Joseph Ratzinger becomes just a Bavarian bureaucrat who has failed in the only task he was ever set—that of damage control.”

Alex Wilhelm, Huffington Post, May 5: “It does not appear that there was a time that the Church was effective at preventing child abuse—this is a problem that reaches back to the earliest days of its formation and practice.”