

FABRICATING OPPOSITION TO JOHN PAUL II

The worldwide reaction to the beatification of John Paul II, from all quarters, was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. But one would never have known this if one's bible were the *New York Times*. Two days before the beatification, it reported that it "has become intensely polarizing." With good reason, it offered no survey data: polls showed 90 percent of Catholics approve and so do most non-Catholics. So on what basis did it make such an extraordinary statement? Amazingly, it didn't even quote a single individual or organization! All it did was fall back on the proverbial, "critics say" line of journalism.

John Allen, normally reliable, wasn't much better. He said, "I am aware that there's some ambivalence" about the process. Sure he is aware of some consternation—he obviously reads the newspaper he writes for, namely, the *National Catholic Reporter* (it has become so violently critical of the Catholic Church that it has undermined its own credibility as a serious Catholic organ). As evidence to support the "ambivalence" thesis, he cited an angry ex-nun. What else is new?

So who else thinks John Paul unworthy? Well, we have the ultra-leftist *Nation* magazine, the near-defunct *Time* magazine and the ever-critical Huffington Post. Then there was the usual stable of carping Catholics: Maureen Dowd, James Carroll and Rev. Richard McBrien (the pope had "a terrible record").

One final note. In making his case against John Paul II, author Jason Berry said that when accusations were made against the disgraced late priest, Father Maciel (who admittedly hoodwinked the pope), Bill Donohue "responded immediately with a letter to the *Courant*, scoffing at the allegations." Berry knew this was a lie. How so? Because Donohue had previously provided Berry with the evidence.

What Donohue contested was whether, as alleged, Pope Pius XII not only gave Maciel the okay to have sex with seminarians, he recommended doing so for the purpose of relieving “physical pain.” Donohue said, “If Berry believes that, he needs to see a shrink.”

“THERE BE DRAGONS” IS A HIT

Prior to its release in May, Tom Arkin of the Catholic League previewed the film “There Be Dragons” and found it inspiring. Here is his review:

Academy-Award-nominated director Roland Joffe’s film, “There Be Dragons,” is a fictional account based on the life of the canonized saint Father Josemaria Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei.

Roberto is a middle-aged Spanish-American journalist assigned to write a book about Father Jose. Set in Madrid in the mid-1970s, he tries to reach out to his ailing father, Manolo, from whom he has become bitterly estranged. Roberto courteously telephones his father only to be hung up on when he broaches the subject of the priest. Intrigued, the son learns not only that his father knows a great deal about Father Jose, but also that they were boyhood friends before parting ways during the Spanish civil war of the 1930’s.

The bulk of the movie is a flashback. The lives of Father Jose and Manolo are traced from their boyhood to the end of hostilities in 1938; it is narrated by Manolo, who is dictating his words onto tape for his son. The word “dragons” is used throughout the film to denote the effects of experiences during that violent time that threatened to

destroy the priest's faith, and all but decimated Manolo's.

The main theme is the importance of faith and forgiveness in defeating one's own "dragons," and the film takes great pains to show that it is Roberto's research into Father Jose's life that provides the great opportunity for father and son to settle lifelong differences.

It was extremely refreshing to see a movie showing priests in a favorable light, and Joffe deserves praise for doing so.

Of the movie, Bill Donohue said, "The Catholic League heartily recommends this film!"

"VITO BONAFACCI" SENDS THE RIGHT MESSAGE

CAVU Pictures recently released its faith-based independent film "Vito Bonafacci." The film is about a successful and wealthy Italian American Catholic businessman who has a crisis of faith. Driven by a deeply personal calling to create a film that glorifies God, first-time filmmaker John Martoccia helms this daring independent production. Actor Paul Borghese gives an intense and deeply moving performance as Vito Bonafacci, a man who wakes up to the reality that he has turned his back on God for the pleasures of the material world.

In a dream, Bonafacci's mother appears imploring her son to abandon his pursuit of greed and materialism. "Beware of the false gods of money, power, status and pleasure," she warns, and instead "return to the true path of life." When he awakes,

his vision propels him to explore the meaning of faith and the role of religion in tempering one's soul. As the echo of his mother's words fill his thoughts, he reaches out to his local priest to begin the renewal of his Catholic faith.

Bill Donohue recommends the movie as a much-needed cultural antidote to the contemporary fixation on materialism.

NBC ALLOWS LENO TO BASH PRIESTS

On a recent episode of "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" there was the occasion for yet another assault on priests. In a skit about the Royal Wedding, Dame Edna played a British correspondent. She was shown taking secret footage of the event while Leno pretended to be speaking with her live.

Dame Edna approached a vendor selling a cheese called "Stinking Bishop." Upon hearing the name, she said, "Stinking Bishop? My son toyed with the priesthood. Or perhaps it was the other way around."

Jay Leno would not be allowed to smear over 40,000 Catholic priests—over and over again—if NBC executives objected. His relentless assaults suggest a tolerance for bigotry that is disturbing. Leno and his scriptwriters are a sick bunch. What made this skit so invidious was its wholly gratuitous nature: there is no relationship between the Royal Wedding and Catholic priests. No matter, the writers just decided to jam their way in with another shot at priests.

We said that it was time Catholics took their protest to the

top as numerous complaints to Debbie Vickers, the executive producer of the show, have been dismissed. We asked our members to contact NBC Entertainment's executive vice president of publicity, Rebecca Marks. Hope she gets the message.

CATHOLIC RIGHTS QUESTIONED

Recently, the *New York Daily News* conducted a poll on its website asking readers whether St. Anthony's High School on Long Island had the right to bar a female student from bringing her ex-girlfriend to the prom.

Readers were asked the following: "Should the Catholic school have the right to bar same-sex couples at the prom?" The *Daily News'* answers were: 1) Yes, it's a private institution and homosexuality goes against church teachings; 2) No, we're talking about a prom, not marriage, the school shouldn't exclude anyone; 3) I don't know.

By posing the question in terms of rights—instead of asking whether readers agree with the decision—the *Daily News* made this issue into a matter of church and state, implying that it is a rebuttal assumption on the part of St. Anthony's that it has the right to determine its own rules.

After seeing this, we decided to conduct our own poll asking: "Should the *Daily News* be allowed to hire columnist Jimmy Breslin, despite his long record of Catholic bashing?"

We asked our members to contact the *Daily News* with their answers. Hope they got our point.

TIMES SQUARE NUNS

We recently commented on the way two Broadway plays depicting nuns, “Sister Act” and “High,” were characterized in their reviews.

“Sister Act” opened on Broadway at the end of April, much to the delight of the *New York Times*. The script, however, we said was shallow. We were being nice. The *Times*, in characteristic form, was not. Charles Isherwood couldn’t resist throwing a sucker punch, noting that “this sentimental story of a bad girl showing the good sisters how to get down has all the depth of a communion wafer, and possibly a little less bite.” Which only goes to show that even when a play about nuns does not offend, there is no guarantee that some critics won’t find an opportunity to do so.

Another play, “High,” featured a recovering alcoholic, gutter-mouth nun, the kind of sister that warms the heart of Broadway aficionados. Though Kathleen Turner managed to keep her clothes on for a change, she wishes someone could have dressed up the score: the play also opened at the end of April, but lasted less than a week after its premiere.

Evidently, we can’t blame Turner. Here is what Matthew Lombardo, the play’s creator, said in response to why he chose Turner: “In a word, I needed a broad, and when you think of a broad, you think of Kathleen Turner.” Guess this broad didn’t cut it as a nun.

In case the snickering class would like to meet real nuns, we suggested they check out the Sisters of Life. They are in sharp contrast to the Times Square nuns featured on Broadway, and quite unlike their imposters, they know how to succeed

without denigrating themselves.

EASTER BRINGS OUT THE CRAZIES

Every year around Eastertime, there are always some crazies who surface; this year was no different. Consider the Easter gifts Christians were graced with:

- Ricky Gervais felt the need to offer a very public “Holiday Message,” notifying the world that though he is not a Christian, he is a very Christ-like person. It is revealing that this British atheist couldn’t find a single secular humanist to model himself after.
- Lady Gaga, who admits to being “confused” about religion, offered more proof of her addled state by choosing to release her single, “Judas,” just before Easter. The song begins with the lyrics, “I’m in love with Judas.”
- Third graders at a Seattle school were told they must call Easter Eggs “Spring Spheres,” though the kids refused to obey.
- Adults in Munson Township, Ohio were ordered to call their Easter Egg Hunt the Egg Hunt. Watch for it to be banned next year.
- Filmmaker Simcha Jacobovici, who a few years ago entertained us with the hoax about Jesus’ tomb, was back again, this time claiming he found two nails used to crucify Jesus. He looked in vain to find an archaeologist who might believe him.
- Evangelist Rob Bell made the cover of Time, and that’s because they liked his “Happy Meal” approach to Christianity: sin and evil don’t exist, just sugar and spice and everything nice.

- On Good Friday, James Frey—the same guy Oprah sized up as a fraud—introduced his book, *The Final Testament of the Holy Bible*: he portrays Jesus as an alcoholic who lives in a filthy Bronx apartment, smokes dope, kisses men and impregnates prostitutes. Frey is agnostic on the question of whether Jesus ever worked for the *New York Times*.

Contrary to our skeptics, we don't make these things up—we just note them.

KUSHNER UNWORTHY OF HONORARY DEGREE

Recently we commented on the decision by trustees of the City University of New York (CUNY) not to award playwright Tony Kushner with an honorary degree.

As a general rule, objections to anyone being considered for an honorary degree take on weight only when there are serious reasons for doing so. An honorary degree is a statement from an academic institution that meritorious service should be recognized, but it is also a statement, ineluctably so, about the characterological attributes of the honoree. For example, a gifted orator may properly be denied if what he espouses is hatred.

Tony Kushner is a talented creative artist, but he is also someone who espouses hatred. CUNY trustee Jeffrey S. Wiesenfeld correctly identified Kushner as a man whose relentless assaults on the democratic state of Israel effectively disqualify him from being honored by John Jay College, a CUNY institution. On that account alone, Kushner is not deserving of an honorary degree. But there is more.

When the Terrence McNally play, “Corpus Christi,” was performed in New York in 1998, Kushner not only defended this vile work—it portrayed Christ having sex with the 12 apostles—he lashed out at the Catholic League for exercising its First Amendment right to freedom of speech. Never did we call for censorship. All we did was hold a demonstration.

When Matthew Shepard, the homosexual from Wyoming, was mercilessly killed by anti-gay thugs, Kushner blamed the pope! “Pope John Paul II endorses murder,” he wrote in the *Nation*.

Kushner’s vitriol against Israel, coupled with his Catholic bashing, made him unworthy of receiving a CUNY honorary degree. It may be that Kushner deserves to be in a Playwright Hall of Fame. But CUNY represents the norms of the academic community, and they do not counsel bigotry. Jeff Wiesenfeld raised the right issues, and made the right call.

Unfortunately, less than a week after our news release, the trustees reversed their initial decision and decided to honor Kushner.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL INDICTS HOLY SEE

Amnesty International recently released its annual report indicting the Holy See saying it “did not sufficiently comply with its international obligations relating to the protection of children.” The report did not list a single instance of a human rights violation that took place anywhere in the world in 2010 under the auspices of the Holy See, yet it still managed to condemn its human rights record.

As if the Vatican is responsible for the behavior of priests all over the world, the report indicts the Holy See for “child sexual abuse committed by members of the clergy *over the past decades*, and of the enduring failure of the Catholic Church to address these crimes properly, [continues] to emerge in various countries.” (Our italics.) Ideology and not objective research was clearly at work.

Amnesty International also indicted the Holy See for not mandating that the police be contacted in cases of sexual abuse. But this is true of virtually every nation, so why single out the Church?

The Holy See should now issue a report on secular organizations which disrespect marriage and the family, listing Amnesty International’s embrace of gay marriage as Exhibit A.

CATHOLICS FOR CHOICE LIES

The anti-Catholic group, Catholics for Choice recently held a workshop at Planned Parenthood of Collier County in Florida. We took note and said that this event just proved that Catholics for Choice lies.

Catholics for Choice has twice been condemned by the bishops’ conference as a fraud—there is nothing Catholic about it. Indeed, it has never raised as much as a dime from practicing Catholics, relying almost exclusively on donations from the Ford Foundation and other establishment groups. Its agenda—to champion child abuse in the womb—is anything but Catholic. But it was fitting that Planned Parenthood, the captain of the abortion industry, hosted this workshop.

The Diocese of Venice in Florida had it exactly right when it declared the event “an attempt to distort Catholic teaching to advance a particular agenda that is offensive to Catholics and like-minded people of good will.” The central message of Catholics for Choice—“you can be prochoice and Catholic”—carries as much credibility as saying you can be pro-genocide and Catholic.

To say, as they advertised, that “abortion can be a moral choice,” is to say that the intentional killing of innocent human life can be morally justified. It cannot be, notwithstanding the positions of Catholics for Choice and Planned Parenthood, both of which have a track record that is as deceitful as it is bloody.