

KHADAFY - FARRAKHAN LINK DEMANDS FEDERAL INVESTIGATION

The Catholic League has asked the U.S. Department of Justice to undertake an investigation of the growing link between the Libyan government of Muammar Khadafy and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. Specifically, the league wants to know whether the Nation of Islam has violated U.S. law by accepting financial support from Libya, a nation certified as terrorist by U.S. authorities. Laws pertaining to the registration of a foreign agent are implicated, and many others may be as well.

It has been reported that a \$1 billion pledge has been made between Khadafy and Farrakhan, enabling them to "work together to influence U.S. elections and foreign policy." News reports also say that Khadafi wants the "creation of a separate black state in the United States with its own army." In 1985, Khadafy reportedly loaned \$5 million to Farrakhan seeking to help black Americans in an "armed struggle."

It is because of the notorious anti-Catholicism of the Nation of Islam, as well as its more well-known anti-Semitism, that the Catholic League was proud to join with the Jewish Action Alliance in protesting this outrageous development. The Nation of Islam publication, The Call, has repeatedly spoken of the Pope as "the Anti-Christ" and spokesmen for the organization have called the Pope "a cracker." Obscene statements have also been made about the Pope.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue at a demonstration at the Libyan Consulate on February 1. He was joined by Chuck Mansfield of the Long Island Chapter. Here is a sample of Dr. Donohue's remarks:

"The Nation of Islam, under the aegis of Louis Farrakhan, has an ugly record of bigotry targeted at Jews, Catholics and many

others. That this unmitigated hatred might be subsidized by one of the most reckless regimes in the world is unconscionable. Khadafy is a menace to world peace and Farrakhan is a menace to domestic peace, making an alliance between them doubly threatening.

“Those officials in Washington who boast of standing tall against bigotry, hate speech and terrorism must now be held accountable for their deeds. Catholics and Jews will be watching who does what and when. And when the watching is over, they will register their sentiments in a way every politician understands.”

Dr. Donohue made two speeches at the rally. He focused on the need for reasoned dialogue between contending parties and warned that a Khadafy-Farrakhan link did not bode well for peace and tranquility. He also took note of the fact that Catholics are generally unaware—thanks to the media—of the extent to which the Nation of Islam harbors a prejudice against Catholics.

The Catholic League expects that Attorney General Janet Reno will respond affirmatively to its request for an investigation. Congressman Peter King of New York has already pressed this issue and others are expected to follow suit. The Catholic League has pledged to hold all public officials who are in any way connected to this matter responsible for the outcome.

BLOCKBUSTER PROMOTES “PRIEST”

FUELING ANTI-CATHOLICISM

The nation's largest video rental chain, Blockbuster, recently made the Disney-Miramax movie *Priest* available for distribution. Due to its anti-Catholic nature, the movie was the source of strong criticism from the Catholic League last year and was roundly scored by many others as well.

On May 25, 1995, Catholic League president William Donohue wrote a letter to Steve Berrard, the CEO of Blockbuster Entertainment, expressing his concern that "it would be disheartening to learn that Blockbuster decided to put *Priest* on its shelves." He also asked "what kind of policy you have in making these determinations [of deciding which videos to select]." No reply was given to this letter.

The Catholic League made the following statement about this development:

"Blockbuster does not distribute every movie made, nor does it randomly select which videos to promote. We know this because Blockbuster refused to carry the anti-Christian movie, *The Last Temptation of Christ*. But apparently Blockbuster thinks there is a difference between an anti-Christian movie and one that is merely anti-Catholic. It would be most instructive if Blockbuster explained its reasoning.

"Tolerance for bigotry is intolerance and that is why Blockbuster errs in its decision to stock *Priest*. By fanning the flames of anti-Catholicism, Blockbuster calls into question its reputation as a family-friendly outlet and contributes to an already poisoned environment. It gleefully accepted the plaudits of many when it refused circulation of *The Last Temptation of Christ*. It will be interesting to see how Blockbuster reacts once the public discovers its new double standard. We will be sure to inform the Catholic community of its duplicity."

Dr. Donohue wrote another letter to Blockbuster CEO Steve Berrard asking him to explain why *The Last Temptation of Christ* was found unacceptable but *Priest* was. At press time, no response had been given.

CONFRONTING THE SKEPTICS

The editor of a Pennsylvania newspaper recently called to protest my letter objecting to an anti-Catholic cartoon. Nothing noteworthy about that. But what is worth mentioning was his tone. He could not for the life of him understand why there was a need for an organization like the Catholic League. He spoke for many when he said that, aside from a few extreme instances, there was very little anti-Catholicism in the country. What the league saw as examples of bigotry, he contended, were nothing more than criticisms against the Church.

Now try contrasting this bigotry suffered by other segments of our society. The terms racist, sexist and homophobic are bandied about so recklessly that those who ask for proof are often seen as part of the problem. It's as though declarations of bigotry are evidence enough. Just consider how many people think that merely asking Hillary Clinton to testify before a grand jury is proof positive that there is sexism in the land.

But when it comes to the Catholic Church, that's a different story. When the Catholic League charges that the Church has been defamed, we are expected to provide mountains of evidence and tons of testimony, all of which are designed to persuade the skeptics to our cause. Our complaint, to be clear about this, is not that we should be forced to verify our charges, it is simply that there is a double standard at work. We have

to pass a rigorous test while others are given a free pass.

A syndicated columnist from the South takes it a step further. "If Ralph Nader criticizes industry," he asks, "is he bashing it? If an artist caricatures an ineffective and misdirected school board, is he bashing education? If today's media react to the situation in the churches [rackets and scandals] with news features, editorial comment, sharp-edged cartoons, what we're witnessing is honest reporting and commentary, not bashing."

The columnist is right, though his remarks are disingenuous. Surely there is a difference between reporting on a scandal and fanning the flames of discontent. The latter is accomplished, in part, when gross generalizations are made about an entire class of people or organization. It is one thing to publish news accounts of a clergyman gone astray, quite another to take a stab at the Church while doing so. If superiors covered up a misdeed, they should be exposed, but attempts to condemn a 2000 year old institution—which has very clear-cut rules against the immoral behavior—should be resisted by all responsible editors.

Another popular comment, often made by the same persons, is that the Catholic Church should be able to defend itself. It is a doubly dumb statement: a) it presupposes that the Church is incapable of self-defense and b) it presumes that the laity are not part of the Church.

The Catholic Church, like all other organizations under attack, can use allies, and that is what the Catholic League is—an ally of the Church. As lay men and women we have every right to protect our Church, and indeed we carry a moral obligation to do so. We are needed not so much because the clergy can't do the job, but because as lay people we are afforded greater latitude in choosing the right means of redress. Besides, does anyone complain that there should be no Anti-Defamation League for Jews on the grounds that rabbis are

sufficient to the task?

There is another dimension at work here as well. Some people are so angry with the Catholic Church (many are ex-Catholics) that they simply deny the existence of Catholic bashing. These same persons would be horrified at the suggestion that their denial of anti-Catholicism is rooted in their own bigotry, but the facts speaks otherwise. When charges of racism, sexism and homophobia are casually and routinely leveled at the Church, with nothing to back up the claims other than sheer emotion, something quite telling is being revealed.

Much of what the Catholic League is complaining about could be resolved rather quickly, if only the skeptics would listen. Our complaint boils down to this: we want a level playing field. And until we get one, we will continue to do our job.

HATING MOTHER TERESA

By William A. Donohue

Mother Teresa has “deceived” us. Her work with the poor is done not for its own sake, but to “propagandize one highly subjective view of human nature.” She is “a religious fundamentalist, a political operative, a primitive sermonizer and accomplice of worldly secular powers.” Furthermore, the Albanian nun is “a demagogue, an obscurantist and a servant of earthly powers.” She keeps company with “frauds, crooks and exploiters,” and takes in millions of unaccounted for dollars.

If this sounds like nonsense, well, it is. But it is also the way Christopher Hitchens looks at Mother Teresa. His book, *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice*, is a sequel to his British television “documentary” entitled “Hell’s Angel.” The sexual message implied in the book’s title

demonstrates that Hitchens never escaped adolescence, and both the book and the film are designed to get the public to hate Mother Teresa the way he does. That he hasn't fooled even the *Village Voice*, which took note of Hitchens' hidden agenda "to prove all religion equally false," must be disconcerting for the author. After all, if the alienated can't be fooled, it's time for Hitchens to pack it in.

Christopher Hitchens is a British transplant, a political pundit who has written a column for the *Nation* magazine for decades. The *Nation*, for the unacquainted, is a magazine that would put a smile on the face of Joseph Stalin. (Speaking of Stalin, it is not unimportant that Hitchens' father was a gunrunner for Old Joe, proving once again the maxim "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.") Hitchens has also written many books, none of them of any consequence, and has now found a new home writing for *Vanity Fair*. Having spent his entire adult life on the wrong side of history, he has become a very bitter and angry man.

Why does Hitchens hate Mother Teresa? Like Mother Teresa, Hitchens is troubled by poverty. Unlike her, he does nothing about it. What upsets him most is that the world's greatest champion of the dispossessed is an unassuming nun. Hitchens would prefer to grant the award to ideology, namely to the politics of socialism. And because he is a determined atheist, he cannot come to terms with Mother Teresa's spirituality and the millions who adore her. More than this, it is her Catholicism that drives him mad.

Even some of Hitchens' fellow leftists have noticed his deep-seated hatred of Catholicism. In the 1980s, Robert Orsi accused Hitchens of continuing "a shameful *Nation* tradition of anti-Catholicism," adding that "Hitchens's straightforward hatred of Catholics is offensive and ugly prejudice." It is to be expected, then, that anyone as well received as Mother Teresa would be too much for Hitchens to bear.

As expected, Mother Teresa has won scores of awards from all over the world. This bothers Hitchens. What has she done with the money earned from the awards? He doesn't know, but that doesn't stop him from saying "nobody has ever asked what became of the funds." Not true. He has asked, so why doesn't he tell us what he found? Because that would take work. Worse than that, he would then have to confront the truth. This is why he would rather imply that Mother Teresa is sticking the loot in her pocket. It's easier this way.

His book, by the way, is a 98 page essay printed on eight-and-a-half by five-and-a-half inch paper, one that is so small it could easily fit into the opening of a sewer. It contains no footnotes, no citations of any kind. There is a role for this genre, but it is not associated with serious scholarship, and it certainly isn't associated with works that make strong allegations against public persons. Rather, it is associated with the gossip pages of, say, a *Vanity Fair*.

Hitchens doesn't like rich people (save for those obsessed with guilt and who give to "progressive" causes) and that explains why he doesn't like it when Mother Teresa takes money from the wealthy. But it wouldn't bother Hitchens if she took money from the government, because that would make her a real redistributionist. From this perspective, Robin Hood is a game that only collectivists can play.

In the promotion flyer accompanying the book, the publisher delights in saying that Hitchens outlines Mother Teresa's relationship with "Paul Keating, the man now serving a ten-year sentence for his central role in the United States Savings and Loan scandal." Wrong, the man's name is Charles Keating, but what difference does that make to a publisher unconcerned with verifying the sources of its authors?

Keating gave Mother Teresa one and a quarter million dollars. It does not matter to Hitchens that all of the money was spent before anyone ever knew of his shenanigans. What matters is

that Mother Teresa gave to the poor a lot of money taken from a rich guy who later went to jail. But her biggest crime, according to Hitchens, was writing a letter to Judge Lance Ito (yeah, the same one) "seeking clemency for Mr. Keating."

It would be rather audacious of Mother Teresa if she were to intervene in a trial "seeking clemency" for the accused, unless, of course, she had evidence that the accused was innocent. But she did nothing of the kind: what she wrote to Judge Ito was a reference letter, not a missive "seeking clemency."

"I do not know anything about Mr. Charles Keating's work," Mother Teresa said, "or his business or the matters you are dealing with." She then explains her letter by saying "Mr. Keating has done much to help the poor, which is why I am writing to you on his behalf."

Now why this character reference, written of someone who was presumed innocent at the time, should be grounds for condemnation is truly remarkable. It reveals more about Hitchens than his subject that he brands her letter an appeal for "clemency." It was nothing of the sort, but this matters little to someone filled with rage.

Here's another example of how Hitchens proceeds. He begins one chapter quoting Mother Teresa on why her congregation has taken a special vow to work for the poor. "This vow," she exclaimed, "means that we cannot work for the rich; neither can we accept money for the work we do. Ours has to be a free service, and to the poor." A few pages later, after citing numerous cash awards that her order has received, Hitchens writes "if she is claiming that the order does not solicit money from the rich and powerful, or accept it from them, this is easily shown to be false."

Hitchens isn't being sloppy here, just dishonest. He knows full well that there is a world of difference between

soliciting money from the rich and working for them. Furthermore, he knows full well that Mother Teresa never even implied that she wouldn't accept money from the rich. And precisely whom should she—or anyone else—accept money from, if not the rich? Would it make Hitchens feel better if the middle class were tapped and the rich got off scot free? Would it make any sense to take from the poor and then give it back to them?

Who's left?

Hitchens lets the reader know that there aren't too many people that he likes. On this, he is bipartisan. He doesn't like Hillary Clinton (she "almost single-handedly destroyed a coalition on national health care that had taken a quarter century to build and nurture"), Marion Barry (responsible for corruption and the crime of "calling for mandatory prayer in the schools") or Ronald Reagan (his sins are too long to cite here). As such, he objects to Mother Teresa being photographed with them. Now if only she had posed with the characters who hangout at the Marxist Institute for Policy Studies (a favorite Hitchens cell), she would have escaped his wrath altogether.

Hitchens also hates Mother Teresa's itinerary, charging that there is a political motive to her travels. For example, in 1984 she went to comfort the suffering in Bhopal after a Union Carbide chemical explosion. While there, she asked that forgiveness be given to those responsible for the plant (the Indian government was mostly to blame, though Hitchens, the inveterate anti-capitalist, cannot admit to this). So what does Hitchens make of this?

He takes great umbrage at her right to ask for forgiveness, questioning who "authorized" her to dispense with such virtues in the first place. For Hitchens, her refusal to answer this question (never mind that she was never asked in the first place) is proof positive that her trip "read like a hasty

exercise in damage control.” Damage control for whom? Union Carbide? Does Hitchens even have a picture of Mother Teresa and a Union Carbide official to show?

Hitchens smells politics whenever Mother Teresa supports moral causes he objects to. For example, in 1988, while in London tending to the homeless, Mother Teresa was asked to meet with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. She did. She also met a pro-life legislator. So? For Hitchens, this shows the political side of Mother Teresa. Forget for a moment that Mother Teresa is perhaps the most noted pro-life advocate alive, and that abortion is first and foremost a moral issue. And does anyone doubt that had she met with a politician interested in socialized medicine, Hitchens would be citing her humanity, not her politics?

Mother Teresa has tended to the sick and poor all over the world. She doesn't pick and choose which countries to go to on the basis of internal politics, and this explains why she has visited both right-wing repressive nations like Haiti and left-wing repressive nations like Albania. Hitchens can't stomach this and indicts Mother Teresa for servicing dictatorships. Now if his logic is to be followed here, then most Peace Corps workers and Red Cross personnel are guilty of courting despots. This may make sense to those who write for the Nation, but no one else can be expected to believe it.

It would be a mistake to think that Hitchens is a principled opponent of dictatorships. What matters is whether he believes the regime is sufficiently utopian in its leftist politics to merit his approval (this is why Albania doesn't qualify—it was just an old fashioned tyranny). Allende's Chile, however, is a different story.

In 1983, Hitchens lamented the “tenth anniversary of the slaughter of Chilean democracy” under Salvador Allende. This is a strange way to characterize thuggery. Corrupt and despotic, Allende welcomed terrorists from all over Latin

America, bankrupted the poor with runaway inflation, locked up dissidents, installed a censorial press and abused the court system in an unprecedented manner. But despite his record, Allende was the darling of Christopher Hitchens, and Western socialists in general, in the early 1970s.

The Sandinistas were the favorites of the Nation crowd in the 1980s. These gangsters fleeced the country, punished the poor (in whose name they served) and instituted mass censorship. Hitchens acknowledges the latter outrage but cannot bring himself to condemn his friends. Censorship, which if practiced by a right-wing regime is called "fascism," is understood by Hitchens as suggestive of "the crisis of the left in the twentieth century." And what is this crisis? The resolution of the problem of "individual rights versus the common good." But Hitchens must be joking, because in reality the left has never been faced with such a democratic dilemma, having long settled the problem squarely in favor of totalitarianism.

In exemplary Catholic fashion, Mother Teresa comes to the poor not out of sentimentality, but out of love. No matter how impoverished and debased the poor are, they are still God's children, all of whom possess human dignity. This is not something Hitchens can accept. An unrelenting secularist, he cannot comprehend how Mother Teresa can console the terminally ill by saying, "You are suffering like Christ on the cross. So Jesus must be kissing you."

Hitchens is so far gone that he cannot make sense of Christ's admonition that "The poor will always be with you." Not surprisingly, Hitchens says "I remember as a child finding this famous crack rather unsatisfactory. Either one eschews luxury and serves the poor or one does not." But he just doesn't get it: Mother Teresa eschews luxury and serves the poor, yet not for a moment does she believe that she is conquering poverty in the meantime. Only someone hopelessly wedded to a materialist vision of the world would think otherwise.

Hitchens also objects to Mother Teresa's asceticism (if she lived the Life of Riley he would condemn her for that). He charges that her operation in Bengal is "a haphazard and cranky institution which would expose itself to litigation and protest were it run by any branch of the medical profession." Hitchens would prefer that the Bengalis force Mother Teresa to follow regulations established by the Department of Health and Human Services before attending to her work. It does not matter to him that Mother Teresa and her loyal sisters have managed to do what his saintly bureaucrats have never done—namely to comfort the ill and indigent.

It is a telling commentary on any author when he twists the facts to suit his ends. Hitchens is a master of this and his book is chock full of examples. To cite one, he chastises Mother Teresa for not working cooperatively with the City of New York when she refused to install an elevator in a building she was acquiring to service the homeless. What he doesn't mention is that the Missionaries of Charity pledged to carry the handicapped up the stairs, making moot the need for an elevator. But for Hitchens to mention this fact would have gotten in the way of his agenda.

It is jealousy, not ideology, that propels Hitchens to criticize Mother Teresa for receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. He wonders "what she had ever done, or even claimed to do, for the cause of peace." (His accent.) This is a strange comment coming as it does from one of those "If You Want Peace, Work For Justice" types. And it apparently never occurred to Hitchens that it is precisely Mother Teresa's humility that disallows her to grandstand before the world trumpeting her own work. A true crusader for the underclass, Mother Teresa is not in the habit of claiming to do anything. She is too busy practicing what others are content to preach.

If receiving the Nobel Peace Prize angered Hitchens, it is safe to say he suffered from apoplexy when he read Mother Teresa's acceptance speech. In it, she took the occasion to

say that "Today, abortion is the worst evil, and the greatest enemy of peace." Hitchens labels her speech a "diatribe" that is riddled with "fallacies and distortions," none of which he identifies, preferring instead to say that there "is not much necessity for identifying" them. Not, it should be added, if your goal is a smear campaign.

It is a staple of secularist thought that contraception and abortion are the best means to ending poverty and population growth. This may explain why people like Mother Teresa are not popular with this crowd, but it is no excuse for cheap *ad hominem* attacks. Someone who is confident about the logic of his argument doesn't need to stoop to the gutter to make his point. But Hitchens does just that when he charges that Mother Teresa's opposition to contraception and abortion "sounds grotesque when uttered by an elderly virgin." That it is his own utterance about her that is grotesque seems to have escaped him.

What is perhaps most flabbergasting about Hitchens is that he has no idea about the very nature of the problem Mother Teresa is addressing. On one page he writes that "it is difficult to spend any time at all in Calcutta and conclude that what it most needs is a campaign against population control." Yet on the previous page he notes, with admiration, that in Calcutta "secular-leftist politics predominate." It is a safe bet that Hitchens will go to grave not understanding that it is the predominance of secular-leftist politics that promotes high levels of population growth and ultimately accounts for the misery of Calcutta.

It is ironic that after hurling one unsubstantiated charge after another that Hitchens ends his little book by saying, "It is past time she [Mother Teresa] was subjected to the rational critique that she has evaded so arrogantly and for so long." It would be more accurate to say that it is one more source of her greatness that Mother Teresa never evades anything, including irrational tracts written by vindictive

authors. The arrogance is all his, because in the end, Hitchens hasn't even laid a glove on her.

ABC SHOW THE NAKED TRUTH RIDICULES CATHOLICISM

The January 10 edition of the ABC show The Naked Truth, ridiculed Roman Catholicism from beginning to end. The show featured two female reporters who dressed as nuns and visited a Catholic Church in quest of determining whether actress Drew Barrymore was entering the convent. In the course of the show, the following incidents occurred:

- One of the reporters mentions that she once thought about becoming a nun but said that when "a little thing called the pill" came out, she changed her mind.
- When asked by a priest in the confessional when was the last time the woman went to confession, she replies, "What is this—the Spanish Inquisition?"
- One of the reporters spots a real nun and recognizes her as an old classmate. The nun, who is identified as "Luscious O'Farrell," explains her decision to become a nun by saying, "I woke up one day and found that being a drunken slut was strangely unfulfilling." Her reporter friend says, "Sr. Luscious would be the patron saint of porno actresses."
- Holy water is thrown at one of the reporters by the priest as he exclaims, "Get thee back, Satan."
- One of the reporters says she would be a good candidate for the sisterhood since she has no money, kids or sex. "Heck, I'm darn near a nun now," she says.
- The final scene shows the priest coming out of the

confessional taking off his collar saying, "I quit."

The Catholic League offered the following response to the show:

"This edition of the ABC program The Naked Truth is another example of the degree to which Roman Catholicism is held in contempt by some in the media. Offensive and disgraceful, this show demonstrates that there are some in the television industry who have an agenda to discredit the Catholic Church. There is a difference between light humor and an assault on the beliefs and practices of Catholics, and this show clearly falls in the latter category.

"We will contact the sponsors of the program and will alert our members to take action against them. Knowing our members, they won't hesitate to do so."

CONTROVERSY TO MARK ST. PATRICK'S PARADE, DESPITE COURT VICTORY

Last year, in the Hurley decision, the U.S. Supreme Court assured the sponsors of the St. Patrick's Day parade the right to determine who marches in the annual event. However, that didn't end the controversy. Gay and lesbian militants have pledged to protest the march, despite the fact that they are barred from entering the parade. From New York to San Francisco, the patience of the police and the marchers will be tested as radical gays attend to mocking the march.

In a unanimous ruling, handed down on June 19, 1995, the

Supreme Court held that the private sponsors of the St. Patrick's parade had a constitutional right to exclude marchers whose message they reject. Justice David Souter said in his opinion that "One important manifestation of the principle of free speech is that one who chooses to speak may also decide what not to say." The decision overturned an earlier decision by the Supreme Court of Massachusetts that the St. Patrick's Day parade came within the state civil rights law's definition of a "public accommodation," and as such could not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

Chester Darling, the attorney who successfully defended the South Boston Allied War Veterans Council, explained that the decision to bar the Irish-American Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Group of Boston did not single out gays. His group had previously barred anti-busing groups, the Ku Klux Klan and anti-gay agitators. "The parade," he said, "is about Irish celebrating St. Patrick's Day in their neighborhood—that's the focus we intend to keep."

In New York, where a previous New York State decision had secured the right of the Ancient Order of Hibernians the right to exclude members of a local gay group, organizers were bracing for another confrontation. The Irish Gay and Lesbian Organization (ILGO) plans to make its presence felt by greeting marchers with their proverbial chant, "We're Irish, We're Queer, We'll Be Here Every Year." Perhaps they will, but they will be arrested if they try to march in the parade.

The Catholic League will be marching in the St. Patrick's Day parade for the second straight year. It is the position of the Catholic League that while sexual orientation, per se, should not bar anyone from marching, those who seek to sunder the purpose of the march—be they straight or gay—have no right to do so.

The major media continue to label the exclusion of gays as

“homophobic,” thereby vilifying Catholics who seek only to honor St. Patrick. Free speech, the league maintains, is meaningless unless those who would silence it are prohibited from doing so. The principle has wide application and the league is grateful that the members of the high court sustained it.

MEDIA BROWNOUT OF MARCH FOR LIFE

It wasn't a total blackout, but the media coverage of the annual March for Life wasn't far from it. This was one time television, radio and the major newspapers didn't have to worry about competition, as none of them showed any interest in reporting on the pro-life event that marks the anniversary of Roe v. Wade.

Police estimates put the crowd at 60,000 while Nellie Gray of the March for Life Fund offered the figure of 125,000. It is fair to say that those who attended the march were more inclined to believe the larger figure. In any case, not one protester was spotted by anyone from the New York Archdiocesan contingent, making this a very positive event. The Washington Post, however, gave a different impression.

Typically, a march that draws tens of thousands of participants from all over the country merits front page coverage. But not the March for Life. The Washington Post put the story on front page of the “Metro” section, thus suggesting that it was a local event. The photograph it printed showed one, lone woman carrying a pro-abortion sign, surrounded by marchers with pro-life signs. It would make a

great story all by itself to find out how long it took the photographer to find this one protester.

It is not unusual for marches of this size to be marred by some incident, a confrontation, a brawl or litter scattered about. But this march was exceptional as nothing untoward happened: everyone was well behaved.

In study recently released by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the media offer a very biased perspective of abortion rights advocates and opponents of abortion. For example, in 116 stories, Republican advocates of legal abortion were labeled “moderate,” and in 37 stories, pro-life Republicans were described with inflammatory terms like “far right” and “hard right.” No Democrat or Republican who is pro-choice was described as “far left” or “hard left.” Nor was a pro-life Democrat ever called “moderate.”

The media coverage of the March for Life, then, was no mistake. It reflects the bias that colors the profession of journalism, from top to bottom. And because so many of the marchers and leaders of the March for Life are Catholic—with the hierarchy plainly in sight—it is no leap of logic to conclude that old-fashioned anti-Catholicism also plays a role in how this issue is reported.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY JEOPARDIZED BY LANSING, MICHIGAN BILL

The Catholic League has formally opposed a gay rights bill in Lansing, Michigan on the grounds that it affords inadequate protection for the religious freedom rights of individuals. Amendments to the Lansing Code of Ordinances, commonly

referred to as the Civil Rights Ordinance, would grant protected class status to persons based on sexual orientation.

Although the Civil Rights Ordinance includes exemptions for religious organizations, it is silent regarding the religious freedom rights of individuals. Because the courts have difficulty in making determinations regarding the application of exemptions to religious organizations, such exemptions are often inadequate to protect the autonomy of religious institutions.

To offer a practical example, the bill would not protect a Catholic couple who wants to refuse to rent a room to a gay couple. As such, the bill would force them to do something that in conscience they cannot countenance.

A few years ago the league was involved in such a case and was able, fortunately, to resolve it without going to court. It involved a couple who had advertised in a local newspaper for a trained person to live in their home so as to service their mentally disabled son. When an openly gay applicant was refused the job, he threatened to sue, claiming discrimination. The parents of the patient did not want a gay person attending to their son after the experience he endured while being hospitalized: he was raped by a male staffer.

If the Lansing bill were to include a provision to protect the religious rights of individuals, the league would not oppose it. The league has notified all members of the Lansing City Council about its objections. We made it clear that the religiously informed conscience of individuals must remain free from the governmental interference exemplified by the sexual orientation provisions of the proposed Civil Rights Ordinance.

BARNEYS FILES FOR BANKRUPTCY

The fashionable clothing store, Barneys New York, has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. *Catalyst* readers will recall that the Catholic League successfully forced Barneys to remove a vulgar Nativity scene from its storefront window on Madison Avenue and 61 Street in December 1994. The company plans to keep its stores open during bankruptcy proceedings, but its future is in doubt.