

M.D. APOLOGIZES FOR MOCKING CHRISTIANITY

A doctor from the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, has apologized for offending Christians at a conference on nursing. It was at the National Practitioner Conference in Arlington, Virginia that the doctor offered a slide presentation of his work on Hepatitis C. One of his slides showed a man crucified to a cross with his groin draped and a doctor listening to his liver.

A Catholic League member was in the audience and took offense to this portrayal.

Both the Catholic League nurse and the league's national office wrote to the doctor stating their complaint. We are pleased to say that the doctor has said he is sorry for what he did and that he will never use the slide again.

BOYCOTT OF TARGET STORES ENDS

In the last edition of Catalyst, we called for a boycott of Target Stores because of the statement made by managers from the Buffalo area that "Catholic schools are not part of the community."

After receiving a satisfactory response from the Target Stores headquarters in Minneapolis, we are officially calling for an end to the boycott. Target regrets the incident and has assured us that "this does not reflect the values of our company in any way." Consequently, Catholic League members can

feel free to patronize Target stores again.

SAN FRANCISCO MAYOR SHOWS INTOLERANCE FOR CATHOLICISM

Willie Brown, the mayor of San Francisco, is at war with the city's archdiocese. Showing his intolerance for Catholicism, Brown is trying to force Catholic Charities to abide by a domestic partnership bill. Under the bill, any organization that contracts with the city must provide health, pension and other benefits to its employees. Archbishop Levada of San Francisco has said that if the law were to apply to the Catholic Church, it would violate the Church's "ethical tenets."

It is the position of the archdiocese that to grant benefits to unmarried gay partners would send a message that gay relations and traditional marriage were equitable. In response, Mayor Brown has said that he will not allow Catholic Charities to be exempt from the law; the city has \$5.5 million worth of contracts with Catholic Charities. The Catholic League released the following statement to the media on this issue:

"Despite the fact that the Catholic Church doesn't impose its teachings on others (it rightly proposes lots of things), critics of the Catholic Church like to accuse it of such. Yet when people like Mayor Willie Brown truly seek to impose their views on others, the critics of the Church go mute. "

In virtually every city in the nation where domestic partnership bills have been passed, exemptions have been made for religious organizations. San Francisco stands in stark

contrast to the tolerance exercised by other municipalities by coercing its contractors to collapse their principals so as to service the city's gay agenda. It is hoped that Archbishop Levada will stand fast and challenge this imposition in court.

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What Mayor Brown is saying is that those who contract with the city to service the poor, AIDS patients, the elderly, the disabled and the the homeless cannot do so unless they are prepared to sacrifice their principles on the altar of extremist politics. If Mayor Brown thinks that sex between people of the same sex is on a moral par with heterosexual unions in the institution of marriage—and what Catholics regard as the Sacrament of Matrimony—that is his business. But it is none of his business to jeopardize the welfare of the dispossessed by forcing those who disagree with him to forfeit their First Amendment rights of freedom of expression and freedom of religion.”

The league would like to see this issue tested in court. The First Amendment and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act offer constitutional protection from this kind of state interference in religion. It is the height of irony that San Francisco, which prides itself as the nation's most tolerant city for gays to live in, is proving itself the most intolerant city for Catholics to reside.

MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN RETURNS

In December and January, the British movie, the *Life of Brian* was aired five times on the network, Comedy Central. The

film, originally released in 1979, is a classic example of anti-Catholicism. For those who have not seen the movie, a description of its contents will prove enlightening.

The *Life of Brian* chronicles Jesus' life in the form of a parody. All of the characters who play the Jewish people speak with a British accent. The movie opens with heavenly singing and the Star of Bethlehem. The Three Wise Men are shown offering gifts to the baby, Brian. The Virgin Mary is played by a man with a high-pitched voice. Mary does not know that her baby is to be the Messiah. She greedily accepts the gifts and then complains about them. The 3 wise men then take back the gifts and push Mary to the floor.

In the next scene, the words "Saturday Afternoon – About Tea Time" appear on the screen. Throngs of people are heading up a mountain and a man is preaching and reciting the Beatitudes. The crowd starts to make fun of the Beatitudes by changing the words. For example, "Blessed are the cheesemakers" parodies "Blessed are the peacemakers" and "Blessed are the Greeks" is substituted for "Blessed are the meek."

Brian's mother begins to complain that she wants to go to the stoning. At the stoning, the accused man states that he is to be stoned because he told his wife that the "piece of halibut is good enough for Jehovah." A rabbi tells them that they can only start to throw stones when he blows the whistle. The Jews are portrayed as people that attend stonings as a sporting event and the crowd is so eager to throw stones that they end up stoning the rabbi, too.

We next see a group of people gathered together for a secret meeting. They are called the "People's Front of Judea." One of the group's male members states that he wants to be called "Loretta" from now on and would like to have a baby. Brian meets with the group and tells them that he is willing to join and that his name is "Brian Cohen."

The group responds that he must first paint in red the words "Romans Go Home" on a public building, which he does to their applause.

The organization, including Brian, plots in a humorous style to break into Pilate's castle, kidnap him and give the Romans two days to leave their land. The group does so and kills everyone except Brian. Brian is depicted as a religious rebel fighting for freedom and is held in a dungeon where he talks to other prisoners. One of the prisoners states that they will all get crucified. The prisoner tells Brian that it's probably the best thing that the Romans have done for us and that this country would be a mess if we didn't have crucifixion. Pilate tells the guards that he wants Brian fighting a rabid animal in one week.

Brian escapes from Pilate's castle and jumps off a high ledge. A spaceship filled with aliens swoops down out of nowhere and carries him to safety. The Roman soldiers begin chasing Brian, who again jumps off a ledge, and onto the head of a prophet whom he kills. In order to escape the guards, Brian pretends that he is the prophet and manages to utter the line, "Don't pass judgment on other people or you might get judged." After he speaks these words, Brian looks surprised that he was even able to come up with such an idea.

Hundreds of people are so struck by that one line that they start to follow Brian wherever he goes. Brian is scared of them and can't understand why they are following him. He runs from them and in doing so he loses a sandal. The crowd picks it up and everyone voices a different interpretation of the significance of Brian dropping his sandal. Some say that now we too should only wear one sandal.

The next scene shows Brian in bed with Judith, a member of the Jewish rebel group. He is shown naked from the back. He opens his window and there are thousands of people lined up to see him. Mary is furious with him for attracting such crowds until

the crowd starts worshipping her as Brian's mother. Mary is so flattered by the crowd's worshipping that she allows Brian to speak for the crowd. Brian hesitantly tells the crowd to "think for yourself" and "work it out for yourself." The crowd cheers and acts like Brian just gave them incredible advice.

The Romans eventually find Brian and imprison him again. His sentence is crucifixion. When asked by Pilate whom he should release, people respond that they want Brian to be released. Brian, however, already left to carry the cross to his crucifixion. While hanging on the cross, Brian speaks to another man hanging next to him. The man says that he is entitled to be crucified in the Jewish area and not the Roman area.

Judith arrives as Brian is hanging on the cross. She tells him it's great that you are doing this and then walks away. Mary arrives and caustically asks him how he could do this after everything she has done for him. She also walks away and leaves him to die. The movie ends with a song whose refrain is "the last laugh is on you" and "always look on the bright side of life."

When the *Life of Brian* first appeared in 1979, it was greeted with a chorus of condemnation from Catholic, Protestant and Jewish groups. Warner Bros. is again responsible for this bigotry.

The Catholic League has protested the showing of this movie (especially as it was shown just before and after Christmas) and would encourage league members to do likewise. Please write to: Doug Herzog, President, Comedy Central, 1775 Broadway, 10th floor, New York, New York 10019.

HIGH SCHOOL MISHANDLES FLAP OVER BUMPER STICKER

Easton Area High School in Easton, Pennsylvania recently mishandled an anti-Catholic issue that emerged on campus. Though the school sought to crush any involvement by the Catholic League, it didn't work.

One of the high school teachers has long had a bumper sticker on his car that reads, "Keep Your Rosaries Out of My Ovaries." A problem occurred when a school-sponsored event was to take place in the area where the car was parked. Some of the Catholic teachers took their complaint to the principal, who, in turn, agreed to move the site of the event. But that is not where the matter ended.

The school newspaper, The Junto, interviewed one of the Catholic teachers and published a story about the incident. But it also published a picture of the bumper sticker, thus giving profile to the subject. In addition, the article made some untoward comments about Catholics. The following is the text of a letter that William Donohue sent to the newspaper:

Dear Editor:

The December 13 edition of The Junto carried a piece surrounding the controversy over a bumper sticker displayed on the car of teacher Chris Magyarics. The sticker in question, "Keep Your Rosaries Out Of My Ovaries," is a favorite among anti-Catholic pro-abortion forces. Instead of arguing the merits of abortion, they resort to diatribe, the effect of which is to silence debate. I was struck by the characterization of those who protested the bigoted sticker as "Scrambling to defend their Catholic beliefs." Do Jews and African Americans also "scramble" when they respond to bigotry, or is this an attribute exclusively exercised by Catholics?

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue

Perhaps the silliest comment made by anyone was made by history teacher Judy Turner. She wonders “Who is to decide what’s wrong or right?” Is this how she approaches the subject of slavery in her class? That there are certain things that are morally wrong should be axiomatic, and among them are inflammatory statements made against religious groups.

This was not the end of the issue. The *Junto*, on the advice of the principal, refused to print Donohue’s letter.

Unfortunately for her, news of this decision reached the desk of the local newspaper, the *Express-Times*, and they ran a story on the entire controversy. Indeed, the *Express-Times*, outraged at the attempt to quash the league’s response, ran Donohue’s letter on the editorial page.

This just goes to show that in a free society it is hard to keep the news from surfacing. It also goes to show what happens when dirt is swept under the carpet.

FLYING NUN TAG TEAM DISBANDS

A tag-team wrestling duo by the name “The Flying Nuns” has disbanded under pressure from Roman Catholics. The two men, dressed as nuns in habit, went under the names Sister Angelica and Mother Smucker. When performing, the tag-team would mock Catholicism by bowing in prayer and blessing the crowd.

Just as bad was the participation of the World Wrestling Federation (WWF). Vince McMahon, chairman of the WWF, as well as a female announcer, made lewd comments about the “nuns” while they were wrestling. Other actors, such as Brother Love (a preacher) were known to comment how the “nuns” were “virginal...pure as the driven snow.” This same person also said on TV that “their bodies have never been touched, except by

their own hands, of course.”

When the league investigated this matter, it was initially stonewalled. But it was soon revealed by Christine Wypy, Manager of Fan Services at WWF, that a “corporate decision” had been made to disband the tag-team. It was apparent that WWF was feeling the heat from Catholic protests and was not prepared to promote the Catholic-bashers any longer.

RELIGIOUS RIGHTS IN WORKPLACE SECURED IN MASSACHUSETTS

A bill that would secure protection for workers who desire to observe religious holidays without penalty has been passed by the Massachusetts legislature and signed by Governor William Weld. Unfortunately, the bill was not retroactive, thus leaving Kathleen Pielech and Patricia Reed—the two principals who were initially victimized when they didn’t show for work on Christmas day in 1992—without relief.

In February 1995, the Catholic League submitted an amicus brief in the case of Pielech and Reed v. Massasoit Greyhound, Inc. When the case was brought before the Supreme Judicial Court in 1995, it struck down the existing law that protected religious rights in the workplace as unconstitutional. But when a new law was passed extending religious rights to those not affiliated with an organized church or sect (a sincerely held belief was sufficient to grant protection), the Supreme Judicial Court, on November 27, 1996, upheld that law’s constitutionality.

Over the past several months, the Catholic League was in contact with the Massachusetts Governor, Lt. Governor,

Attorney General, House Speaker and Senate President urging them to restore religious liberty in the workplace. The league is grateful for the action taken but regrets that the bill was not retroactive.