

BIGOTRY TARS TWO NEW YORK STATE CAMPUSES

For the past few months, the Catholic League has been involved in an on-going battle over anti-religious bigotry that took place on two campuses of the State University of New York (SUNY). A satisfactory resolution to this matter was reached with the Stony Brook campus of SUNY, but not with the New Paltz campus.

In November, SUNY-New Paltz hosted a conference entitled, "Revolting Behavior: The Challenges of Women's Sexual Freedom." The conference featured a sex-toy sale, masturbation workshops, explicit discussions of sadomasochism, lesbian sex, etc. That was bad enough, but what got the league involved was the attack on Christians and Jews; both were mocked and humiliated in a most callous way. Then things really exploded at SUNY-Stony Brook when a campus newspaper published an anti-Catholic attack on Dr. Candace de Russy, the SUNY Trustee who blew the whistle on the fracas at New Paltz.

The newspaper, the *Stony Brook Press*, depicted graphically and editorially a vile, anti-Catholic and ad hominem attack against Dr. de Russy. The league came to her assistance by writing to the governor, school chancellor, SUNY trustees, the presidents of the two SUNY campuses and every member of the New York State legislature. The letter asked school administrators to denounce the bigotry and requested members of the Assembly and Senate to support Dr. de Russy. Free speech, we reminded them, applies to politicians and educators, not just offending students.

Dr. Shirley Strum Kenny, president of the Stony Brook campus, responded professionally by criticizing what she labeled as a "sexist, anti-Catholic outburst against Mrs. de Russy." She also pledged to push for a course in Ethics in Journalism so

that students will “take their ethical responsibilities seriously in the future.”

There has been no response from New Paltz president Roger Bowen and that is why the league has not dropped this case. However, Governor George Pataki and SUNY Chancellor John Ryan, as well as many members of the legislature, strongly criticized what happened. Most encouraging, a resolution was introduced in the Assembly that addresses this issue in a responsible manner.

The league is most pleased with the support that Dr. de Russy has received. Aside from a dishonest editorial in the *New York Times* accusing her of “meddling,” the public and the press have stood by this courageous Catholic scholar.

AMBASSADOR NOMINEE CHALLENGED

The Catholic League has asked the U.S. Senate not to confirm James Hormel as U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg. The league’s objections to President Clinton’s nominee stem from Hormel’s role in the 1996 San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Parade.

Providing commentary on the parade on KOFY-TV, Hormel gave his tacit endorsement to the anti-Catholic group, Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (the group has been mocking Catholicism since its founding in 1979). Hormel joined two broadcasters in welcoming the nun-dressed drag queens, laughing at their antics and showing general support for their agenda. Furthermore, when asked by Senator Tim Hutchinson to repudiate those who mock the Catholic Church, Hormel failed to do so.

The league believes that any one who sanctions religious

bigotry has no legitimate role to play in representing the U.S. Hormel had an opportunity to object to the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence right on the air, but he did not do so. Worse, he refused to condemn Catholic bashing when asked to do so by Senator Hutchinson.

Considering the fact that Luxembourg is 97 percent Catholic, it makes no more sense to elevate Hormel to this post than it would to send Louis Farrakhan to Israel or David Duke to Kenya. Because of other problems in the White House, a vote on the Hormel nomination has been put on hold.

THE CATHOLIC LEAGUE AT 25 (1973-1998)

William A. Donohue

On April 16, the Catholic League will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a dinner at The Plaza in New York City (see p. 7 for the details). There is much to celebrate, as well as much to focus on down the road.

Were it not for Virgil C. Blum, S.J., there would be no Catholic League. The founder of the Catholic League, Father Blum was a Marquette University professor of political science who had a vision for the Catholic laity that was, and still is, a fairly radical idea: he wanted Catholic men and women to become full participants in society, bringing their informed Catholic conscience to bear on the reigning issues of the day. The problem, he often said, was that Catholics were political pygmies, and that is why he characterized them in 1983 as “chumps, patsies, dopes, born-every-minute suckers.”

Those are harsh words. But consider the context: he wrote that at a time when it seemed that every other group in society was passing us by, long after the civil rights movement had been launched. Rights mania had gripped the nation, touching blacks, women, homosexuals, migrant farm workers, students, the handicapped, Indians, Hispanics, Asians, aliens—everyone, it seemed, but Catholics (Jews had long since established the Anti-Defamation League).

It was against this background that Father Blum set forth his agenda. He knew that from the beginning of our nation's history, Catholics had struggled for acceptance, looking mostly to the clergy for guidance. In terms of discrimination, Catholics had made progress, but in terms of engaging the culture, they had largely adopted the Greyhound mentality, leaving the driving to others. That had to change.

Most of those who experienced rights mania entertained a narrow view, seeking a greater slice of the American pie for themselves. Father Blum had a very different understanding: he wanted to transform public policy and the culture, making society better not only for Catholics, but for everyone else. The American ideals of liberty, justice and equality, he reasoned, could not be achieved unless the Church was more vocal and lay Catholics more assertive. This is what the Catholic League was set up to do.

Blum's writings concentrated heavily on the schools, the judiciary, the media, the culture, abortion and political participation. He saw two major problems with the schools—the lack of choice and the collapse of values. A tireless champion of vouchers and tuition tax credits, Blum was outraged that teachers, politicians and judges worked hard to deny parents the right to place their children in a parochial school. With regard to the curriculum, Blum joined with many in denouncing what a sham a so-called value-free education was.

Blum was rightfully upset with the courts. None of the rulings

we now live with on abortion, pornography, students' rights, prisoners' rights, etc. are even vaguely found in the Constitution, but that hasn't stopped nine persons from inventing them. The media came in for criticism because of its hostility to Catholicism and for its morally offensive fare, problems that continue to plague us.

The last article that Father Blum wrote was in March, 1990. Entitled, "My Hope for the Future...and a Fond Farewell," Father Blum announced his retirement shortly before he died. Here is how he ended his piece:

"I look to a future in which Catholic League membership recruitment efforts will meet with more than the meager response garnered in the past. I look to a future in which the League will grow in terms of staff; in which more men and women, on fire for the cause of Christ, will be able to find a sense of fulfillment and security in employment with the Catholic League. I look forward to a future in which the Catholic League, supported by the Catholic laity of the United States, will impact more strongly on the ideas of society. And a I look forward to a future in which the Catholic League can more forcefully meet whatever challenges face our most precious freedom: religious freedom."

His final words were, "And that freedom is attainable because of you, the activist Catholics who comprise the Catholic League's membership." That says it all.

I hope you can be with us to celebrate our Silver Anniversary. I have no doubt that Father Blum's spirit will be with us.

THE TRUTH ABOUT POPE PIUS XII

by Sister Margherita Marchione

Pope Pius XII was not a German collaborator nor was he pro-Nazi. Neither was he inactive nor silent. As a member of the Catholic Church, I resent the blatant accusations against the diplomacy of the Pope and the Church during World War II. This is not only indecent journalism but it also an injustice toward a man who saved more Jews than any other person, including Oscar Schindler and Raoul Wallenberg. Unfortunately even in the new Holocaust Museum at Battery Park in New York City the Pope is unjustly criticized. It is historically inaccurate to charge him with "silence."

Should the media be allowed to perpetuate such falsehoods? Documents prove that these misrepresentations are untrue. Pius XII spoke out as much as he could, and was able to do more with actions than with words. To the very end, he was convinced that, should he denounce Hitler publicly, there would be retaliation. And there was. Whenever protests were made, treatment of prisoners worsened immediately. Robert Kempner, the American who served as deputy chief of the Nuremburg war-crimes tribunal, wrote: "All the arguments and writings eventually used by the Catholic Church against Hitler only provoked suicide; the execution of Jews was followed by that of Catholic priests."

Pius XII—through his public discourses, his appeals to governments, and his secret diplomacy—was engaged more than any other individual in the effort to curb the war and rebuild the peace. Documents show that Pius XII was in contact with the German generals who sought to overthrow Hitler. Documents also show that the Jewish community received enormous help: Pius XII's personal funds ransomed Jews from Nazis. Papal representatives in Croatia, Hungary, and Romania intervened to stop deportations. The Pope called for a peace conference

involving Italy, France, England, Germany, and Poland in 1939, in a last-minute bid to avert bloodshed.

An interesting document is the testimony of Albert Einstein who, disenchanted by the silence of universities and editors of newspapers, stated in *Time* magazine (December 23, 1940): "Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth. ...The Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom." Indeed, executing the directives of Pope Pius XII, religious men and women opened their doors to save the Jews.

Never were the Jews and the Vatican so close as during World War II. The Vatican was the only place on the continent where they had any friends. Pope Pius XII's response to the plight of the Jews was to save as many as possible. Yet little has been done to stop the criticism of Pius XII that began in 1963, when Rolf Hochhuth portrayed him as a Nazi collaborator in the play "The Deputy." In contrast to the image suggested by this play, Vatican records indicate that the Church operated an underground railroad that rescued 800,000 European Jews from the Holocaust. After a careful study of available documents, whoever is interested in the truth will no longer condemn the actions of Pope Pius XII and the Catholic Church during this tragic period.

An honest evaluation of Pope Pius XII's words and actions will exonerate him from false accusations and show that he has been unjustly maligned. The Pope neither favored nor was favored by the Nazis. The day after his election (March 3, 1939), the Nazi newspaper, *Berliner Morgenpost* stated its position clearly: "the election of Cardinal Pacelli is not accepted with favor in Germany because he was always opposed to Nazism."

The New York Times editorial (December 25, 1942) was specific: "The voice of Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and

darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas...He is about the only ruler left on the Continent of Europe who dares to raise his voice at all." The Pope's Christmas message was also interpreted in the Gestapo report: "in a manner never known before...the Pope has repudiated the National Socialist New European Order [Nazism]. It is true, the Pope does not refer to the National Socialists in Germany by name, but his speech is one long attack on everything we stand for. ...Here he is clearly speaking on behalf of the Jews." Perhaps the rest of the world should interpret the Pope's words as they were meant and, undoubtedly, correctly understood by the Nazis, i.e.: **POPE PIUS XII WAS ALWAYS OPPOSED TO NAZISM.**

The Jewish Community publicly acknowledged the wisdom of Pope Pius XII's diplomacy. In September 1945, Dr. Joseph Nathan—who represented the Hebrew Commission—stated "Above all, we acknowledge the Supreme Pontiff and the religious men and women who, executing the directives of the Holy Father, recognized the persecuted as their brothers and, with great abnegation, hastened to help them, disregarding the terrible dangers to which they were exposed." In 1958, at the death of Pope Pius XII, Golda Meir sent an eloquent message: "We share in the grief of humanity. When fearful martyrdom came to our people, the voice of the Pope was raised for its victims. The life of our times was enriched by a voice speaking out about great moral truths above the tumult of daily conflict. We mourn a great servant of peace."

THE POPE IN CUBA: MEDIA

MOSTLY FAIR

While overshadowed by President Clinton's latest scandal, Pope John Paul II's historic visit to Cuba in January received, for the most part, very fair treatment from the American media. The Pope's strongly worded Gospel messages promoting faith, family, and the sanctity of life were all thoroughly and accurately reported, as was the outpouring of enthusiasm with which the Cuban people welcomed him.

To be sure, some commentators tried to posit a philosophical similarity between Pope John Paul and Fidel Castro (both advocates for the poor, goes the mantra). Such notions were dispelled, however, by detailed reporting of the Pope's ringing denunciations of Marxism, and his calls for freedom and justice for the Cuban people.

Most of the critical media commentary stayed within the bounds of legitimate discourse. A particularly egregious exception, which drew an immediate response from the league, was the adjacent cartoon by Rob Rogers in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. This clearly crossed the line into anti-Catholic ridicule—as did a similar cartoon by Oliphant, which showed the Pope hearing Castro's confession, with the caption, "One of them is a subversive...or both."

Columnist Colman McCarthy sounded the same theme in a *Baltimore Sun* piece headlined, "What Do John Paul and Fidel Castro Have In Common? It's Their Way Or No Way." McCarthy sought to draw a parallel between Pope John Paul's efforts to "suppress" dissent (i.e., to uphold the Church's teachings) and Castro's 40 year reign of terror in which political dissidents have been systematically tortured, jailed or executed. It is one thing to disagree with the Pope's handling of dissent within the Church. It is nothing short of obscene, however—especially given this Pope's lifetime of courageous advocacy for human rights—to compare his actions with the

human rights atrocities of the Castro regime.

“SOUTH PARK” STOOPS TO THE GUTTER

The Catholic League took strong exception to the February 4 episode of the Comedy Central cartoon, “South Park.” It featured a boxing match between “Jesus” and “Satan.”

In addition to the violence, the script included a priest character who shouts, “Jesus, you’re gonna kick ass”; a boy who coaches Jesus saying, “Goddammit, Jesus, snap out of it”; another young boy who discusses how he stuck an envelope “up my ass”; and, as usual, the chef sings sexually explicit songs to the boys. Moreover, “Satan” slams “Jesus” around the ring, fakes losing the match and “Jesus” bemoans that he was betrayed because everyone bet against him.

A letter of protest was sent to Comedy Central CEO Doug Herzog. The following is the statement the league released to the press:

“In July, one of the creators of ‘South Park,’ Trey Parker, boasted of his agenda by saying, ‘I can guarantee it’s gonna be the raunchiest thing on TV and it’s gonna piss a lot of people off.’ He wasn’t entirely honest—he should have had the guts to say that it was Christians whom he wished to offend.

“Everyone complains how decadent the pop culture has become. But it doesn’t take a blue ribbon commission to figure out why: with people like Parker emulating people like Larry Flynt, it’s no small wonder why things are the way they are.

“To those who say that ‘South Park’ is just a cartoon, I have a suggestion: write to Mr. Parker and ask him to deliver the same message of blasphemy, sex and violence by substituting Martin Luther King for Jesus and Bull Connor for Satan. After all, that should tick a lot of people off, too.”

Those who would like to write to Herzog can do so by contacting him at 1775 Broadway, New York, New York 10019.

FCC COMPLAINT FILED

For the past few years, the San Diego chapter of the Catholic League has been in a battle with a local radio program, the “Dave, Shelly & Chainsaw Show.” The league’s central complaint, as stated by chapter president Carl Horst, is that the “Lash Wednesday” segment of the show is blasphemous: it invites listeners to “confess” their sins on the air, concentrating heavily on sexual sins. Moreover, there is an indecent element to the show that the league believes is integral to its case.

The San Diego chapter has written to the station manager, rallied area Catholics to flood the station with postcards objecting to the show, convened meetings with leaders of various religions that are supportive of our efforts, etc. But nothing seems to budge the offenders. That is why a formal complaint against the show has been filed with the Federal Communications Commission, listing our concerns.

We will keep members up to date on this matter as it unfolds.

SLAMMING PRIESTS AND NUNS

It pains the Catholic League to learn of news reports involving the sexual indiscretion of a priest or nun. The league's position is to issue no comment on those in the media who fairly criticize the Church for not doing enough to check this (or any other) problem. But when criticism extends beyond allegedly culpable sources to the entire corpus of priests and nuns, then it is time for the league to act. Such a time recently came when a South Carolina newspaper, the *News and Press*, published an editorial that crossed the line.

The Darlington newspaper began its editorial commenting on the light sentence given to a Catholic priest charged with sexually abusing a 13-year-old boy. This was entirely legitimate. But then came the indefensible charge that celibacy is the putative cause of pedophilia. Worse still was the comment that sexual improprieties are standard fare for priests and nuns.

"This incident," the editorial said, "is but the latest over hundreds of years involving priests and nuns sworn to celibacy. There are unknown nameless, infants buried in convents all over the world." And we thought Maria Monk was dead.

The league wrote a letter to the publisher and the editor of the newspaper asking for an apology for this "malicious attack."

DECEIT UNMASKED

An editorial in the *Asbury Park Press* struck the Catholic League as deceitful and that is why the incident did not go unchallenged. The New Jersey newspaper was good enough to print a letter registering our complaint.

To the average reader, the editorial in question sounded reasonable enough. The *Asbury Park Press* was taking issue with a decision by the New Jersey Historic Trust to grant funds to a Catholic church for historic preservation purposes. What the reader didn't know was that St. Mary's Church in Wharton, New Jersey was only one of nine churches that received a grant for historical preservation, or that it was the only one on the list of recipients with the initials "R.C." after it. Nor did the reader know that there were other churches which received funding—like St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Freehold—that are closer to Asbury Park's backyard. As we said in our letter, "Put together, this smacks of bigotry, as well as deceit."

We also commented that churches, temples and mosques are integral to the communities in which they exist and should not be treated as if they were somehow inferior to the local firehouse. We reminded the editors that the reason why there are tax breaks for houses of worship is because they are deemed to be in the public interest, just as schools, hospitals, universities, foundations and other institutions are. So if all houses of worship are worthy of public support for their mere existence, we wondered, why aren't the most prominent among them worthy of a grant for the purpose of historical preservation?

The league is grateful to one of its members, who wants to remain anonymous, for giving us the tip we needed in order to protest this incident.

BRIEF FILED AGAINST YALE

The Catholic League has filed an amicus brief on behalf of Orthodox Jewish students at Yale University who have had their religious liberties abridged. The league's brief, prepared by William Bentley Ball, was recently filed in United States District Court for the District of Connecticut.

Yale contends that it has a right to force freshman and sophomore students to live on campus and abide by its living arrangements. If students object, they can live off campus, but only if they agree to pay the nearly \$7,000 room and board fee to the university. The Catholic League believes that the objecting Orthodox Jewish students should not be penalized for opting to live off campus. The students ask only that Yale respect their religious convictions: they cannot in good conscience accept living arrangements that allow for coed dorms and bathrooms, condom machines and "safe sex" literature.

The league explained its position to the media as follows:

"In his Catholic League brief in *Hack et al. v. Yale*, William Bentley Ball said that Yale's policy represents 'a serious imposition upon the religious liberty of Orthodox Jewish students.' Indeed it does, which is why we are fighting this case on both free exercise grounds and freedom of association.

"If the effect of Yale's policy were to incidentally burden religion, there would be little reason to protest. But this policy directly clashes with the religious rights of the students, so much so that it is 'severely coercive.'

"It says something about Yale's alleged commitment to tolerance and diversity that it openly practices such

intolerance for the diversity that these students seek. This case should never have wound up in the courts. That it has is demonstrative of Yale's obstinacy."