

# POLITICS AND RELIGION 2000

Candidates for state and federal office, Republican and Democrat alike, have addressed the subject of politics and religion more this election year than in previous ones. The Catholic League made clear its thoughts on this issue with a formal statement to the media:

“Candidates for public office are often guilty of pandering to special interest groups, and that occasionally includes religious groups as well. But sometimes they are genuinely expressing their thoughts on religion, and that is why it is wrong to reflexively denounce them for doing so.

“Just as it is wrong to wantonly inject religion into politics, it is wrong to deliberately eject religion from politics. The current dispute on this matter between Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Hillary Clinton is a case in point: he has every right to question those who want to limit the public expression of religion and they have every right to question him about his position. Indeed, it would be helpful if we had a national discussion on this subject, absent the kind of political posturing that often takes place.

“Pope John Paul II recently encouraged Catholics to become more participatory in secular affairs. On November 15, he said to Catholics ‘You must speak out on all occasions, in season and out of season...A secular society which is ever more silent about God needs your voice.’ The Catholic League has been doing just that, and we will continue to do so, without favor to any political party.

“To cite one example of our non-partisanship on this issue, take George W. Bush. We defended his right to express his reliance on Christ without having to succumb to the demands of those who want to censor such discourse from public life. And now we are critical of his decision to open his South Carolina

campaign at Bob Jones University, a school that is blatantly anti-Catholic. As the election year proceeds, the Catholic League will continue in this vein.”

On February 8, William Donohue appeared on “Hardball” with Chris Matthews to discuss this subject. He took a shot at George W. Bush, Hillary Clinton, Steve Largent, Dennis Hastert and Dick Armey.

When asked by Matthews whether he was a Republican or Democrat, Donohue said, “I started as a Democrat, and I quit and became a Republican. And seven years ago, I quit them, and I have been an independent since then. I have no intention of joining either party.” To which Matthews said, “Wow. Thank you very much, William Donohue. Speaks like my stomach when I’m mad.”

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## **MORE ART QUA HATE SPEECH ON CAMPUS**

A lot of artists, for some reason, hate the Catholic Church. Why artists hate the Church more than, say, milkmen, is hard to say, but there is little doubt that they do. Maybe it’s because they fancy themselves as being creative. Maybe it has something to do with their fixation on abstract thinking. But chances are neither explanation is adequate: patients in mental hospitals often think they’re creative and it is their wont to engage in abstract thought. Yet few are bigots.

Whatever the reason, they’ve struck again, and both times on the west coast. To be specific, the problems occurred on the campuses of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles and Clackamas Community College in Oregon City,

Oregon. As is almost always the case with bigoted artists, they used sex as a weapon to target the Church.

At the Fisher Gallery on the campus of USC, there was an exhibition entitled "Crossing Boundaries." In a display called "The Source, Virgins and Crosses," 30 crosses are juxtaposed with a blank outline of the Virgin of Guadalupe. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, "the actual Virgin has been removed, leaving just the aura that surrounds her, resembling a vaginal orifice." This was supposed to be understood in Marxian terms: "If religion is the opium of the masses, the brothers say, then the Virgin is man's entry into paradise—spiritually and physically." Another offensive piece of art, "El Nino's Wake," depicts Baby Jesus naked at a wake.

The Pauling Center at Clackamas Community College featured "Two Popes Boinking." It showed two men wearing papal tiaras having sex. State representative Bill Witt was understandably upset with this, as were league members in the area.

We wrote to Dr. Steven Sample, president of USC, stating our objections.. We made the point that in 1994 the president of San Francisco State University was faced with a similar problem. When he discovered anti-Semitic art on his campus, he said it contributed to a "hostile campus environment" and ordered the offending mural removed. We asked Dr. Sample if he thought he had a duty to do the same with the bigoted art on his campus.

In response, we heard from Lloyd Armstrong, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. He said he would look into the matter and get back with us. We are awaiting his response.

We put similar pressure on the president of Clackamas Community College, Dr. John Keyser. We are happy to report that upon receipt of our letter, faculty at the college met and decided to remove the artwork from the gallery; it was

transferred temporarily to a spot near faculty offices and then sent on its way with the rest of the exhibition. A panel discussion on this controversy was scheduled that included a representative of the Archdiocese of Portland. The league was invited to participate but we were unable to do so given other commitments.

The Marxian statement about religion being the opiate of the masses probably gets at the root cause of this problem more than anything. In their arrogance, artists—to say nothing of their intellectual comrades in the academy—sincerely believe that religion is a drug that stupefies the masses, draining them of revolutionary fervor. The truth of the matter is that it is the learned ones who've been doped. Raymond Aron, the late French sociologist, had a more accurate understanding of what was at work when he wrote his book, *Marxism: Opiate of the Intellectuals*.

In any event, art *qua* hate speech remains hate speech. Almost any dope should be able to figure this one out.

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## INDULGING WITH INDULGENCES

The *New York Times* took the occasion of the opening of the Holy Door at St. Paul Outside the Walls Basilica in Rome to lecture the Catholic Church on its teaching concerning indulgences. The story, by Alessandra Stanley, appeared in the January 19, 2000 issue under the headline, "The Pope Opens a Door, but Not All Christians Feel Welcome."

"Indulgences, the Roman Catholic practice of remitting punishment for sins in exchange for prayer, repentance and, in the Middle Ages, even money, helped set off the Protestant Reformation," was the lead for the *New York Times* story on the

opening of the Holy Door. According to the Times, "some Protestant leaders, including Baptists, Presbyterians and Calvinists, chose to skip an event they viewed as an affront."

The *Times* then reported that "after the Second Vatican Council reforms, progressive Catholics sought to play down indulgences, viewing them as a hindrance to ecumenical dialogue." The Times cited no sources for these "progressive Catholics," which generally means the statement resulted from listening to the shared wisdom of reporters over a few glasses of wine.

The *Times* story provides a good mix of classic anti-Catholicism with new media trends in Catholic coverage. First, the titillating reference to indulgences in exchange for money feeds old-fashioned nativist attitudes about Catholics. The secular media rarely takes the time to understand and accurately present the Catholic teachings they question, usually relying on age-old anti-Catholic prejudices to define it for the audience. (As indulgences could be gained through acts of charity, giving was long held as one means. Overly aggressive solicitation of almsgiving for indulgences spurred on Luther's protest. Shortly thereafter the Church would forbid indulgences for financial donations.) Resurrecting a practice abandoned 450 years ago was done purely for its anti-Catholic appeal.

Conjuring up unnamed "progressive Catholics" to downplay Church teaching is a newer twist in media coverage of the Catholic Church. The media sets itself as judge and jury in alleged debates within the Church, and usually comes down endorsing internal dissent to support its own secular outlook in supposedly objective news stories. The practice is not only anti-Catholic, but also rotten journalism.

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# GETTING BASHED IN A TRAVEL GUIDE

Every bookstore carries volumes of Fodor's travel guides. They are a useful source of information about cities and countries throughout the world. Unfortunately, they can also be a source of anti-Catholic bigotry. Take the *Fodor's Exploring Italy* book.

"*Mammismo*—the attachment of Italian men to their mothers—is as strong as ever. Christ, runs the old joke, was an Italian, brought up at home for 30 years in the belief that his mother was a virgin and he was the son of God."

That gem is found on page 11 of the current edition, published in 1998.

On the next page, this is found: "The Catholic Church has been bound up with Italian life for almost 2,000 years. Although now in apparent decline and no longer obsessed with political power, it still plays a part in national affairs and impinges—however subtly—on many aspects of day to day life."

We've asked Peter Olson, chairman of Random House, Inc., to delete these bigoted statements from the next edition of this book. Why don't you do the same? Write to him at 201 East 50<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, New York 10022.

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# FATHER GUMPEL CORRECTS THE RECORD

In the last issue of *Catalyst*, we mentioned that one of the three Catholic scholars asked to join the commission on the Holocaust was Father John F. Morley. We also noted that Father Morley “has been critical of the work of Father Peter Gumpel, the Jesuit who is promoting the cause of sainthood for Pope Pius XII; Father Morley has labeled Father Gumpel’s work ‘biased.’”

Father Gumpel assures us that he is the “realtor of the cause of Pius XII; that is, by papal appointment the autonomous and independent judge of investigation, whose task is to examine in a completely impartial manner everything concerned with this cause; to supervise the drafting of the ‘Position on Life and Heroic Virtues,’ which in due time will be presented to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and to make sure also that possible objections have been presented and treated in an objective and fair manner.”

Father Gumpel contends that if Father Morley had gotten this right, he would not have accused him of being biased. We at the Catholic League fully agree with this assessment. Moreover, we believe that, together with Father Pierre Blet, Father Peter Gumpel is the world’s foremost authority on the subject of Pope Pius XII.

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## HATE MAIL

On January 26, we received a startling amount of text on the “Feedback” section of our website. It took 15 minutes just to

open the page due to the volume. What it said was "HAIL HITLER HAIL PIUS."

The author of this brilliant expression actually took the time to write this approximately 208 times per page on more than 200 pages, amounting to a whopping 416,000 entries. In the headings, the phrase "YOU WILL ALL BURN FOR YOUR IGNORANCE" was written.

It is not a good thing when a person's IQ matches his shoe size.

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## **BROOKLYN CHURCHES VANDALIZED**

Over the past few months, six Brooklyn Roman Catholic Churches have been vandalized. Statues have been decapitated, broken and defaced, and in some instances hate mail has accompanied the desecrations.

In response, we contacted the Brooklyn District Attorney's office, the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice, asking the authorities to make these investigations a priority; the league also offered to assist in any way it could. On January 21, we took another step.

To help pay for the restoration of the vandalized statutes, the Catholic League made a contribution to each of the targeted churches: St. Jerome's, Our Lady of Refuge, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Fortunata, and St. Rita's.

From what we have learned, these crimes were not the act of wayward delinquents, rather they have all the markings of deliberate malice. Indeed, the fact that they occurred in the same New York borough where white-collar miscreants recently

insulted Catholics with hate speech masked as art (the Brooklyn Museum of Art fiasco) suggests that anti-Catholic bigotry is alive and well in Brooklyn.

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## ANTI-CATHOLICISM IN AMERICAN CULTURE

A new book that Catholic League members will not want to miss is now available from Our Sunday Visitor. *Anti-Catholicism in American Culture* is a series of essays which includes the Center for Media and Public Affairs' newest report on media coverage of the Catholic Church. The book is edited by Robert Lockwood, former president of the publishing division of Our Sunday Visitor, and now the Director of Research for the Catholic League. Here are some of the book's highlights:

*The seven anti-Catholic assumptions common to the American experience*

*The sordid account of an anti-Catholic diatribe that has been a best selling "religious" title for more than 155 years*

*Why the role of women is a flash point for criticism of the Church*

*How the focus of anti-Catholicism has changed radically from the 1960s to the 1990s*

*Ways priests are simultaneously depicted as sexually repressed prudes and licentious perverts*

*How the secular media ridicule Catholic teaching under the guise of freedom of speech*

*Comprehensive analysis of media coverage of the Catholic Church from 1963 – 1998*

*Twelve practical ways to improve relationships with the secular media that actually work, by William A. Donohue, President of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights*

*Anti-Catholicism in American Culture* is available from OSV for \$19.95 plus shipping and can be ordered at 1-800-348-2440.

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## **HILLARY CLINTON—OFF ON THE WRONG FOOT**

Hillary Rodham Clinton announced her candidacy for the U.S. Senate on February 6, and she did so by sending the wrong message to Catholics. “I’ll be on your side in the fight against school vouchers, which drain taxpayer dollars from our public schools,” she told the crowd at SUNY Purchase, the Westchester campus of the State University of New York.

However, on December 14, 1999, Mrs. Clinton told 100 Orthodox Jewish leaders that she would back certain “constitutionally correct” methods for government to help private schools. On December 17, Catholic League president William Donohue wrote to Mrs. Clinton asking for clarification but she never responded.

On another matter, just prior to Mrs. Clinton’s announcement, her campaign operatives blasted the song “Captain Jack” to her crowd of admirers. “Your sister’s gone out, she’s on a date and you just sit at home and masturbate,” is how the lyrics

read. Other lyrics put a positive spin on pornography and drugs.

The Catholic League, along with Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, led a chorus of criticism against Mrs. Clinton. Here is what we told the press:

“Bishop Mark Hurley recently criticized Vice President Al Gore for feeding anti-Catholicism by constantly maintaining that vouchers drain money from public schools. Now Mrs. Clinton is at it, only this time her ‘fight against vouchers’ campaign comes on the heels of promising to deliver on offering public assistance to private schools. She needs to make up her mind on this issue and she needs to do so without offending Catholic sensibilities.

“It cannot be argued that playing a patently offensive song prior to welcoming Mrs. Clinton was a mistake. No, Mrs. Clinton’s operatives wanted to send a message and they succeeded. It is mind-boggling that Mrs. Clinton’s campaign chiefs would want to flag a sexually irresponsible song as a way of introducing her to New York. Talk about getting off on the wrong foot.”