

POPE'S JOYOUS ANNIVERSARY; WORLDWIDE ACCLAIM

The Catholic League chose Monday, March 3 to make a special tribute to Pope Francis on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*; it is ten days before his one-year anniversary as the leader of over one billion Catholics. We will publish our op-ed ad in the next edition.

By all accounts, the pope has won the acclaim not only of practicing Catholics, but of many who have fallen away. Those from other religions, as well as many who are not religious, have also recognized his gifts: he is a populist pope, one who resonates well with the average person.

We chose to make a statement in the nation's most influential newspaper the week before the Holy Father's special day because we wanted to influence the impending discussion on his first year. To be exact, we are concerned about those who have previously been at odds with the Vatican, but are now trying to claim the pope as one of their own. These are more than cafeteria Catholics—they are playing politics.

In other words, some of his new fans have an agenda. They want practicing Catholics to think that Pope Francis is unhappy with their traditional focus on the rights of the unborn and other cultural issues. This is untrue, but it is an idea that has gained currency: it is not the pope who feels this way; rather, it is those who seek to alter public discourse on some important Catholic teachings.

Owing in large part to Pope Francis' relaxed style of conversing with the media, his words have proven to be fodder to those who are bent on parsing them. Some of the misinterpretations may be innocent, but some are not: the deliberate twisting of his comments to fit a particular

political vision is not uncommon.

What is particularly odious is the increasing tendency of agenda-ridden Catholics to trash Pope Benedict XVI, as well as Blessed Pope John Paul II: this is done so that their inflated image of Pope Francis stands in sharp contrast to Benedict and John Paul. What they hope to achieve is a sense of momentum—things are moving their way and we need to get in line. Their goal is as transparent as it is dishonest.

The Catholic League loves all three popes, and we implore everyone to give due recognition to their very different strengths. But to those who constantly look at the world through a political lens, there are good popes (Francis) and bad ones (his predecessors). This is a jaundiced view of reality, and it is unfair to all of them.

Congratulations Pope Francis!

HHS MANDATE BLOCKED

The U.S. Supreme Court has put the brakes on the infamous Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate that would force Catholic non-profits, and objecting private businessmen, to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, contraception, and sterilization. The issue has yet to be fully resolved.

On January 24, the Supreme Court issued an injunction blocking enforcement of the HHS mandate. It affirmed Justice Sonia Sotomayor's New Year's Eve order in the case; she acted on an appeal from the Little Sisters of the Poor to stop enforcement of the edict.

The issue was decided on procedural grounds. The high court

enjoined the Obama administration from enforcing the mandate on the sisters while the case is pending before the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

What is significant about this ruling is that it weakens the administration's argument that it was accommodating Catholic non-profits by allowing the Little Sisters to designate a third-party administrator to provide for these morally objectionable services.

The record is mixed on the many appeals heard by the courts on this issue; we have won some, and lost some. That is why the Supreme Court will eventually decide this matter once and for all.

It is revealing that among those who are working against the First Amendment religious liberty rights of Americans are many atheist and left-wing civil liberties organizations. So-called victims' groups are also involved, as are Catholic dissident groups. We expect them to lose in the end.

ENVY DRIVES INEQUALITY ISSUE

William A. Donohue

When Pope Francis speaks about our “throwaway” abortion culture, or comments on marriage as a union between a man and a woman, he wins no points from those on the left. But when he speaks about income inequality, he is praised by the likes of President Barack Obama and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio. However, these three men are not speaking from the same page. What is driving Obama and de Blasio is envy; what is driving the pope is justice.

The Catholic Church considers envy to be one of the seven capital sins. It is not identical to jealousy. The jealous want what others have; the envious want to deprive others of what they have.

The Austrian-German sociologist, Helmut Schoeck, contended that envy was inherent in human nature and had to be contained. He credited the Catholic Church for taming envy, saying it played a decisive role in the advancement of civilization. But it had a way of springing back with a vengeance, especially in the hands of left-wing politicians.

Schoeck's book, *Envy: A Theory of Social Behaviour*, released in the 1960s, was a clarion call against the exploitation of envy for political ends. "The time has surely come when we should stop behaving as though envious man was the main criterion for economic and social policy," he said.

Obama and de Blasio exemplify Schoeck's concern. Both of them are consumed with tapping into a debased appetite for envy, driving a wedge between the classes. De Blasio, for instance, promised to raise taxes on the rich to pay for his prekindergarten classes. Governor Andrew Cuomo agreed that this is a good idea (forget the fact that all the evidence shows that Head Start-type programs have no lasting effect on students), but he said he would pay for it out of state funds. No way, said de Blasio, he still wants the rich to pay more. Thus, the mayor's prime interest was to "get the rich."

Obama is so obsessed with leveling the classes that even his former economic advisor, Larry Summers, spoke out against his policies at the World Economic Forum in Davos. "The rhetoric of envy and the rhetoric of tearing down, I don't think, is the right rhetoric for America's leaders," he said. Summers advocates policies that grow the economy for everyone; otherwise, he said, we would be left with a "stagnant pie."

What is particularly striking about Obama is his condemnation

of conditions that he presides over; he acts as though he is a reporter covering the news. When he says that inequality is rising, and poverty is crippling entire segments of the population, does he realize what he is saying about himself? These conditions have worsened on his watch. It would behoove him to spend more time changing the policies he implemented that are responsible for this economic mess.

If those who are publicly screaming about inequality really wanted to do something about it, they would endorse plans such as those proposed by Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander. He wants to redirect 41 percent of the money spent on education to allow federal scholarships for low income families so they can send their child to any private, or public (out of their neighborhood), school of their choice. But, of course, the poverty screamers are beholden to the teachers' unions, and the last thing they want is competition. So the poor suffer, precisely because those who champion their cause work hard to deny them free choice in education.

So irrational is the politics of envy that its proponents don't really care whether the policies it is supposed to fund work at all. Take economist Rick Newman. In a burst of honesty, he admits that "getting the rich" is more important than policy outcomes. Writing for Yahoo Finance, he said, "let's just say it—the rich can afford a tax increase, even if the money is used for some dim-witted redistributionist scheme that doesn't incentivize work."

Such a depraved vision of society has nothing to do with Pope Francis' concerns. In the pope's statement to those meeting in Davos, he sounded more like Summers than Obama or de Blasio. He did not evince a trace of envy in his plea to the rich: "Those who demonstrated their attitude for being innovative and for improving the lives of many people by their ingenuity and professional expertise can further contribute by putting their skills at the service of those who are still living in dire poverty."

Pope Francis wants the rich to use their skills to help the poor; he is not baiting the masses to demand that the rich pay more in taxes so that they can pay less. It's the difference between a genuine interest in helping the needy, and soaking the rich.

The politics of envy does nothing to address the conditions of the poor, but it does foster divisiveness. Worse, it allows shallow politicians to beat their breast in a false demonstration of compassion, while delivering nothing but resentment and stagnation. If that is what they want, so be it, but they have no right to pretend that they see eye-to-eye with the pope.

ROLLING STONE LIKES THE POPE

The February 13th cover story in *Rolling Stone* was a lengthy piece by Mark Binelli on Pope Francis. The article was respectful, though hardly without flaws. Like so many of the pope's new fans, Binelli's bouquets come at the price of exaggerating the Holy Father's uniqueness, and unfairly characterizing his predecessors.

Binelli likes it that Francis smiles a lot in public, but anyone who is objective would extend the same compliment to both Pope Benedict XVI and Blessed Pope John Paul II. Francis is praised for saying "go without fear." Yet "Be Not Afraid" was John Paul's signature statement. The new pope is applauded for reaching out to liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, yet a bolder move was made when Benedict invited dissident theologian Hans Küng to meet with him. Francis wins points for kissing the feet of AIDS patients, yet such acts of kindness are hardly unique—the late Cardinal John O'Connor emptied

their bed pans.

Binelli says that Francis “still considers abortion an evil.” Still? I bet the pope “still” regards all forms of unjust killing to be evil. Binelli is so excited by the pope’s words, “Who am I to judge?”, that he mentions them twice. But like so many others, he fails to cite what the pope really said: “If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?” The pope’s qualifiers should tell Binelli something.

To build Francis up, the others must be knocked down. John Paul was a “reactionary,” and Benedict was a “dour academic” who had a “disastrous papacy.” It is amusing to read that bad-guy Pope Benedict described homosexuality as an “intrinsic moral evil,” as if good-guy Pope Francis thinks otherwise. Binelli should reread his closing remark where he rightly quotes Francis as saying that his positions on gay marriage and abortion are “That of the Church.”

Binelli says “petrified Catholic traditionalists” objected to priests who “actually took up arms” in Latin America in the 1980s. But if liberal Catholics are truly horrified by violence, why didn’t they feel the same way?

PARSING THE POPE’S WORDS

Not a day goes by without a pundit or editorial writer opining on what Pope Francis said about some controversial issue. While every pope, as well as every religious and secular leader, properly has his remarks subjected to scrutiny, Pope Francis is having his words sliced and diced far beyond anything his predecessors were accustomed to. Quite frankly, the goal of many commentators is to make the pope’s statements

appear to underscore their own ideological agenda.

Nothing excites the passions of those on the left today more than gay rights. Their obsession is shown with Pope Francis' comment, made over the summer, "Who am I to judge?" Indeed, it appeared in a January 15th editorial posted on the website of the *New York Times*, and in a Huffington Post piece written by an Episcopal gay priest. But that is not what the pope said.

What Francis said was, "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?" The difference between what he is quoted as saying, and what he actually said, is not minor. Those who parse his words agree, which is why they parse them. It is important to note that the pope did not offer two sentences: his one sentence was chopped to alter his message.

A Lexis-Nexis search discloses that there were 907 articles that cite the phrase, "Who am I to judge" and "Pope Francis." When letters to the editor and duplicates are filtered out, the final tally was 799. Of that number, 494, or 62 percent of the total, contain just the words, "Who am I to judge?" Only 305, or 38 percent, report the entire sentence. Moreover, it is becoming more common to distort what he said, not less.

The willingness of Pope Francis to reach out to homosexuals who are searching for the Lord is commendable. But attempts to parse his words are not.

HOLLYWOOD'S MORAL COMPASS

The song, "Alone Yet Not Alone," was nominated for an Oscar, but then the decision was rescinded; the tune is from a Christian film of the same title. "Philomena," a propaganda

film strewn with lies about the Catholic Church, won four nominations. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences does the balloting, and most of the voters are white men: in 2012, 94% were white and 77% were male. It would be nice to know if there is even one practicing Catholic among them.

If Hollywood is not Catholic-friendly, it certainly has no phobia when it comes to the sexual abuse of children. We know this because five years ago the Tinseltown celebs came to the defense of Roman Polanski, a confessed child rapist, when he won a Zurich Film Festival award. Harvey Weinstein, the distributor of "Philomena," referred to the "so-called crime" that Polanski committed. But there is nothing "so-called" about plying a 13-year-old girl with a Quaalude and champagne, and then raping her in a tub.

"Free Polanski" was the name of the petition launched in 2009 to defend the man who drugged, penetrated, and sodomized the girl. It politely referred to this as "a case of morals." That was the best it could do. It was signed by Stephen Frears, the director of "Philomena," Martin Scorsese, Jonathan Demme, John Landis, Mike Nichols, Steven Soderberg, and many others. The man who led the petition was Woody Allen.

Allen has been nominated for best original screenplay in "Blue Jasmine," and Cate Blanchett is up for best actress. But the white boys who voted in February had to decide whether they wanted to honor a man whose adopted daughter, Dylan Farrow, said he sexually abused her when she was a seven-year-old. Prosecutors found there was "probable cause," but decided to spare Dylan the trauma of a trial. So Allen walked. Had he been a priest, he would have been in prison years ago.

Hollywood's moral compass is set: it has infinitely more tolerance for celebrity child rapists than it does for Christianity, especially Catholicism.

NEW YORK TIMES SHOWS ITS BIAS

There is no newspaper in the United States that is more extreme in its defense of abortion-on-demand and homosexual rights than the *New York Times*. It regards the defense of partial-birth abortion to be a “moderate” position, and its reporters have openly bragged about the record number of homosexuals who write feature stories. The January 23, 2014 edition offered more support to the accusation that it is biased in its coverage on these issues.

There was a front-page story about a homosexual vice principal in Seattle who was asked to step down when it was learned that he was married to a man. The 1,351-word story did not focus on the man’s violation of a contract he voluntarily signed (Catholic employees are expected to abide by Catholic teachings); rather, it focused on students who were rallying to his side. The story featured four photos: the one on the front page was in color, and one of the three pictures on p. A16 was quite big (9”x6”).

On the opposite page, p. A17, there was an average-size picture of the March for Life that was held in January in Washington, D.C. There was no story. Yet there could have been a great one: hundreds of thousands of marchers, overwhelmingly young, braved the bitter cold; many had traveled through a snow storm the day before to get there (the federal government was shut down because of the bad conditions).

A handful of young people from Seattle who supported their fired vice principal merits big coverage, but a massive pro-life march in a winter storm is all but ignored. And the motto of the *New York Times* is, “All the News That’s Fit to Print.” I guess pro-life news is not fit to print.

HAS BILL MAHER COOLED OFF?

Readers will recall that in our last issue, we announced how we pulled out all the stops to get Time Warner, the parent company of HBO, to dump Bill Maher's HBO show. We detailed Maher's relentless attacks on priests, bishops—even the pope—branding them all child rapists.

We ran a lengthy report on Maher's anti-Catholic rants on our website, enlisted the support of the bishops, contacted our e-mail list, and published a full-page statement about this issue in *Catalyst*: we asked everyone to write to Time Warner chairman and CEO, Jeff Bewkes.

Well, it is too early to see if Maher has changed. But in the first five weeks of his new season, he has not made a single "joke" labeling the clergy child molesters. He has made an occasional snide remark, but nothing of the kind of fare that set off the alarms.

On his first show of the new season, January 17, Maher made a flip, but not obscene, comment about the pope that indicated he had been spoken to. At the end of his remark about Pope Francis, he turned to the side and said the following to someone offstage: "Don't f***ing start with me. It's a new season."

Has Bill Maher just cooled off for a spell, or has he been pressured to change his tune for good, at least as far as his HBO show is concerned? We can't say right now, but the early returns look promising. We'll keep you posted. Thanks to all who wrote to Mr. Bewkes.

“PHILOMENA” IS A MALICIOUS FRAUD

Of all the movies up for an Oscar this year, “Philomena” is by far the one that Catholics, and the public-at-large, need to be wary about. What has been peddled as a true story is, in fact, untrue. Worse, it deliberately paints the Catholic Church in a negative way, and is especially cruel to Irish nuns.

“Philomena” is such an outrageous lie that Bill Donohue exposed it in a lengthy article, “Debunking Philomena.” Copies were sent to the bishops, those in the entertainment industry, and to many in the media; scores of reporters in the U.S., England, and Ireland were mailed a copy. It is posted on the Catholic League website; see “Special Reports” section.

The crux of the matter is this: according to the book (of the same name), upon which the movie is based, Philomena Lee got pregnant out-of-wedlock in Ireland in 1952 when she was 18-years-old. That part is true. But it is a malicious lie to say that the nuns stole her baby and then sold him to “the highest bidder.” It is also a lie to say that Philomena went to the U.S. to find him.

In reality, Philomena’s mother died when she was six, leaving her father to care for three boys and three girls. He put the girls in a convent and raised the boys. When Philomena got pregnant, and could not provide for her child, her father contacted the nuns asking for assistance.

In other words, the nuns never “stole” the baby. Moreover, Philomena’s baby was not sold to “the highest bidder”: no fee of any sort was charged. The Wisconsin couple who adopted the

boy offered a donation, which is customary, but it was entirely voluntary. And Philomena never set foot in the United States until the end of last year when she was hawking the movie—no attempt was ever made to find her son. Her son died of AIDS in the mid-1990s.

When the writer, the director, and the actors involved are asked about criticism by the Catholic League, they quickly say that the movie is “inspired” by true events. To show how utterly dishonest they are, consider the last paragraph of the book’s Prologue. The author, Martin Sixsmith, says, “Everything that follows is true, *or reconstructed to the best of my ability.*” (Our italic.)

The word “everything” is an absolute—it allows for no exceptions. But Sixsmith can’t even complete the sentence without contradicting himself: as soon as “or” is added, the claim is no longer absolute. It gets better.

“Gaps have been filled,” Sixsmith says, “characters extrapolated, and incidents surmised”; this is also how the film starts. The gaps, it turns out, are gargantuan, but he is a master at filling them.

Most of those associated with the film are from England, so it is hardly surprising to see the Irish depicted in a negative light. The Weinstein boys, Harvey and Bob, distributed the movie: they are no strangers to anti-Catholicism, having given us such beauties as “Priest,” “The Butcher Boy,” “Dogma,” “40 Days and 40 Nights,” “The Magdalene Sisters,” “Bad Santa,” and “Black Christmas.”

Harvey Weinstein proved how diabolical he is when he went to Switzerland in January to meet with Vatican officials: he wanted the pope to see the film in a private screening. He failed. Father Federico Lombardi of the Holy See Press Office said, “The Holy Father does not see films and will not be seeing this one.”

However, two Vatican officials did agree to see it. Immediately, it was said that Pope Francis' "personal secretary" saw it. Floating this lie was Steve Coogan, a co-producer of the movie and the person who adapted the book for the screen, as well as several media outlets on both sides of the Atlantic. The person they identified as the pope's personal secretary, Msgr. Guillermo Karcher, is actually one of nine papal masters of ceremonies; he is not even the main master. Msgr. Alfred Xuereb is the pope's secretary.

There were more lies. Coogan told CNN that Philomena Lee was invited by the Vatican to meet with the pope. In fact, the two of them shook hands with the pope behind a wall, as part of the general audience, which is open to the public.

MSNBC host Richard Liu took up the Weinstein party line by mouthing all sorts of lies, and Coogan played right along with him, providing new fodder. Charlie Rose of CBS was another "useful idiot." By contrast, Christiane Amanpour of CNN, and Andrea Mitchell of NBC, were fair.

The Weinsteins have spent an enormous amount of money advertising this movie, especially in the *New York Times*. That's because this is not just a film: it is a propaganda statement designed to undercut the moral voice of Catholicism.

The hatred of the Catholic Church that many in the entertainment business have is no secret; we have documented it many times over. But when large amounts of cash are spent on selling a movie that is riddled with vicious lies about Catholicism, and passed off as if it were true, it is cause for outrage.

We wouldn't be surprised if the Weinsteins showed a cropped photo of Philomena and the pope on Oscar night. It would certainly be consistent with their deceitful tactics.

U.S. NEWS DEFENDS BIGOTRY

We were only one week into the new year when we were treated to one of the most anti-Catholic articles we've seen in many years. Columnist Jamie Stiehm published her onslaught against Catholics, as well as the Catholic Church, in *U.S. News and World Report*. We choose our words carefully: this was not just an assault on the teachings of the Catholic Church, it was an assault on Catholics.

"The Catholic Supreme Court's War on Women" is the title of this screed. What set Stiehm off was Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor's decision to stay the Health and Human Services mandate from taking effect January 1.

Sotomayor is referred to as "just a good Catholic girl" who "put her religion ahead of her jurisprudence. What a surprise, but that is no small thing." The Justice's decision "brings us to confront an uncomfortable reality," Stiehm writes. "More than WASPS, Methodists, Jews, Quakers or Baptists, Catholics often try to impose their beliefs on you, me, public discourse and institutions." She then lists, as a happy exception, Nancy Pelosi. Sotomayor, by contrast, "is selling out the sisterhood."

"Catholics in high places of power have the most trouble, I've noticed, practicing the separation of church and state," Stiehm says. "The pugnacious Catholic Justice, Antonin Scalia, is the most aggressive offender on the Court, but not the only one." Now it seems that Justice Sotomayor "has joined the ranks of five Republican Catholic men on the John Roberts court in showing a clear religious bias when it comes to women's rights and liberties. *We can no longer be silent about this.*" (Our italics.)

Stiehm also indicts “the meddlesome American Roman Catholic Archbishops” who “seek and wield tremendous power and influence in the political sphere.” Moreover, “The rock of Rome refuses to budge on women’s reproductive rights and the Supreme Court is getting good and ready to strike down *Roe v. Wade*...”

This is a throwback to the most anti-Catholic vitriol of the 19th century. Stiehm hurls every negative stereotype there ever was at us: Catholic public officials are not to be trusted; Catholics do not think for themselves; Catholics want to impose their religion on others; Catholics do not believe in separation of church and state; Catholics want to control women; Catholic bishops interfere in the lives of others; and the Vatican is a beacon of intolerance.

When we first read this attack, we investigated who Jamie Stiehm was (we had never heard of her). She is a writer for Creators Syndicate; the company distributes her articles to its subscribers, and they decide whether to publish them. We believed that the *U.S. News* piece was distributed by Creators Syndicate, and so we criticized both media outlets.

At first, an official at Creators Syndicate said that although this particular article by Jamie Stiehm was not distributed by the company, he would take no responsibility for her work, even though she publishes a weekly column for Creators; he also thanked those who liked it. When word of the controversy got out, Brent Bozell, who is on the Catholic League’s advisory board, offered to act as a go-between between Bill Donohue and Rick Newcombe, the head of Creators Syndicate; Bozell writes for the company.

Donohue and Newcombe spoke at some length and came to an amicable understanding. Newcombe said he never would have published such a bigoted article, and Donohue was convinced of his sincerity.

Bill Donohue then asked Brian Kelly, the Editor and Chief Content Officer of *U.S. News*, whether he defends the article. To his surprise, Kelly did. Brian Kelly said Jamie Stiehm's attack on Catholics and the Catholic Church was "within the bounds of fair commentary." He compared her vicious statement to "pieces from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Archdiocese of New York and Concerned Women for America."

Here is how Bill Donohue replied: "I have no way of knowing if Kelly is a bigot. I do know he is incompetent. Any man who equates a reasonable defense of Catholicism, written by those in the employ of the Catholic Church, with Jamie Stiehm's anti-Catholic screed, lacks the faculty of discernment, and thus has no legitimate role to play in journalism. He couldn't defend this in public; I challenge him to do so."

We made sure that Stiehm's attack was widely read. In addition to our media blitz, we sent it to the top schools of journalism, as well as to journalist societies and associations. Multicultural and Diversity institutes were also blanketed. All major Hispanic media outlets and civil rights organizations learned of Stiehm's condemnation of Justice Sonya Sotomayor. We also contacted all of the chapters of the Federalist Society, the conservative civil liberties organization. We were delighted when Holly McKay of Fox News, and others, picked up this story.

There was a time when *U.S. News & World Report* was a respected magazine. Like so many other magazines, the print edition no longer exists; it is available only online. No matter, Brian Kelly is a disgrace: the Georgetown graduate is comfortable disseminating anti-Catholic propaganda, though as Bill Donohue said, he cannot do so in public.