

# **“SPRINGER OPERA” DRAWS FIRE; TRUMP ASKED TO ACT**

On the day that “Jerry Springer: The Opera” debuted in New York, the Catholic League held a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Joining Bill Donohue were Brent Bozell of the Media Research Council, Dr. Deal Hudson of the Christian Review, and Ralph Reed of the Faith and Freedom Coalition; Bozell serves on the advisory board of the Catholic League, Hudson is a member of the board of directors, and Reed is an influential evangelical. All spoke about their concerns and what they were going to do about it.

The seriousness of this obscene assault on Christians, and the fact that the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funds the entity behind the play, merited a multi-level response: Donohue wrote to President Donald Trump, the House and Senate subcommittees that have authority over the NEA, and Dr. Jane Chu, chairman of the NEA. See pp. 4-9.

Donohue focused on two central issues: a) the propriety of using federal dollars to help underwrite the New Group, the production company that hosted the “Springer Opera,” and b) the need to appoint a new chairman of the NEA.

Regarding the first concern, Donohue made it clear that if it is wrong to use public monies to promote religion, then it must also be wrong to denigrate religion. To be specific, it is wholly unjust to force taxpayers to tolerate government censorship of the Ten Commandments on public property while at the same time forcing them to pay for attacks on Christianity.

President Trump asked the Congress to cut all funding to the NEA, but he was overridden by both the House and the Senate. This is one reason why Donohue took a different strategy: he

asked the president to nominate a morally responsible person to succeed Chu, whose term ends in June. Trump is expected to name her replacement soon; his choice must be confirmed by the Senate.

Chu and Donohue exchanged letters, explaining their respective positions; the tone was professional. However, Chu's refusal to even address the bigoted nature of the musical was inexcusable.

The New York media largely ignored the play, but our campaign did draw good Internet coverage. Also, Donohue spent an hour discussing this with Deal Hudson on his Ave Maria radio program.

We are most grateful to the coverage that Raymond Arroyo's EWTN show, "The World Over," gave to the press conference.

We look forward to President Trump's nominee to succeed Chu. We are delighted to play the lead role in nudging him to do the right thing.

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## **"Magdalene" Update**

The Weinstein Company movie, "Mary Magdalene," will not open on Good Friday. It is being moved to a later date.

Catholic League members will recall that our February appeal was a request for donations that would fund a media blitz against the movie. We cited three aspects of this movie that were objectionable: its opening on Good Friday; the Harvey Weinstein connection; and the film's script.

The Weinstein Company told the media that it moved the movie's opening date due to internal chaos at the company. They cited

Harvey Weinstein's dismissal from the company, which followed a series of sexual misconduct accusations, for the disruption.

Did the Catholic League have anything to do with postponing the movie's opening date?

Bill Donohue wrote to the head of the Weinstein Company on December 21, registering his three objections. One month later, almost to the day, it was announced that the film's opening date would be postponed. It is true that two other movies were also postponed, but in both cases time constraints were operative: they were slated to open prior to "Magdalene," thus forcing a quick decision.

It is therefore possible that the company saw a chance to move the film off of Good Friday without appearing to yield to the Catholic League, citing internal problems.

No matter, we will use donations raised in February to address our second and third complaints.

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# **HAPPINESS ELUDES COLLEGE STUDENTS**

**William A. Donohue**

The most popular course at Yale these days—enrolling 1,200 students (they had to move the class to a huge building)—is called Psychology and the Good Life. It's not just Yale where courses in positive psychology are all the rage: they're packing students in all over the nation, and have been doing so for some time. The goal is to make students happier.

What is happiness? For Aristotle, it meant the ability of each

person to reach his potential. That required hard work and was dependent on virtue. Aquinas cited the necessity of virtue as well, though “perfect happiness,” he insisted, was not possible without God. For today’s students, such conceptions of happiness are foreign at best, and anathema at worst.

Contrary to the prevailing wisdom, happiness is not analogous to pleasure; its analogue is joy. Pleasure may arise from self-indulgence, but true happiness stems from its opposite: self-giving. It is the joy we receive by giving of ourselves to others. People of faith understand this, especially practicing Christians, but to secularists, which include a lot of college students these days, it is unintelligible.

Can happiness be learned? That is what positive psychology is predicated upon. Indeed, it assumes it can be taught.

Happiness can be acquired, but to say it can be learned, and taught in a classroom, is not only a stretch, it is deceiving. No one doubts there are aids, exercises, and tips that can be tapped when we are down, but there are no shortcuts, or cheat sheets, that can be accessed to make us happy.

To put it differently, there is no happiness pill or injection. True happiness, dependent on virtue as it is, has a long apprenticeship; it must be carefully nurtured. It’s more like cooking a great chili or tomato sauce: it’s a slow boil, taking time to mature. It is not microwave ready.

Virtue is an expression of morality, and morality is typically grounded in religion. These are three attributes—virtue, morality, and religion—that are treated by those who teach positive psychology as if they were a communicable disease. Most of these professors are thorough-going secularists, bent on a quest for happiness without God.

A decade ago, Todd Kashdan was one of the early big names in positive psychology. He taught at George Mason University, and was smart enough to know the difference between pleasure and

happiness; he aptly tied the latter to selflessness. But he was just like his colleagues in one important respect: he had an aversion to religion. Indeed, he boasted, "I never use the word morality." Or God.

Daniel Gilbert, who has long taught positive psychology at Harvard, goes beyond Kashdan. He is concerned that his work on happiness seems to have all the trappings of a religion. "I guess I just wish it didn't look so much like religion." That makes him unhappy.

Despite this professorial aversion to religion, the empirical evidence on happiness overwhelmingly shows that the most happy people in America are also the most serious about their religion; the most unhappy are the secularists. This is one of the conclusions I came to writing *The Catholic Advantage: Why Health, Happiness, and Heaven Await the Faithful*.

Well-being is a term that describes our physical and mental health, our degree of happiness, and overall life satisfaction. Those who have the highest well-being are the most religious; those who score the lowest are the least religious.

I tested this conclusion by comparing practicing Catholics, priests, nuns (especially cloistered sisters), and saints to Hollywood celebrities and intellectuals. The latter, almost all of whom are secularists, suffer from poor physical and mental health, and are decidedly unhappy.

How can this be? Beliefs, bonds, and boundaries—the Three B's—explain it all. Catholics believe in God, are bonded to each other, as well as to God, and respect behavioral boundaries. Celebrities, by and large, have no time for God, are narcissistic, and behaviorally reckless. Intellectuals are too smart to believe in God, are self-absorbed, and find boundaries to be suffocating.

A young college graduate, Rachelle Hampton, writing in Slate

about the popular Yale course on happiness, recently spoke openly about her depression and the depression of other college students. She found herself “meditating” in her classes at Northwestern, electing to find solace in a course on Buddhism (this is a religion without rules, suited to the needs of secularists).

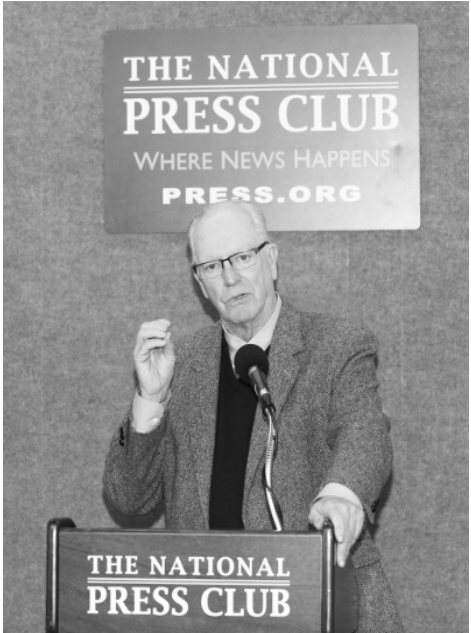
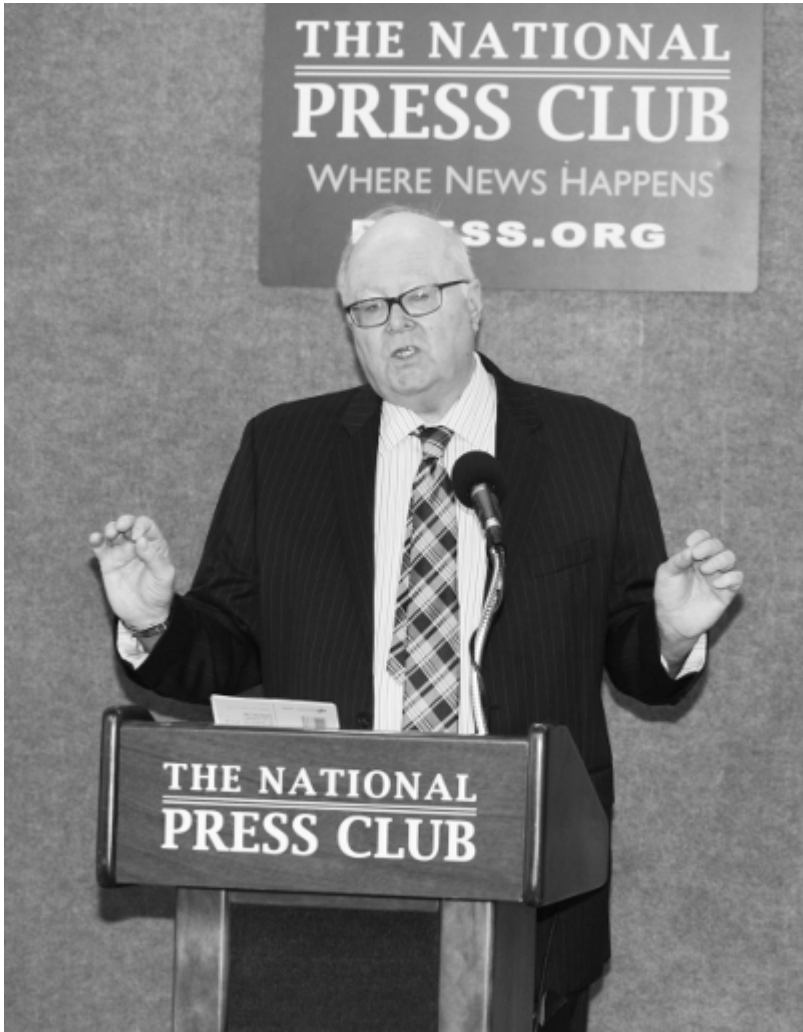
Rachelle is not alone. She shared this statistic: “Almost 50 percent of students surveyed by the American College Health Association in 2016 reported feeling that things were hopeless—and almost 37 percent reported feeling ‘so depressed that it was difficult to function’ during the previous 12 months.”

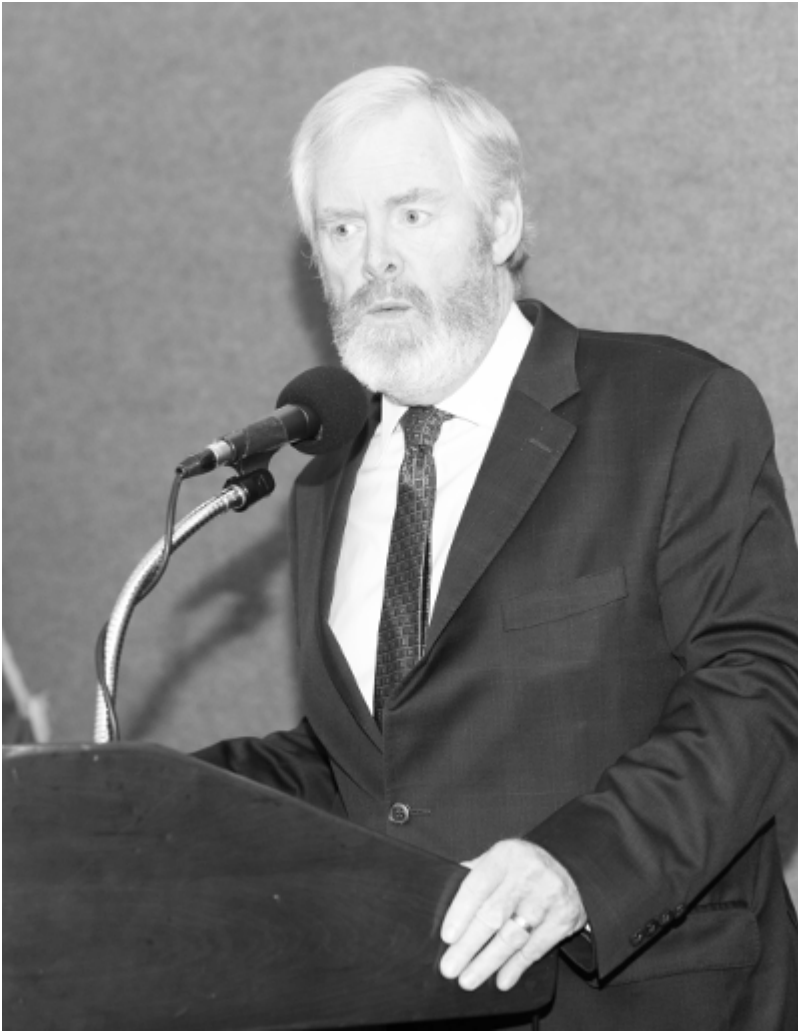
It is sad that so many bright young people are in a moral fog, falling back upon themselves to set anchor. Catholicism is anything but foggy—it is a clear-eyed prescription for well-being, anchored in the Ten Commandments and the Catechism. But don’t look for the positive psychologists to acknowledge this, even though it is supported by scientific evidence, the very god they worship.

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## **PRESS CONFERENCE ON “SPRINGER OPERA”**

From top to bottom: Bill Donohue, Ralph Reed, Deal Hudson and Brent Bozell.





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## **DONOHUE'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT REQUESTING NEA APPOINTEE WHO WILL CEASE FUNDING ANTI- CHRISTIAN FARE**

To read the letter click [here](#).



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## **DONOHUE'S LETTER RE: FUNDING HOST OF "SPRINGER OPERA" TO THE NEA CHAIRMAN**

To read the letter click [here](#).

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## **DONOHUE'S LETTER TO CONGRESS REQUESTING PROBE INTO NEA**

To read the letter click [here](#).

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## **NEA CHAIRMAN CHU'S LETTER TO DONOHUE**

To read the letter click [here](#).

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# DONOHUE'S LETTER IN RESPONSE TO NEA CHAIRMAN CHU

To read the letter click [here](#).

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## CATHOLICISM IS NOT INCLUSIVE

When the pastor of a rural Minnesota Catholic church learned that three male musicians each claimed to be married to a man, he dismissed them. When officials at a suburban Maryland Catholic school learned that a substitute teacher and field hockey coach was associated with a white supremacist group, they dismissed him.

Both decisions were merited.

The Catholic Church opposes gay marriage and racism. While neither the gay men nor the white supremacist were openly flouting their convictions, once their status became publicly known, Catholic officials had little choice but to dismiss them. Not to do so would be to give sanction to behaviors that are in direct contradiction to the teachings of the Church.

That should be the end of the story. However, the three gay men have garnered some community support, and one of them is refusing to leave the church. There has been no positive reaction to the teacher who has ties to racists, and he is not contesting the decision to fire him.

Similarly, gay activists have taken up the cause of the gay musicians, maintaining that the Catholic Church should be inclusive. But that is precisely the argument that white

racists could make regarding the Maryland teacher: the Church should welcome everyone.

The word catholic means universal, but it is a profound misreading of Catholicism to suggest that it is an inclusive organization. It is not. Nor for that matter is *any institution*: from the smallest cell in society, namely the family, to global organizations such as the United Nations, all are founded on exclusivity: they have lines of authority, based on either kinship or institutional strictures, that exclude those who do not qualify for membership.

Diversity, si. Inclusiveness, no. That is what Catholicism represents.