

“PRIMAL FEAR” MALIGNS CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Paramount movie, “Primal Fear,” which opened nationwide on April 3, maligns the Catholic Church by presenting every Catholic character as being either a sexual abuser, victim of sexual abuse or swindler. The Archbishop of Chicago is portrayed as a priest who sexually abuses young boys, commands them to have sex with girls in pornographic movies, and associates with laymen who are corrupt.

The Catholic League released the following comment to the media on “Primal Fear.”

“Audiences that have an appetite for invidious portrayals of the Catholic Church will be well-fed when they see ‘Primal Fear.’ There is not a redeeming feature about any Catholic in the entire film; indeed, the ones that are presented are uniformly debased. We learn that the Archbishop of Chicago has sex with altar boys and we hear him order a young boy to take off a girl’s blouse. He then instructs the girl to perform oral sex on the altar boy that is standing in front of her while commanding the boy behind her to sodomize her. All of this is being taped by the Archbishop for his own video collection. If the homeless young people do not cooperate, the Archbishop promises to cut off all food, water and heat.

“At one point in the movie, an attorney complains that ‘it is not the Catholic Church that is on trial.’ But, in fact, it is. And the verdict is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Comments are made that the Archbishop is possessed by demons and ‘gets off’ while watching his porno movies. His lay associates are million dollar swindlers and every characterization of the Archbishop shows him to be a monumental hypocrite.

“In light of the scurrilous charges that were later retracted by Steven Cook against Cardinal Bernardin, the Archbishop of Chicago, it is most distressing to see any movie offer such a negative image of the Chicago Archbishop. While the movie was based on a novel that was published just prior to Cook’s baseless charges, the unmistakable effect of this movie is to keep alive the accuser’s worst allegations. Cardinal Bernardin, who has faithfully served the Church with vigor for many years, is deserving of our utmost respect, not disdain.”

The league is pleased that the Office of Film and Broadcasting of the United States Catholic Conference gave the movie an “0” rating – morally objectionable.

REPORT ON ANTI-CATHOLICISM RELEASED

The Catholic League’s second Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism was published in March. It details approximately 150 of the most egregious examples of anti-Catholicism that took place in 1995. The purpose of the report is to inform those in the media, education and government of the extent and variety of anti-Catholicism that is prevalent in American society today.

The report lists findings drawn from several sectors of society: activist organizations; the arts; commercial establishments; education; government; and the media (including a sample of offensive cartoons).

No claim is made that the report is an exhaustive study of the nature of anti-Catholicism. But it is an indispensable resource for those interested in the subject. It has been sent

to every Bishop and Congressman in the nation, as well as to influential persons in the media and others sectors of society.

Catholic League president William Donohue offered the following comment on the report:

“Those in a position to promote meliorating efforts will find that they have their work cut for them. If multiculturalism is taken seriously, then educators must address the problem of anti-Catholicism in such programs. If those in the workforce are interested in promoting greater sensitivity to workers of various cultural backgrounds, then they should show more concern for the sensibilities of Roman Catholics. Those in the media for whom tolerance is a mantra will similarly have to question whether their work contributes to tolerance, or intolerance, of Catholics. And government officials for whom bigotry is the world’s greatest sin will find a new source of evil in reading this report.”

WHY I’M ANTI-LUNCH

I don’t like lunch. I have no problem with lunch on weekends, but on weekdays, that is a different matter altogether. Here’s why.

The Catholic League, thank God, continues to grow by leaps and bounds. As a result, I am frequently asked to have lunch with people to discuss the secrets of our success. Sometimes the request is simply to “touch base,” other times prominent individuals will seek my advice, and occasionally I am asked to join with them in a joint effort. While I have no aversion to any of these overtures, I have a problem with entertaining them over lunch. To be sure, there are exceptions, but in

general my answer is no.

Most “working lunches” are a waste of time. Little is accomplished at lunches, and when it’s over there are messages that need to be answered and media that need to be contacted. It’s not just the two hours that were spent at lunch that need to be made up, the time away from the office breaks the rhythm of the day, making it all the more difficult to get back into the swing of things.

We pride ourselves at the Catholic League with doing an awful lot with a short staff. We put in long hours doing the kind of work our members are paying us to do. If I had lunch with everyone who extends an invitation, I would weigh 500 lbs. and accomplish a fraction of what I’m able to do right now. That’s why a quick hot dog on the streets of New York works well for me.

Another problem I have with lunch is that most of the time is spent talking about someone’s wish list. But doing, not talking, is what counts. There are plenty of other opportunities to talk about special projects without wasting time in the middle of the day. Discussing new ventures can be done over the phone, or over a beer after work, but they don’t need to be done at the expense of time away from the office.

Many good intentioned people are deep into process. But process short of a defined goal and timetable is a joke. The old adage, “there’s no time like the present,” rings true, and it would be refreshing if more people on our side tried to actualize this maxim. Why they don’t is no mystery.

Once a project has been outlined, it needs execution. Immediate execution. But too often what happens is that a lack of courage kills a good idea. Then the process starts all over again with yet another agenda item that will go by the wayside.

What exactly are people afraid of? The adversaries of the

Catholic Church—and there are many of them—don't lack for courage, so why should we? There are more good people, non-Catholics as well as Catholics, who are ready to support us in our efforts, making inexplicable the lack of fortitude on our side. Hang-wringing over lunch makes for self-righteousness, not action, and that is why occasions that provide for such opportunities should be avoided.

Another problem with lunches is that too often people are more interested in feeding their egos than their stomach. Name-dropping has never impressed me—quite the contrary, it's a bore—so when that starts happening, I tune out. The world is full of people who know people, but in the end rubbing shoulders gives me the rub: once you've met them, then what? Is it really important to have one more business card in your pocket?

Lunches, it is said, are good for “networking.” They are indeed. But once that's been done, then what? And even if the contact that has been made is fruitful for both parties, and not just for one, couldn't such “networking” have taken place in some other venue? What's wrong with a half hour appointment at the office? At least those pretend to be doing work while watching a game in a “sky box” are typically doing it on their own time, which is more than can be said of those who bolt from the office to “network” with some new Joe or Josephine.

Over the past few months I have spoken in Florida, Texas, Wyoming, Virginia, California and Pennsylvania, and everywhere I go I find an appetite for leadership, a willingness to fight the good fight. With so many people standing behind the Catholic League, we can't let them down. And it is not easy to see how we can please our members by visiting the latest restaurant at noon.

“Doing lunch” is not a prescription for achievement, rather it is an excuse for doing nothing. So that's why I'm anti-lunch. Hope you are, too.

DONOHUE DEBATES PAISLEY'S VISIT TO REGENT UNIVERSITY

On March 20, Catholic League president William Donohue debated David Melton, an attorney at the Rutherford Institute, at Regent University in Virginia Beach on the subject of "The Outer Limits of Free Speech." The debate was the result of an ongoing disagreement between the Catholic League and the Rutherford Institute regarding the propriety of having Rev. Ian Paisley speak at Regent University. Paisley was invited to speak at Regent last fall by the student chapter of Rutherford.

At the time of Paisley's speech, which occurred on October 26, 1995, the Catholic League sent a news release to the media protesting the presence of Paisley, a notorious anti-Catholic bigot from Northern Ireland, at Regent University. The league was pleased that Regent president Terry Lindvall, who was out of town at the time, responded quickly and unequivocally that Paisley should not have been brought to the campus. The Catholic Alliance of the Christian Coalition supported the league's position and attorney Keith Fournier, executive director of the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), challenged Paisley on his views during the question and answer period that followed Paisley's address.

During the debate, Donohue drew attention to the fact that the Rutherford Institute, alone among the circle of Protestant groups, refused to condemn Paisley and justified his presence at Regent on free speech grounds. When given several opportunities to denounce Paisley at the debate, Melton demurred saying that the issue was free speech v. censorship, thus repeating the earlier position of Rutherford attorney

Rita Woltz.

Donohue began his presentation with a short overview of Paisley's work. He mentioned the "mock Mass" that Paisley made in 1959 in Ulster Hall, and took note of his protestations against Pope John XXIII for the Pontiff's promotion of ecumenism. Indeed, Paisley led an illegal march on Belfast City Hall to protest the flying of the Union Jack at half-mast when the Holy Father died.

Paisley, Donohue argued, has a history of quitting any political organization that doesn't ascribe to his extremist views. For instance, Paisley quit the Unionist Party in 1966 because it was too moderate, and founded the Protestant Union Party as a suitable replacement. Three years later he quit that party to form the Democratic Unionist Party because his more recent group wasn't extremist enough. In addition, Paisley has been jailed several times for fomenting warfare between Protestants and Catholics. Especially noteworthy is the Third Force, the hooded paramilitary thugs who support Paisley.

Paisley, who still calls the Pope the "Anti-Christ," and refers to the Vatican as "Harlot City," makes it indefensible to call him anything other than an anti-

Catholic bigot. Here is one of his choice statements: "I hate the system of Roman Catholicism but God being my judge I love the poor dupes who are ground down under that system. Particularly I feel for their Catholic mothers who have to go out and prostitute themselves before old bachelor parties."

In 1994, when a priest complained to Paisley about his anti-Catholicism, the Protestant minister replied: "Go back to your priestly intolerance, back to your blasphemous Masses, back to your beads, hold water, holy smoke and stinks and remember...we know your church to be the mother of harlots and the abomination of the Earth." Even during the question and answer

period following his lecture at Regent, Paisley called the Catholic Church the "Whore of Babylon."

Having established Paisley's credentials as a bona fide bigot, Donohue took up the question of free speech. Only the government can censor, he said, and there is nothing in the First Amendment that requires a private institution to extend an invitation to anyone to speak. Speaking on a college campus is a privilege, not a right, he asserted.

"Congress shall pass no law... abridging the freedom of speech." That is what the First Amendment says, and although since 1925 the Supreme Court has extended that guarantee to the states, it remains a fact that the First Amendment exempts private institutions. The reason for this, Donohue contended, is that the Framers of the Constitution did not want judges sitting in judgment over the affairs of the private sector. Thus, Regent was not obliged to host Paisley.

The position of Rutherford is very similar to the argument that holds that the Framers put freedom of expression in the First Amendment because they wanted to show its preeminent status. This is wrong on three counts, Donohue said. Historically, the first freedom has always been freedom of conscience, as anyone who has ever spent time undergoing mind-control in a totalitarian society will explain. Freedom of conscience is inextricably related to freedom of religion, a freedom far more important than expression.

The Framers, Donohue maintained, originally listed the First Amendment as the Third Amendment: it was only after the first two amendments failed to achieve ratification in the states that it was elevated to the first. And freedom of expression is nowhere mentioned in the Constitution, rather it is freedom of speech—meaning political discourse—that the Framers sought to safeguard.

According to Donohue, the First Amendment is not an end in

itself, but a means: it is a means toward the end of good government, and thus should not be treated as if it were the finishing point of freedom. That is why many exceptions to the First Amendment have been recognized by the courts, yet the Rutherford Institute, sounding strangely like the ACLU, seems to think of freedom of speech as if it were meant as an absolute.

Donohue then cited 24 exceptions to the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech, as recognized by the courts. Here is a list of those exceptions:

1) Libel 2) Perjury 3) Obscenity 4) Incitement to riot (advocacy is one thing, incitement another) 5) When a "clear and present danger" exists 6) Infringement on copyright 7) Blockbusting (it is not illegal to ban the putting of notices in mailboxes urging people to sell their homes because some unwanted group is allegedly moving into the neighborhood) 8) False advertising 9) Speech that targets a "captive audience" (e.g. no one has a right to blare political speeches in confined quarters like a bus or train where the passengers cannot avoid hearing it) 10) Leading schoolchildren in prayer in a public school 11) Contemptuous speech in a courtroom	12) Insubordination in the armed forces 13) Treasonous speech 14) Bribery 15) Discussing money in a Congressman's office 16) Misrepresentation of one's credentials 17) Verbal agreements in restraint of trade 18) Gender-specific ads in newspapers 19) Filibustering 20) Threatening letters 21) Harassing phone calls 22) Solicitation of a crime 23) Certain types of picketing 24) Certain types of commercial speech (e.g. gun and tobacco ads may be circumscribed)
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Donohue argued that these exceptions make it silly to maintain that the First Amendment is an absolute. Those who adhere to such a doctrine not only would not make these exceptions, they would do as the ACLU has done by defending everything from dwarf-tossing in bars to the distribution of child pornography as a First Amendment right, thus trivializing its meaning. As the Jesuit First Amendment scholar Francis Canavan has instructed: "The guarantee [of freedom of speech] was meant to protect and facilitate the achievement of rational ends by communication among free and ordinarily intelligent people."

Again, none of this has anything to do with a college campus hosting Ian Paisley, because no one has a right to speak on a campus, much less a private one. Colleges exist, Donohue said, so that the pursuit of truth can be achieved. They have no obligation, then, to invite speakers from the Flat Earth Society to lecture. Nor do they have an obligation to invite anti-Catholic bigots to speak.

People like Paisley, the Imperial Wizards of the Ku Klux Klan, Nazis, and the like, have no legitimate role to play in a place where the pursuit of truth is deemed paramount.

If Rutherford believes, as attorney Rita Woltz has said, in "an open forum for discussion of all views," then is Rutherford prepared to endorse speakers who want to talk about the merits of rape, incest, bestiality, genocide, segregation, apartheid, serial killing and slavery? When this question was put to David Melton, he was unable to sustain an argument why such views shouldn't be addressed on college campuses, thus verifying Donohue's charge that he is treating a college as if it were the equivalent of a Geraldo or Sally Jesse show.

Donohue's final point was to argue that a Christian college has even less obligation to host a person known for harboring an animus against Catholicism. Paisley, an unrepentant bigot with a legacy of Catholic bashing, is a minister of hate, and it is therefore an insult to Catholics to have him appear on

the campus of a Christian college. Yeshiva doesn't invite Nazis, Howard doesn't invite white racists, Wellsley doesn't invite misogynists, and Christian colleges shouldn't invite anti-Catholics, Donohue exclaimed.

Having said that, Donohue maintained that he would defend Paisley from being censored by the police in a public forum. But alas, that was not the issue here. He ended by saying that the position of the Rutherford Institute was vacuous, intellectually specious and morally reprehensible.

After Donohue spoke, Melton presented his position, which was followed by an open-ended exchange between the two of them; it concluded with questions posed by the graduate students at Regent. During the exchange, Melton said that "the only speech the Catholic League believes in is Catholic speech" and that the league had charged that the Rutherford Institute was "anti-Catholic." When pressed to provide evidence for these two baseless accusations, Melton offered nothing, provoking Donohue to admonish him for not doing his homework before debating.

PBS: HERE THEY GO AGAIN!

Fear of being anti-Catholic was on the mind of a PBS anchor at New York's affiliate, WNET. On March 11, the station re-broadcast a 1990 documentary called *The Burning Times*, produced by the National Film Board of Canada. In celebrating women's history month and in raising money during their pledge drive, WNET aired this program which described the history of witch burnings, attributing them mostly to the Catholic Church during medieval times.

During the break midway through the program, Mr. Roman, the

anchor, interviewed Dr. Serenity Young, a scholar, about the documentary. He asked her if it were fair to ascribe the majority of the blame to Catholicism and the state it shaped. She said it was fair because the Church was actively involved in what happened to women. He then asked if there were a 'benign' side to the Church's activities. She said yes, but not when it came to witchcraft. He then continued, asking if this program were appropriate in light of the fact that this was public television and the station was seeking money from the audience, which probably included adherents of this religion. Her answer was that this is women's history and it must be told. PBS is the only station which would put on such programming.

Mr. Roman's frequent questions indicate that, although he had no intentions of offending Catholics, the station was well aware of the potential offense to Catholics and all Christians. He seemingly understood the irony of criticizing and insulting a group and then proceeding to ask for donations. That he thought the documentary might be too harsh and biased is indicative that the league's negative reaction was not completely subjective or unexpected. The result and the intention were the same: no one denied that the Church was being targeted for perceived wrongs. Whatever the documentary's intent, the station knew the result, which explains the host's questions.

The greatest irony is that the PBS show was not a fact-based story of a seamy aspect of Christian history. It was a propaganda piece, designed to advance New Age perspectives at the expense of Christianity. It promoted the feminist agenda and in no way tried to be balanced as documentaries are supposed to be. Starhawk, a witch/political activist, was interviewed and was said to teach at a Catholic school, which was unnamed. The truth is, she was associated with a spirituality institute that was no more Catholic than Catholics for a Free Choice. It was run by a Father Matthew

Fox, who no longer is a Catholic priest. His assertions were presented as true, without actual proof.

Among the false statements that the program presented as fact were the following: that Mary, the Blessed Virgin, was worshipped as a goddess; that her titles, Queen of Heaven and Mother of God, are indicative of her divine status; that, although Joan of Arc gave her voices saints' names, they were really pagan spirits from her youth; that the Church hierarchy scapegoated women by declaring them witches and burning them alive to displace blame from themselves for societal ills; and that the Church changed doctrine, elevating the devil to a higher position so as to have a targeted enemy.

The spin of the show was that before Christianity oppressed women and inverted the way things were done, women were leaders, healers, and counselors. The show indicated that paganism was a great way of being one with nature, letting women enjoy equality. This historical revisionism is what the league has come to expect from PBS.

PROTEST STIRS ADL TO RESTORE PRIZE TO AUTHOR

This past winter, the Catholic League joined with several Polish-American organizations to protest a decision by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to renege on granting a prestigious literary award to Richard Lukas for his book, *Did the Children Cry? Hitler's War Against Jewish and Polish Children*. The protest paid off because in the end, ADL was pressured into restoring Lukas with the Janusz Korczak Literary Award.

It all started on December 1, 1995. It was then that Carol Perkins of the ADL wrote to Lukas' publisher, Hippocrene Books, announcing the judges' decision to give Lukas the award. Lukas was to receive the literary award, plus a prize of \$1,000 on January 23 at the ADL's headquarters in New York. In her statement to Lukas' publisher, Perkins wrote that "Because many excellent entries were submitted for the competition, arriving at the final decision proved an interesting challenge for our judges." But all that was soon to change.

On January 10, the ADL's director of Marketing and Communications, Mark Edelman, wrote to the publisher stating that a "mistake" had been made in announcing that Lukas was to receive the award. Edelman explained that the ADL has "several levels of review" and that subsequent review led to a decision to reverse the initial judgment.

When the Catholic League learned of what happened, it was incensed. The league had given Lukas' book a favorable review in the December 1994 *Catalyst*, noting that *Did the Children Cry?* was "a heady tonic to the prevailing mythology that Catholics did nothing while Jews suffered." The letter is reprinted here in full:

Dear Mr. Edelman:

I have learned that author Richard Lukas was notified in early December by the ADL that he was the winner of the ADL's Janusz Korczak Literary Award. I have now learned that the award is being rescinded, just two weeks prior to its presentation. As an author myself, I find this incomprehensible. As the president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, I am troubled by the statement that notifying Lukas of the award was a "mistake."

The Catholic League monthly journal, *Catalyst*, only occasionally reviews books. The December 1994 edition of

Catalyst gave a very positive review of Did the Children Cry? Hitler's War Against Jewish and Polish Children, 1939-45. One of the reasons we chose to give it a favorable review was the author's interest in detailing how the Catholic Church, as well as individual Catholics, went to great lengths to help Jews during the Holocaust. We found the book to be a heady tonic to the prevailing mythology that Catholics did nothing while Jews suffered. Such misrepresentation of history only feeds anti-Catholicism and that is why we took interest in Lukas' work.

Mistakes of any kind can easily be made. But it is not an everyday occurrence when authors are notified by prestigious organizations that they are the recipient of a coveted award, only to have the award withdrawn because of a "mistake."

For the record, I would like to know exactly why the book was selected for an award in the first place. Surely there are records of this evaluation. And I would also like to know why those reasons were found unpersuasive—and by whom—at a later date.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue
President

The Catholic League, as well as several Polish-American organizations, did not receive a response from the ADL until the matter was favorably resolved on March 18. But the good news did not come until considerable pressure had been brought to bear.

Before the ADL reversed its decision not to give the award, the attorney for author Lukas had already warned the ADL that it would be sued. Also, a delegation from a New York division

of the Polish American Congress, led by Frank Milewski, had met with officials of the ADL expressing their concerns. Servite Father John T. Pawlikowski, a professor at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, also wrote to the ADL, stating that the cancellation of the award had caused "embarrassment and dismay within several Polish-American organizations that have been historically committed to improving Polish-Jewish relations."

When the ADL made its announcement to reinstate the award to Lukas, it noted that it still had several problems with the book. The ADL said that "we believe the book underestimates the extent of Polish anti-Semitism before and after World War II. We believe also that, while there were heroic efforts of some Poles during this time, the book appears to vastly overestimate the number of Poles who were engaged in such courageous actions. Finally, the ADL believes the book presents a sanitized picture of Polish involvement with Jews during the War and overlooks authoritative points of view of many historians, including Polish historians."

The ADL's new spin on the issue suggests that the Lukas volume fell short of passing the ADL's politically correct interpretation of history. That the judges saw fit to give the book the literary award in the first place put the ADL in the awkward position of having to justify its decision to renege.

Though justice prevailed in the end, this marks a sad chapter in the ADL's history. Had it not been for public pressure (and the Catholic League is proud to have been among the first to protest), Lukas would have been discredited and the important message he detailed in his book would have been ignored. We hope that the ADL has learned an important lesson and that such "mistakes" will be avoided in the future.

PROTEST OF BIAS YIELDS FAVORABLE RESULT

On March 12, the Long Island newspaper, *Newsday*, ran a headline that caught the attention of the Catholic League. It said, “**Ex-Altar Boy on Trial.**” But upon reading the piece, it was clear that the past association of the 26 year-old killer had no relevance to the story whatsoever.

William Donohue called the paper’s editor, Anthony Marro, and asked him to explain this oddity. Though at first Marro tried to offer an explanation of what might have happened (the altar boy status could have been taken from court records), he proved to be fair once he investigated the story. Indeed, he admitted that there was no defensible reason for mentioning the killer’s previous status as an altar boy. The content and tone of his remarks assured Donohue that this would not happen again.

Newsday published the following letter on March 26, sent by Dr. Donohue:

“On March 12, there was an article that read, “Ex-Altar Boy on Trial.” It addressed the behavior of a 26 year-old man accused of kidnapping, murdering and mutilating the body of a Queens woman. But the reader searches in vain to find the connection between the accused and his former status as an altar boy. Was he also a stringer for *Newsday*, and if so, would such an incidental association be recognized in the article, much less in its headline?

“The Catholic League has no problem with stories that mention the religious affiliation of someone in the news,

but it expects that when this is done, it will bear some relationship to the story. There are lots of policemen, to take one example, who exercise tremendous courage in saving people's lives—and many of them have been altar boys, too—but we would never see a story titled, “Ex-Altar Boy Cop Saves Lives.”

BERNIE WARD SHOW DEFAMES CATHOLICISM

On March 24, the Bernie Ward Show, which originates in KGO San Francisco, defamed Catholicism by belittling the terrorism of the gay group ACT-UP. Ward was upset with the recent invasion of a mosque, but justified the 1989 invasion of St. Patrick's Cathedral by saying “homosexuals had a good case to make.” He explained his answer by arguing that the Church “has encouraged homophobia and homophobic actions.” He even went so far as to say that the Roman Catholic Church “is encouraging people to be violent against gays, that is justifying the violence against gays, and that is taking a position that will spread a fatal disease, then you can understand why people would be upset by that and would consider the need to do some kind of form of public protest.”

Just eight days earlier, on March 16, Ward charged that the “right wing fascist” who ran the Catholic Church during the Vietnam war did not allow opposition to the war.

The Catholic League sent the following news release to the media on this subject:

“Bernie Ward's hatred of the Catholic Church has allowed him to misrepresent history and promote instead a bigoted

portrayal of Catholicism. Terrorism is never justified and that is exactly what happened in 1989 in St. Patrick's Cathedral when militant gays disrupted Mass and spit the Host on the floor.

"The Catholic Church has never encouraged violence against gays or any other group. Moreover, its teachings on sexual ethics have promoted restraint, the very virtue that is a necessary toxin against sexually transmitted diseases.

"Ward's apparent fixation on discrediting Catholicism will not win but it is a sad commentary on his twisted sense of reality."

SAN DIEGO ATHEISTS HIJACK EASTER SERVICE

San Diego's Atheist Coalition received a permit from city officials to hold a "sunrise service" on Easter Sunday on Mount Soledad. For the past 73 years, area Christians have held a respectful service at the base of the cross-bearing mountaintop. But this year, the Atheist Coalition filed for a permit before Christians did and succeeded in obtaining it. Atheists, humanists, a gay congregation and witches participated in the ceremony.

The Catholic League released the following statement to the media, and San Diego Catholic League chapter president Carl Horst defended the league's position to the media on the west coast.

"It is well understood that municipalities have a moral, if not a legal, obligation to award permits to established

groups who routinely ask for one on the day of their annual event. If anti-gays were to ask for a permit on the day of the annual Gay Pride Parade—before gay leaders asked for one—would the officials in San Diego grant it? Would they similarly honor a request from Nazis at an annual Jewish event? If the Klan were to beat African Americans to the punch by requesting a permit to upstage an annual ceremony honoring black Americans, would the officials oblige them?

“Rev. Thomas Owen-Towle of the Unitarian Universalist Church in San Diego is wrong when he says, ‘I don’t think the day belongs to anybody.’ Easter Sunday belongs to Christians as much as Passover belongs to Jews and Ramadan belongs to Muslims. Atheists should choose their own day to commemorate their belief in nothing. In the meantime, they would be well advised to practice tolerance and respect for the diversity of the Christian experience.”

It is expected that Christians in San Diego will learn from this outrage and not allow the Atheist Coalition to beat them to the punch next year.

LEAGUE FORCES END TO OFFENSIVE AD

On March 3, in an ad in the *New York Times*, the New York Health & Racquet Club offended Christians, drawing a letter of protest from the Catholic League. The ad, placed during Lent, said “Rise from the Dead” and offered the following statement alongside the headline: “A New York City day can leave you for dead. Luckily resurrections are available hourly from one of our certified massage therapists.” The ad showed a picture of

someone getting a massage.

In a letter to the president of the New York Health & Racquet Club, William Donohue complained that the ad was doubly offensive because "a) it makes light of a very serious event that is particularly important to Catholics and b) it removes all doubt as to what is being caricatured." Donohue concluded by saying, "By all means advertise your services, but please don't do so at our expense."

In a letter of reply, Samuel Russell wrote the following: "As the Director of Advertising for the New York Health & Racquet Club, please accept my apologies if this advertisement has offended you, or any of your members in anyway, we certainly did not intend to cause offense and will not continue to run this ad in the future."