

CATHOLIC HOSPITALS TARGETED BY CALIFORNIA BILL

California Assemblywoman Shelia James Kuehl has introduced legislation that would deny funds to Catholic hospitals that are collected through the sale of revenue bonds. The bill revokes the right to sell revenue bonds from any health facility that does not provide for the full range of reproductive services. In essence, it would penalize Catholic hospitals for being Catholic.

The Catholic League outlined its strategy to the press as follows:

“The bill by Assemblywoman Kuehl is a mean-spirited retaliatory attack on Catholic hospitals. It comes in the wake of months of discussion among abortion advocates: they are exercised over the merger of secular and Catholic hospitals. This is the latest club they are using to beat Catholic hospitals into submission. Susan Fogel, legal director of the California Woman’s Law Center, admitted as much when she said, ‘This is only the first of its kind in the country, and not the last.’

“The First Amendment allows for separation of church and state. What Kuehl is trying to do is superimpose on Catholic hospitals a hostile secular vision of health care. If this bill passes it will surely be tested in the courts.

“The Catholic League is writing to every member of the California legislature expressing its grave concerns over this bill.”

The early response that we have received from some California legislators has been encouraging.

MEMBERS PRESSURE SELIG ON TURNER

In the last edition of *Catalyst*, we asked members to write to Bud Selig, Commissioner of Baseball, requesting that he suspend Ted Turner, owner of the Atlanta Braves, for his anti-Catholic remarks. We are grateful to all those who have followed through. At press time, a decision had yet to be rendered. We are still hoping for a just outcome and will keep you posted.

PBS FILM ON POLES

Barbara Herbich has done a great documentary titled, "Polish Catholics in the Nazi Death Camps." PBS has plans to run it and the Catholic League was glad to make a donation to cover the costs. Its subject is the Nazi persecution of Polish Catholics and the Church.

SWEEPS WINNERS

Leona Snyder from Sauk Rapids, Minnesota won First Prize in the Spring Sweepstakes. Second Prize went

to Ellen Wholey from Cheltenham, Pennsylvania and Gilbert Bussen from Wallace, Kansas won Third Prize. Congratulations to all three and many thanks to all who participated.

THE WAR OVER THE SISTERS OF PERPETUAL INDULGENCE

This expanded edition of *Catalyst* was necessitated by the surge of anti-Catholicism that hit us all at once from many parts of the country. For your interest, and for the historical record, we are including several pages dealing with the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in San Francisco.

What follows is the exchange of letters that William Donohue and Mayor Willie Brown had over this issue. Also included are photos and the half-page ad we ran in the *San Francisco Chronicle* on March 29. This section concludes with a representative sample of the hate-filled comments that were directed at Catholics and the Catholic League.

We are most proud of the ad we ran. Though its cost over \$16,000, it was worth every nickel: by putting the "Sisters," and the city of San Francisco, on the defensive, it generated the kind of public discussion that must occur if the culture is to change.

WE HATE THE SIN, NOT THE SINNER...THEY HATE US NO MATTER WHAT!

"This kind of parody and theatricality is nothing new. I think the church could learn more about tolerance and being able to laugh at themselves."

(Brother Karekin, Episcopal friar of the Brotherhood of St. Gregory, *San Francisco Examiner*, 4/5/99)

The San Francisco Archdiocese "has been on something of a jihad against gays and lesbians." (Supervisor Tom Ammiano, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4/5/99)

"The Church is also tax exempt, so they get quite a bit of benefit, they shouldn't be messing in politics or public policy or telling us when or where we can close streets, but let me say as a Jewish man I am well aware of the power of public opinion and what it means to be in a minority..." (Mark Leno, San Francisco County Board of Supervisors member, on "The O'Reilly Factor," 3/29/99)

"The Church has been wrong in issues over the years, it's only until very recently that they recognized that they were passive in the face of the Holocaust, it was only (Interrupted)... they've made mistakes before." (Mark Leno, San Francisco County Board of Supervisors member, on "The O'Reilly Factor," 3/29/99)

The San Francisco diocese is "fostering a climate of intolerance and fear by insisting that city officials toe the archbishop's line on gay marriage, same-sex partner benefits and what a neighborhood may or may not do on Easter Sunday." (Sister Phyllis Stein, President, Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/30/99)

The Sisters have "the right to do theater on Easter Sunday," and the archdiocese's attempt to have the street closure permit revoked is "an intolerant act." (Supervisor Mark Leno, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/30/99)

"Homophobia is based in fear. There are a lot of people who fear what this fabric represents." (Sister Zsa Zsa Glamour, while holding up his mock nun's habit, member, Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/30/99)

"I would have thought the Catholic Church would be big enough to understand. This protest is not worthy of them; I think they make themselves less by protesting in this way. It's important for different faiths not to take themselves too seriously. Humor can be a way of generating tolerance." (Rev. Margot Campbell Gross, Unitarian Universalist church, *San Francisco Examiner*, 4/2/99)

"I'm rather disappointed by the position the archdiocese has taken. They seem to present themselves as having a monopoly, a corner on Easter. They don't own it. The fact is we celebrate Easter, too, and the Sisters are in no way hindering us . . . or Catholics who want to celebrate Easter." (Rev. David Norgard, Episcopal priest and rector of St. John the Evangelist church, *San Francisco Examiner*, 4/2/99)

"In my opinion, this is really about homophobia, not about protecting Catholic rights. We Christians cannot expect the secular order to bow down to us, to keep our sacred days. I'm scandalized that other Christians would want the civil order to enforce our beliefs. This kind of behavior is unworthy of Christians and I'm embarrassed by it." (Rev. Mark Stinger, associate pastor at Grace Cathedral, *San Francisco Examiner*, 4/2/99)

San Francisco Supervisor Mark Leno described the League as "the radical right" of the church. (*The Associated Press*, 3/29/99)

“(The League) is a very conservative, radical offshoot of the Catholic Church. I don’t think they represent the voices of the majority of Catholic believers and people who practice the Catholic faith.” (Sister Camille Leon, member, Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, *The Associated Press*, 3/29/99)

“We’re calling upon the San Francisco Archdiocese and the Catholic League to drop the disingenuous rhetoric and begin tending once again to the gentle tasks of healing, forgiveness and offering compassion without condition.” (Sister Ann R. Key, member, Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, *Associated Press*, 3/29/99)

“I call on all sisters, supporters, sympathizers, all those who love and cherish our American freedoms (and all those disgusted with small-minded power-trippers and fork-tongued bigots) to join us in celebration on Sunday, April 4 on Castro Street. (Sister Sadie, Sadie, The Rabbi Lady and Sister Betty-Will, Directors, Ministry of Perpetual Indulgence, in a letter to the editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/26/99)

“We’re really appalled at the insensitivity of comparing us to neo-Nazis, which totally invalidates the Jewish struggle against Nazis. The comparison is offensive not only to myself but to Jewish people everywhere, and the Catholic Church should be ashamed for promoting such an absurdity.” (Sister MaryMaye Himm, member, Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/17/99)

“The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights has finally lit my slow-burning fuse with its paid hate advertisement in the Chronicle March 29... the Catholic Church and its supporters are able to use facile and dangerous comparisons to Hitler’s storm troops, the Klan, anti-Semites and the murderers of Matthew Shepherd as tactics to intimidate and threaten the Board of Supervisors and the tolerant San Francisco community. How dare the Catholic Church compare the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence to fascists over this

insignificant street party which, thanks to their hysteria, has brought it the attention it would never have achieved otherwise... Let's hope this inflamed and ill-advised attack on the gay community does not leave another gay man battered in the streets. (Jill Posener, letter to the editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4/1/99)

"The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence are merely a lightning rod for the less than covert dislike many people harbor toward homosexual culture. If the Sisters weren't around, the church would find something else to be offended by." (Philip Rossetti, letter to the editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 4/1/99)

"[P]rotesters from Queer Nation said any influence the Catholic church exerts on city government would create a dangerous precedent that violates the separation of church and state." (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/29/99)

"Kiss-in participants said they are standing their ground on the Sisters' anniversary party because of the historic oppression of gays by the Catholic church." (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/29/99)

"Over the centuries, the Catholic Church has burned us alive at the stake and remained silent as Hitler forced us into concentration camps." (Michael Petrelis, Kiss-in protester at St. Mary's Cathedral, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/29/99)

"The Catholic Church has always been an enthusiastic persecutor of gay people. A church spokesman using Nazi-persecution-of-Jews analogies for this kind of petty situation demeans the important lessons to be learned for the Holocaust." (Steve Organek, letter to the editor, *San Francisco Examiner*, 3/23/99)

"For many people, the Catholic Church has been the source of considerable pain and a genuine threat to their safety. For example, this organization to this day cultivates the climate

of hatred and intolerance of gays and lesbians. If the Catholic Church had been as truly benign in its actions as its faith intends it to be, there would be nothing to laugh at.. The sister's primary audience is the gay/lesbian community, people who have suffered at the hands of the Catholic Church and have the need to heal. Since repression of dissent is one of the more destructive behaviors that the Catholic Church has indulged in over its long history, it would be in the church's best interest to ignore the satire of the Sisters and praise their charity." (Darr Sandberg, letter to the editor, *San Francisco Examiner*, 3/23/99)

"Though the Sisters are critical of hypocritical and oppressive religious structures of every sort, they also embody the best values of the religion that Jesus embodied. They help feed the hungry, clothe the naked and shelter the poor and homeless. Easter is a great day to celebrate resurrection and hope which the Sisters help bring. (Rev. Jim Mitulski, Metropolitan Community Church, letter to the editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/23/99)

"I believe that Mr. Donoghue should resign and start spending his days spreading what Jesus taught above all else, as I understand it: love for one another." (William P. Fitzpatrick, letter to the editor, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3/24/99)

NEW CHAPTERS

Three new chapters have been formed. Al Kresta is the president of the Ann Arbor chapter, David Fielding takes charge in Pittsburgh and Charles Helms leads the Dallas chapter. We are delighted to have them on board.