

KISSLING SPINS CANON LAW

Catholics For a Free Choice (CFFC) recently released a new pamphlet, titled, “Catholics and Abortion: Notes on Canon Law.” Its aim is to counter “finger-pointing” and “misinformation.” No one who is familiar with Frances Kissling’s group should be surprised that the only techniques used in the pamphlet are just that—finger-pointing and misinformation.

The introduction whines, “Everyone is an expert, claiming that prochoice Catholics are ‘heretics’ or have been ‘excommunicated’ because they have had an abortion or have supported legal abortion.” And here’s some misinformation: CFFC claims, “We respect the church’s law.”

The pamphlet focuses on two relevant passages in the 1983 Code of Canon Law—the one prescribing automatic excommunication for those who have a completed abortion (canon 1398), and the passage that stipulates automatic excommunication for “accomplices” without whose help the grave sin could not have been committed (canon 1329 §2).

In the next ten or so pages, the pamphlet’s author, Sara Morello, wrangles word-by-word with the passages from Canon Law, attempting to show that mitigating factors can lessen the likelihood that someone who has had an abortion actually incurs excommunication. But any Catholic already knows that there are conditions to be met (grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent) before any sin incurs its full penalty. (Incidentally, the word “sin” appears nowhere in the leaflet.)

In a huge leap of logic, the brochure tells us, “In cases where it is difficult to argue that the primary actor incurs a penalty, it would also be very difficult to justify punishing accomplices.” In other words, since we cannot say for sure

whether the woman undergoing an abortion meets the requirements under Canon Law for responsibility for her actions, then we cannot even begin to judge the actions of accomplices, such as Kissling. Thus “the routine activity of hospital administrators, directors of abortion clinics and prochoice politicians does not make them eligible for punishment under this canon.”

One doesn't have to have a degree in Canon Law to see this is nonsense. Canon 1329 states that anyone who aided in the commission of an offense such that it would not have been committed without their help suffers the penalty attached to that offense. For example: an accomplice to a murder is subject to the same penalty that the actual murderer is, regardless of any mitigating factors operating on the murderer. If the murderer is in a blind rage and acts in the heat of the moment, he may be less culpable; but a man who calmly gives him a knife and leads him to his victim enjoys no such advantages. Each individual is subject to penalties based on his own mental state and actions.

Frances Kissling and other facilitators of abortion are probably not under the emotional pressure of those with unplanned pregnancies. And CFFC is fully aware of the Church's actual teaching; they produced this tract on Canon Law, didn't they? And it even grudgingly acknowledges, “getting an abortion is against the church's law.”

In other words, Frances Kissling and her ilk have no excuse. And whether or not you believe that she has acted directly as an “accomplice” through her work with CFFC and the pro-abortion lobby, there remains the fact that she operated one of the first legal abortion clinics in New York, and ran illegal ones in Mexico and Rome; all of which she still defends. If that's not direct complicity, then the law is meaningless.

It's not our place to declare people excommunicated, but we

will point out their disingenuous reasoning. Kissling's motive in producing the tract is transparent: she hopes to silence her opposition, who place her and her organization outside the Church. But Canon Law is clear on one matter, and the American bishops agree: Catholics For a Free Choice is anything but Catholic. And no glossy pamphlet that butchers Canon Law will convince us otherwise.

O'REILLY SPINS THE POPE

In the last issue of *Catalyst*, we ran a critical piece on Fox News Channel talk-show host Bill O'Reilly. After criticizing him in a news release for misrepresenting the pope, and for his harsh condemnations of the Holy Father, O'Reilly struck back at the Catholic League on two consecutive evenings.

We could care less what O'Reilly says about the Catholic League, but we do take seriously his continued vendetta against the pope. On April 9, O'Reilly blamed the pope for decisions made by Cardinal Mahony of Los Angeles. This guy actually thinks the pope monitors the words of bishops all over the world! On April 12, he blasted the pope for calling the war in Iraq "immoral." But the pope never said such a thing.

If O'Reilly wants to offer fair criticism of the pope, he will never hear from us. But when cheap shots are made at the Holy Father, or when patently false remarks are attributed to him, the Catholic League will respond.

O'Reilly needs to stop the spin.

DNC EMBRACES MINORITIES; CONTINUES TO OFFEND CATHOLICS

On April 1, Democratic National Committee (DNC) chairman Terry McAuliffe released a statement objecting to the Bush administration's opposition to quotas. McAuliffe's comments come on the day the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments on a landmark affirmative action case that affects higher education.

"With this administration," McAuliffe said, "the message to African Americans, Hispanics and other minorities, the message is clear: your concerns come dead last."

The effrontery of Terry McAuliffe is unparalleled: here is a man who runs with anti-Catholics and has the gall to sell himself as a champion of equality. Whatever one thinks about affirmative action, it is beyond belief that any public person who supports it would allow himself to be used by anti-Catholics like Frances Kissling.

To this date, McAuliffe refuses to drop the link on the DNC's website to Kissling's Catholics for a Free Choice. That he has angered Catholics—including those who differ on abortion—by his association with a known anti-Catholic bigot is indisputable. At issue is not abortion but bigotry: Catholics for a Free Choice has worked overtime to undermine the Vatican at the U.N. and to bash the Catholic Church on a whole range of subjects. This explains why it has twice been denounced by the bishops as a fraudulent organization that is hostile to Catholicism.

Once the presidential campaign gets into full swing, the DNC will be forced to explain itself to Catholic voters. Catholics

will want to know why African Americans and Hispanics are treated with respect while the leadership in the Democratic Party breaks bread with Catholic bashers.

ATHEIST GROUP ASSAULTS CATHOLICISM

Freedom From Religion Foundation is an atheist organization located in Wisconsin. It is also an anti-Catholic group that never tires of bashing the Church. Two recent examples show how debased the outfit is.

It is not uncommon for states to put voting booths in churches. Though this bothers very few, there are some who are incensed about the practice. Count Robert Meltzer among the disaffected. Meltzer is a Jewish attorney who filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking to render the practice unconstitutional. He explained his reaction to voting in a Methodist church. "In order to vote, you basically had to bow before the cross. I was sick for a week."

In support of this position is Annie Laurie Gaylor, co-founder of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. "Asking a feminist to vote in a Roman Catholic Church is like asking a black man to vote in a KKK hall," said Gaylor.

William Donohue answered her in a news release:

"Gaylor's remarks are helpful because they clarify matters. There can no longer be any doubt regarding her motives: it is not fidelity to the First Amendment that drives the Freedom From Religion Foundation, it's bigotry. And at the top of her list is Roman Catholicism. Because the Catholic Church opposes

child abuse in the womb, Gaylor sees fit to compare it to the Klan. This is the way she thinks.”

Donohue went on to say that “It is theoretically possible to be an atheist and friendly toward Catholicism. But it becomes more difficult when one is an activist in behalf of atheism. It has certainly been my experience that such persons are almost always anti-Catholic bigots.”

It doesn't take much to get under the skin of this anti-Catholic organization. For example, the Madison Metro System in Madison, Wisconsin, puts a picture of prominent persons on its monthly bus pass. Featured on the April bus pass was a picture of Mother Teresa. This was too much for Gaylor who immediately released a statement to the press condemning this as a violation of church and state.

A spokeswoman for Metro said Mother Teresa was selected because she made Time magazine's list of the 100 Most Important People of the 20th Century. The May bus pass features a picture of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.; Gaylor did not criticize this selection.

This is what we're up against. The intolerance exhibited toward religion these days is astounding, especially when the religion in question is Roman Catholicism. The Catholic League, of course, stands ready to do battle against these bigots, but it does amaze us that even the slightest statement of religion in the public square is enough to ignite a protest.

FATHER GROESCHEL RESPONDS TO HIS CRITICS

Father Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R. is a good friend of the Catholic League. On March 2, the *Dallas Morning News* published an article about him titled, "Priest plays down abuse crisis while helping clergy keep jobs." It was written by Brooks Egerton, a staff writer for the *News*; he is also the past chairman of the Texas chapter of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. The article was reprinted in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on March 23. Another article critical of Father Groeschel was written by Maya Kremen; it appeared in the Paterson, NJ *Herald News* on March 4. Father Groeschel has responded to the articles and we are reprinting his answers point by point to set the record straight. We have taken the liberty of splicing his remarks so that the point-counterpoint context is readily understandable.

Dallas Morning News: *In the world according to Father Benedict Groeschel, the Catholic Church's sexual abuse scandal is largely the stuff of fiction. Reporters "doing the work of Satan" are driven to lie, the New York priest says, because they hate the church's moral teachings.*

Fr. Benedict: I do stand by my statement that the secular media have taken the scandal out of proportion, ignored many charges of abuse of minors and committed by others in professional roles, created the impression that this is only a problem of Catholic clergy. Writers as varied as George Weigel, Philip Jenkins, Andrew Greeley, Richard Neuhaus and Peter Steinfels have all been critical of the media coverage of these scandals.

DMN: *The Franciscan friar's base is a mansion on Long Island Sound, where he runs the Archdiocese of New York's spiritual development office and Trinity Retreat Center for clergy.*

BG: I have not been the director of Trinity Retreat for ten years. This retreat for priests has never been referred to before as a mansion. In fact, I don't even live in the building. I have lived for years in the garage.

***DMN:** According to his own written account, he has counseled hundreds of his brethren and "happily, 85 priests have returned to the active ministry."*

BG: Egerton mentions that 85 priests have returned to the active ministry through Trinity Retreat, implying that some of these priests had difficulties with minors. These were priests on leaves of absence, not priests who had been accused of any misbehavior at all.

***DMN:** Father Groeschel... declined interview requests.*

BG: I did not decline to be interviewed. I never spoke to Mr. Egerton because I was not at home when he called.

***DMN:** Dallas Bishop Charles Grahmann has allowed one of his priests, removed from parish work after the diocese concluded he had abused a girl, to help manage the retreat center in recent years. That priest, the Rev. Richard T. Brown, moved to a hermitage a few months ago...*

BG: Fr. Richard Brown never assisted in the management of Trinity Retreat. He did typing and recorded reservations for priests coming on retreat. He lived a most prayerful and ascetical life while here and he had done so for many years before as many people have said. He did no pastoral work in the New York Archdiocese, nor did anyone ever request permission for him to do so.

***DMN:** Leaders of the neighboring Diocese of Paterson, N.J., one of several that sent business to Father Groeschel, blamed three "unfortunate" reassignments on his advice.*

Letter from Marianna Thompson, Director of Communications, Diocese of Paterson, to the *Herald-News*: I never used the word "blame" in my conversations with the Dallas Morning News. The diocesan focus in this issue is not to cast blame on others....

DMN: "It just burns me to no end," said Buddy Cotton, who has accused the Rev. James Hanley of abusing him in the Paterson Diocese and recently called Bishop Rodimer to complain about Father Groeschel.

BG: [From a letter to the *Herald News* 3/3/03] I had nothing to do with the reappointment of James Hanley to another parish after he was removed from Mendham as a result of serious accusations of abuse of minors. In fact, I had never heard of the case. I became involved when Hanley came on retreat after he was removed a second time from a new assignment.

DMN: A psychologist who evaluated Father [Morgan] Kuhl for federal prosecutors recommended that he "be enrolled in a program specific to sex offenders," not just in the general psychotherapy and spiritual counseling he was getting.... U.S. District Judge Anne Thompson initially sentenced Father Kuhl to a short prison term followed by house arrest. But she later reduced the penalty, over the objections of prosecutor Donna Krappa, to five years of probation and ordered the priest to "adhere to the program requirements at Trinity Retreat."

In advocating probation, Father Groeschel represented himself to the court as a counseling psychologist, Ms. Krappa said in an interview. New York state officials said he has never had the license generally required for use of that title. Using the title without a license is a misdemeanor, state officials said.

BG: I can say Morgan Kuhl never received any treatment from me and was in fact directly enrolled in a formal treatment program elsewhere. We provided a supervised residence, which the court agreed to continue.

As to the issue of my not having a license: a Doctor of Psychology does not need a license unless he is receiving third part payments for instance from an insurance company or an agency. I never intended to receive any pay doing psychological counseling or spiritual direction, so I never bothered about a license. In fact I have never been paid a cent for my services that Mr. Egerton refers to as "business." It is not uncommon for professors of psychology not to obtain licenses to practice, because clinical practice is not our principal vocation.

BG: [To the *Herald News*] I am at a great disadvantage in defending myself because of the right of confidentiality of the people involved. I have worked as a therapist and spiritual director with clergy for 30 years after obtaining a doctorate in Counseling Psychology at Columbia University. I have never charged a fee and have never asked for or received payment. I have seen clergy of various different denominations and faiths. Like any therapist I have made mistakes. People forget that therapists and spiritual directors are neither prosecutors nor defense attorneys. Since I cannot defend myself, I think that any honest person will admit that what has been said against me is unfair and based on misinformation. Being a strong advocate of Church reform does not make you popular—but Jesus did not suggest that we would be popular if we try to follow Him.

CLOSING COMMENTS BY FATHER GROESCHEL:

Since the accusations came out, I contacted each of the priests involved and obtained their permission to state publicly that I neither evaluated nor treated them. They were all treated in very well-known professional programs and their placements were based on the joint decisions of well-known psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health professionals. At the suggestion of Cardinal O'Connor, we offered the Trinity Retreat as a place of retreat, prayer, penance and rehabilitation to priests. I often passed on the written

recommendation of other mental health professionals.

WILLIAM DONOHUE OFFERED THESE REMARKS:

Father Benedict Groeschel is a courageous and brilliant priest who has given his life to the Catholic Church. Only those who seek to undermine Catholicism would ever lash out at him. And when they do, the Catholic League will not hesitate to rush to his defense.

ARE BLACKS AGAINST SCHOOL VOUCHERS?

It has long been observed that the leadership in the African American community is frequently at odds with the rank-and-file it claims to represent. The subject of school vouchers is perhaps the prominent issue dividing the two strata.

The evidence that black kids do better in parochial schools than in public schools is overwhelming. It would seem on the basis of evidence that this would be a slam dunk for blacks: few would oppose school choice. The few, however, tend to be public officials.

A firestorm recently emerged in D.C. when Peggy Cooper Cafritz, president of the local school board, came out in favor of vouchers. Leading the charge was Eleanor Holmes Norton, the District's non-voting delegate to the U.S. Congress. Norton labeled Cafritz "unprincipled."

What motivates Norton is her unabashed fondness for the public school establishment, big government and unions. Of all the labels to choose, her selection of "unprincipled" to

characterize Cafritz was downright disingenuous: by bucking the black establishment, Cafritz put principle over politics.

What's happening in Louisiana is similarly interesting. A major debate on school vouchers is taking place and blacks are in the thick of it. Governor Mike Foster is pro-voucher but he is being resisted by the public school establishment.

What do the people want? In a survey done of whites and blacks in Louisiana, 84 percent of whites and 89 percent of blacks supported school vouchers. That's 9 in 10 in the African American community. Yet their leaders want to deny them the exact choice that people like the millionaire Jesse Jackson have had (he sent his kids to private schools).

Before things change, black voters will have to change. They will have to start electing people who honestly and accurately reflect their sentiments and stop rubber stamping their so-called leaders who manage to get on the ballot box.

BIGOTRY ON CAMPUS

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT

From UConn we get this gem in *The Daily Campus* by Mike Kapralos, titled "Catholic Church a Mockery of the Ten Commandments," (April 8). We suggested that the title should have been "U. Conn. a Mockery of Higher Education."

Kapralos gives a catechism of how he thinks the Church fails the Ten Commandments. Here are some examples. The Third Commandment on the Sabbath: "the church does not really break, per se, but it definitely trivialize it [sic] with their 'Holy Days of Obligation.'... These are not days with any basis in the

bible [sic]. I believe they are days artificially created through church-doctrine to raise more money and instill more guilt on the people who, because of other obligations, are unable to attend them."

On not having false gods: "I have seen many 'pagan-type' acts when I see pictures of the pope.... Every time, without fail, is [sic] some person genuflecting and/or kneeling.... This looks a tad to the untrained eye as idolatry, but according to Catholic dogma, it is acceptable."

On not stealing: "Every time you or your neighbor gives money into the church collection plate on Sunday, it goes to places you are unaware. Some may say this stealing [sic] by the church's upper hierarchy."

On not killing: "During World War II, Pope Pius XII largely ignored the plight of the Jews. He would and did not publicly decry the actions of the governments of Germany and Italy, both heavily Catholic countries. Most recently, Pope John Paul decried the war in Iraq as only a last resort...the pope is lying to the world and allowing the further murder of scored [sic] of innocent people and several genocides."

If this is an example of U.Conn's academic standards, then it looks like the only high standards they maintain nowadays are in women's basketball.

PENN STATE

On April 1 a column on Gay Pride Week appeared in *The Collegian*, Penn State's student newspaper. Among the usual complaints about the treatment of homosexuals, student Daniel Moore actually blamed Catholic teaching regarding homosexuality for the sex abuse scandal. The Catholic League fired off a letter rebuking the author for his comments. *The Collegian* ran it the next day.

In our response, we noted that the author called abusive priests men 'consumed with Catholic guilt.' We quipped, "Apparently, they weren't consumed enough. If they were actually faithful to Catholic teaching, the scandal would never have occurred."

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI



The cartoon shown at the left appeared on March 17 in the *Daily Mississippian*, the student newspaper of the University of Mississippi. Drawn by student Allan Innman, the cartoon is grossly insulting to all priests. When a member alerted us to the cartoon, the Catholic League

responded with a letter to the editor, which was published on March 21. In it, we advised, "Lent is a time to take on suffering, not dole it out. Perhaps Innman should consider giving up his cartoons for Lent."