

GANGING UP ON CARDINAL MAHONY

In an April 5 *Los Angeles Times* column, George Skelton criticized Cardinal Roger Mahony because Mahony, the Los Angeles Archbishop, expressed disappointment with a Catholic public official, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, for supporting a bill that would authorize doctor-assisted suicide.

Skelton referred to the Catholic Church as “looking like an ugly old political attack dog,” accusing the cardinal of violating church and state lines. Thus did he call for “a bill to reexamine the tax-exempt status of church property.”

Skelton also said “the church hierarchy is on shaky grounds these days when lecturing about moral leadership.”

Assemblywoman Patty Berg wondered, “Why aren’t they taking care of their own shop?”; and Nunez called the cardinal’s remarks “extreme and dogmatic.”

Anti-Catholic bigots have tried before to strip the Catholic Church of its tax-exempt status and failed miserably. But it shows how far we’ve come from the days when Mr. Separation of Church and State himself, President Thomas Jefferson, gave \$300 to the Kaskaskias Indians to build a Catholic church, to the bullying of George Skelton.

On March 2, 2006, a *Los Angeles Times* editorial commended Cardinal Mahony for “reinforcing the right of religious leaders to speak out on the moral ramifications of political issues.” The issue then was restrictive immigration bills; the cardinal opposed them on moral grounds. So how is it that Cardinal Mahony is now all of a sudden violating the Constitution when he addresses doctor-assisted suicide?

Cardinal Mahony has every right to speak out about contemporary moral issues. Those who want to silence him would do well to purchase a copy of the United States Constitution.

They may especially profit from learning about religious liberty and freedom of speech. Hint: they're in the First Amendment.

CATHOLIC BASHERS SPARED IMUS TREATMENT

In mid-April, talk-show radio host Don Imus was blasted for an on-air racial comment directed at the Rutgers University women's basketball team. There were demands from numerous quarters that Imus be fired—we couldn't help but contrast these calls for Imus' head with the way Catholic-bashing is so often dismissed as "free speech."

Two years ago, Penn Jillette (of the comedy team Penn and Teller) went on Showtime calling Mother Teresa "Mother F-king Teresa" and called the nuns who worked with her "f-king c-ts."

Showtime is owned by Viacom and that is why we wrote to its chief, Sumner Redstone, to register a complaint. He wrote back extolling the merits of "artistic freedom" and "tolerance."

Last year, on Viacom-owned CBS radio, Jillette said Mother Teresa "had this weird kink that I think was sexual," compared the saintly nun to Charles Manson and said she "got her [sexual] kicks watching people suffer and die." Again, nothing was done about this.

In 2005, Bill Maher went on HBO at the time of the death of Pope John Paul II and said, "For those who could not make the funeral, the Vatican has asked that in lieu of flowers, just stop touching your d-k." He also said that the whole story of Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the Resurrection was "grafted from

paganism”; he ended by mocking the death of the pope and the upcoming conclave.

The letter we received from HBO said that “it’s a free country, and people are free to say silly things—even on HBO.”

Right before Easter, the Catholic League protested the chocolate Jesus with his genitals exposed that was to be shown in the art gallery of the Roger Smith Hotel in midtown Manhattan (located on street level, the public was invited to eat him). Air America radio co-host Cenk Uygur, writing about it on “The Huffington Post,” said, “So is the argument that Jesus didn’t have ad-k? Or were people offended because it was too big? Too small? Too immaculate? Not immaculate enough?” Regarding Imus’ remark, Uygur was much more disturbed, calling it “derogatory and insulting.”

Similarly, Joan Walsh on Salon.com said the chocolate Jesus was not “a big deal,” and advised people not to go see it if they didn’t like it. She called on Imus to be fired.

Even New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg said “don’t pay any attention” to the chocolate Jesus, but found it necessary to brand Imus’ comments “repugnant.”

In other words, Catholic bashing is humorous and an exercise in liberty. Racism is awful. Bigotry, then, is neither good nor bad—it just depends who the target is.

NO POST-IMUS CULTURE FOR

CATHOLIC BASHERS

In the wake of the controversy last month involving shock-jock Don Imus, CBS chief Les Moonves remarked that Imus “has flourished in a culture that permits a certain level of objectionable expression that hurts and demeans a wide range of people. In taking him off the air, I believe we take an important and necessary step not just in solving a unique problem, but in changing that culture, which extends far beyond the walls of our Company.”

The Catholic League didn't miss these events and took the opportunity to share our thoughts about the double standards at play with the press in an April 16 news release:

“It was a great statement, but no sooner had Moonves spoken when Catholics learned that his words represented wishful thinking

“On the HBO show ‘Real Time with Bill Maher’ on April 13, the comedian showed a picture of guitarist Keith Richards in his ‘New Rules’ segment and said, ‘New rules, snorting your father isn't crazy’ (this was a reference to Richards’ hoax about snorting the ashes of his dead father). Maher then showed a picture of a Catholic priest administering Communion, saying, ‘Eating your father, that's crazy.’

“The next day Seth Meyers read a news story on ‘Saturday Night Live’ wherein he remarked, ‘For the second consecutive year the number of sex abuse claims against the nation's Catholic priests had dropped. Undisputable proof that fewer kids are going to church.’

“Even the TV Guide Channel got into the act on Sunday when John Henson questioned why anyone would want to blow himself up to get into heaven just to be with 72 virgins when you could have ‘72 naughty Catholic schoolgirls.’

“It is one thing when comedians like Maher label all religions ‘childish, destructive and nonsense’ (as he did April 16 on ‘The View’), quite another when the Eucharist is mocked and priests are slandered.

“The Catholic schoolgirls’ remark was not offensive, per se, but it was entirely gratuitous in both forum and context. All in all, it goes to show that Catholic bashing will survive in a culture that penalizes race and gender bashing.”

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Finally, a unique film that combines the excitement of sports and the richness of the Catholic Faith! “Champions of Faith: Baseball Edition” is a film that showcases Catholicism in a positive and respectful manner. Too often Hollywood uses the Catholic Church as a punching bag, choosing to treat Catholics as “looney” and out-of-touch with reality. This film portrays Catholicism in a heroic light and truly makes one excited to be Catholic.

“Champions of Faith” showcases the Catholic faith-lives of a range of All-Star Major Leagueball players, coaches and managers. These men take their faith seriously and live out that faith with joy, enthusiasm and love. Superstar athletes all too often get caught up in fame and fortune, but the men profiled in “Champions of Faith” are so down-to-earth that they could be considered “the guy next door”—or more fittingly, “the guy in the next pew.”

Filled with exciting game footage from Major League Baseball, this groundbreaking film features inspiring and personal faith stories of some of baseball’s greats.

Future Hall of Famer Mike Piazza shares how the Word of God started resonating inside of him and how it impacted his storied career.

Five-time All Star Mike Sweeney speaks of his conversion and reveals the difficulty of seeking forgiveness for a brutal on-field fight.

Third-base coach Rich Donnelly talks about how his faith in God deepened during his daughter's life-and-death struggle with a brain tumor.

2006 World Series MVP David Eckstein and National League Championship Series MVP Jeff Suppan describe how they saw each other at Mass one Sunday and never knew the other was Catholic. From then on the two St. Louis Cardinals teammates attended Mass together and led their team through adversity and to a World Series crown.

And legendary manager Jack McKeon explains how the intercession of St. Therese after he was in "retirement" finally brought him his lifelong dream—a stunning World Series victory.

At a time when the Catholic Church and Catholics in general are under massive assault in the culture, "Champions of Faith" comes along with the unique ability to change hearts and perceptions. The more than two-dozen cultural icons featured in "Champions of Faith" are proud to be Catholic and unashamed of their Faith. These men are shining examples of what it means to be a man of God and a pillar of the Church.

Produced by Catholic Exchange (who last brought you the best-selling *A Guide to the Passion*), "Champions of Faith" is a powerful weapon in the culture wars of our times. It offers a unique opportunity to discuss faith, family, teamwork and leadership along with other spiritual lessons to be learned from the game of baseball. It's an inspiring film that is sure to touch the hearts and lives of everyone who sees it.

For more information or to obtain a copy visit www.ChampionsofFaith.com or call 1-877-263-1263.

THE SCANDAL THAT HAS NO NAME

On April 11 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released the 2006 report on clergy sex abuse.

Rachel Zoll of Associated Press did her usual fine work in her coverage of the story, but because most of the news was good, her piece was either ignored or drastically reduced by most newspapers.

Here are some of the key findings:

- Of the 635 credible accusations made in 2006, 71 percent of the alleged cases took place between 1960 and 1984. Only 2 percent occurred in 2006.
- Most—71 percent—of the accused priests are either dead or have been removed from ministry; some are missing.
- 80 percent of the alleged victims are male.

In other words, the abuse flared during the sexual revolution of the 1960s and ended when AIDS was discovered in 1981.

The report refers to allegations involving “children under the age of 18,” and in doing so confuses 7 year-olds with 17 year-olds; the latter are not generally regarded as children.

Since most of the victims are males and all of the victimizers are males, what this means is that pedophiles and homosexuals commit most of the molestation. Incredibly, neither the word

pedophile nor homosexual is mentioned once in the report. The report conveniently lumps together cases which began between the ages of 10 and 14 (they account for 52 percent of the cases), thus making it impossible to determine whether pedophilia or homosexuality was at work (puberty begins between 10 and 12). No matter, there were almost twice as many alleged victims aged 15 or over as there were those aged 9 or less.

What no one wants to talk about is the 11 percent of priests whose allegations against them could not be proven or were proven false. What is being done for these men? What outreach program have they benefited from?

GIULIANI AND CASEY: MAKING LIFE DECISIONS

Catholics who accept the teachings of the Catholic Church on the life issues have every reason to be angry with Rudy Giuliani's recent pledge to maintain taxpayer-funded abortions if elected president. His overall position on abortion is incoherent. He says he is now opposed to partial-birth abortion except to save the life of the mother, would appoint "strict constructionist" judges and says he personally "hates" abortion.

Giuliani has no need to qualify his opposition to partial-birth abortion: the American Medical Association has determined that there is never a medical need for this type of abortion.

Moreover, if he appoints the kinds of judges he says he will

appoint, it is not likely they will uphold the wholly contrived right to abortion-on-demand. So why not simply say that *Roe v. Wade* invented a right that nowhere appears in the Constitution?

What exactly is it that Giuliani “hates” about abortion? And why does he want to impose on the public the burden of paying for something that is constitutionally suspect and morally repugnant?

When running for the senate seat in Pennsylvania, Casey would not commit on how he would vote on federally funded embryonic stem cell research. Recently, however, he said he’s against it. This is good news. It makes it all the more difficult for him to later renege on his pro-life position on abortion, and thus should be welcomed by practicing Catholics in both parties.

Catholics look to people like Giuliani and Casey to promote a culture of life. Giuliani’s mixed signals are in need of repair. Casey is off to a good start.

BEHAR STRIKES AGAIN ON “THE VIEW”

Joy Behar, a panelist on ABC’s “The View,” is a former Catholic who denigrates the Church at every chance she gets. The April 13 show proved no exception.

When asked if she is superstitious, Behar remarked, “When I was a kid I used to be because the Catholic Church has a lot of that sort of thing in it, but then I sort of grew out of it.”

What is clear is that Behar hasn't grown out of her obsession with blaming the Catholic Church for her own issues. Just recently, on the March 26 airing of "The View," Behar admitted her lack of knowledge about the Bible, claiming, "I never read the Bible as a child because I was Catholic."

Behar would have viewers believe that it's the fault of the Catholic Church that as a kid she was afraid of broken mirrors and black cats. She would also have them think it's the Church's fault she is too lazy to pick up a Bible.

DEFENDING THE RELIGIOUS RIGHTS OF ALL

Department of Justice publications on Religious Freedom

The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice recently released its *Report on Enforcement of Laws Protecting Religious Freedom* for the fiscal years 2001-2006. This publication contains useful information regarding protection of your rights in such areas as education, employment, and housing discrimination.

Another Department of Justice publication, *Protecting the Religious Freedom of All: Federal Laws Against Religious Discrimination*, is an invaluable guide to citizens wishing to know the full extent of their rights.

Anyone interested in reading about federal law in these areas should go online and visit <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/religdisc/religionpamp.htm>.

Catalyst readers will soon learn that many of the injustices

the Catholic League opposes each year are indeed illegal.

The Department of Justice highlights the following scenarios as being possible violations of federal law.

Education

- A group of students form a Bible club and ask for permission to meet in a classroom before school. While other student-created groups are given meeting space, the Bible club is barred because it is religious.
- A teacher berates a student in front of the class because he does not share the faith of the teacher and the rest of the class, leading to repeated harassment of the student by other children.

Housing

- An apartment complex has a meeting room that is available for residents to reserve for card games, social activities, and similar events. A resident is told that she may not use the room to hold a Bible study with friends.
- A tenant in public housing places a statue of the Virgin Mary on her balcony. Although other tenants are permitted to place similarly sized decorative objects on their balconies, the property manager says that religious items are not allowed in public housing.

Zoning and landmarks

- A small church is denied a permit to operate out of a storefront in a commercial zone, even though non-profit groups including fraternal lodges, a dance studio, and a theater company are permitted in the same zone.
- A town's zoning ordinance requires all houses of worship to obtain a variance in order to locate within its

borders. While there are a number of churches already in town, every application for a new house of worship since the ordinance was adopted has been denied.

Penal system

- Catholic prisoners seek space in a prison chapel on Sunday and permission for a volunteer priest to come in to say Mass, but are told that they should attend the nondenominational Christian service run by the prison's Protestant chaplain.

It is reassuring for people of all religious faiths to know that the federal government takes seriously violations of religious liberties such as the ones mentioned above. Americans of all creeds would do well to arm themselves with the information provided in these Department of Justice religious freedom publications.

Remember, knowledge is power—if you don't know your rights, you won't realize it when you're not getting a fair shake.

PROBE CUTS TOO CLOSE

Brian Brown, executive director of the Connecticut Family Institute, recently testified before some members of the Connecticut legislature. The issue was same-sex marriage.

During the questioning, Brown, known to the lawmakers as a practicing Catholic, was subjected to an improper line of inquiry. Bill Donohue sent a strongly worded letter to the entire legislative body.

Two members of the state legislature, Representative Michael Lawlor and Senator Edwin Gomes, probed Brown's religious

convictions as they pertained to the issue. While it is entirely legitimate to ask witnesses about the source of their convictions, religious or otherwise, a line has been crossed when the questions become personal, intrusive and persistent. "Separation of church and state, it needs to be stressed, cuts both ways: Just as it would be illegitimate of me to ask Rep. Lawlor and Sen. Gomes to go on record explaining their personal convictions about the wisdom of Catholic teachings, it is equally illegitimate of them to pepper expert witnesses about their private beliefs," Donohue said.

Donohue concluded saying that "if this continues, my response next time will not be in the form of a letter."