

Media Treat Pope Fairly; Protesters Fail to Score

By all accounts, the visit of Pope John Paul II to the United States was a smashing success. Media treatment of the papal visit was, with few exceptions, very fair. Protesters were few in number and without impact. From beginning to end, this papal visit proved to be the most triumphant of them all.

The only complaint that the Catholic League lodged against the media during the papal visit concerned the coverage of Catholic dissidents. The Catholic League did not object to media coverage of dissent within the Catholic community, but it did object when groups that are not Catholic were presented as such to the public. The League cited the October 5 edition of *NBC Nightly News* with Tom Brokaw as an example.

Brokaw provided a platform for Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) and Dignity. CFFC is an anti-Catholic front group run by Frances Kissling and has been labeled by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops as having “no affiliation, formal or otherwise, with the Catholic Church.” Dignity is an organization of gays and lesbians who claim to be Catholic while openly flouting Catholic doctrine. Unlike the gay Catholic group Courage, which is recognized by the Church (these are men and women who accept the Church’s teachings on homosexuality), Dignity is not listed in the *Official Catholic Directory*, precisely because it has no standing as a Catholic organization.

The Catholic League released the following statement regarding media treatment of CFFC and Dignity: “The media do a great disservice to Catholics and non-Catholics alike when Catholics for a Free Choice and Dignity are presented as though they were genuine voices in the Catholic community. The effect of such misrepresentation is to promote dissent rather than to

record it. As such, it is irresponsible for the media to allow itself to become willing accomplices to public deception. The term catholic means universal, but to be a Catholic is to acknowledge the authority of the magisterium of the Catholic Church. This is something that neither group accepts, the effect of which is to nullify their status as Catholic."

Anti-Catholic bigotry was evident even before the arrival of the Holy Father in Newark, New Jersey. In the vicinity of Giants Stadium, a group called His Marvelous Light Ministries distributed copies of a booklet titled "Do You Really Know Who This Man Is?"; on the cover is an illustration of Pope John Paul II. The entire text is given to portraying the Pope as Satan. Speaking of the "revival of the papacy," the text says, "The beast is coming to life again and the world is giving power to the Papal beast." The gist of the publication is that the Pope is a blasphemous agent of Satan, if not Satan himself.

On the cover of the October 15 edition of *LGNY* (Lesbian & Gay New York) is an illustration of Cardinal O'Connor and Pope John Paul II kissing. The following headline statements appeared on the cover. "OH MARY! Revealed! *Real Reason For Papal Visit!*" "O'Connor & Pope's Secret *GAY LOVE!*" "Vatican Shocker! *Men in Dresses!*" "*TEARFUL ADMISSION: We Were WRONG About Homosexuality! And Abortion! AND Infallibility!*" Finally, there was this choice headline: "Their Urgent Warning: *THE CATHOLIC LEAGUE ARE F ALSE PROPHETS!*"

Both the size of the protests and the coverage afforded them by the media were meager. The Catholic League learned of a protest meeting at New York's Gay and Lesbian Community Center on September 26 and made arrangements to field a report on the proceedings. We were notified that three principal groups were organizing the protests: ACT-UP, American Atheists and NARAL (National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League). Literature was passed out labeling the Pope as "The Foremost Symbol of Religious Superstition, Intolerance and Bigotry." In

Baltimore, where the papal visit ended, literature was distributed that said, "Show 'His Silliness' that the United States is NOT part of the 'Holy Roman Empire of 1995.'" "

The protest that greeted the Pope at the United Nations was so bad that police officers complained that it was a waste of their time. Only about 15 protesters were present, most of them from the American Atheists group. But there were several hundred protesters who marched up 6th Avenue on Saturday, October 7.

The march up 6th Avenue began at Bryant Park, located behind the New York Public Library. The groups included members from ACT-UP, People for the American Way, National Organization for Women, NARAL, Dignity, American Atheists, the ACLU and Planned Parenthood. They protested the Church's positions on women, homosexuality and abortion. Four members from ACT-UP were arrested when they broke away from the march and headed toward St. Patrick's Cathedral where the Pope was reciting the rosary.

The Lesbian and Gay Papal Visit Coalition (a front for ACT-UP) solicited the support of the New York Civil Liberties Union in an unsuccessful bid to petition the police to allow them greater access to a spot near St. Patrick's so that the Pope would hear their protest. A banner, however, was unfurled from a sixth floor balcony at Saks Fifth Avenue, overlooking the Cathedral. In obvious reply to the Catholic League's 1994 anti-condom posters that appeared in the subways ("Want to Know a Dirty Little Secret? CONDOMS DON'T SAVE LIVES"), the banner read, "Condoms Save Lives." The six who staged the event were immediately arrested.

Showgirls Offends Catholics

The United Artists movie, *Showgirls*, which opened on September 22, was justly criticized for its indecency, and that is why it received an NC-17 rating. But the movie also contains a scene where vulgar words and behavior are used in reference to Our Blessed Mother. Language such as "The F_____ g Virgin Mary" is used and, in the same scene, a heavy set woman bares her breasts and makes a vulgar reference to the Virgin Mary while doing so.

The following is an excerpt of the League's statement to the press regarding the movie.

"*Showgirls* is not only a movie that is violent and sexually exploitative of women, it is a movie that insults the Catholic religion. The juxtaposition of indecency and blasphemy is nothing new, but the fact that this movie has already set the record for the most amount of money ever spent to promote an NC-17 rated film makes it all the more disturbing.

"It is bad enough that United Artists is determined to mainstream its filth into neighborhood theaters without also attacking Catholicism. This only goes to show that there are those in Hollywood who not only have no moral standards, they have no respect for religion-especially Catholicism-either. And the fact that screenwriter Joe Eszterhas has urged minors to acquire fake IDs to see the movie proves that their callous agenda includes the exploitation of children as well.

"The Catholic League urges parents to protest the showing of this movie in their neighborhood theaters. If this blasphemous stag movie belongs anywhere, it belongs in back alley theaters normally associated with the 42nd Streets of America."

Pope Protesters a Pathetic Lot

What a sorry bunch of creeps. That's the only way I can describe the way I feel about those who mounted their little protest against the Pope. Pope John Paul II is arguably the greatest man of the 20th century and he is surely the most beloved person on earth today. Non-Catholics, as well as Catholics, have embraced him in a manner that is absolutely awesome. And that is why those who protested against him are so pitiful: it is they – not the Pope – who are strangely out of step with the masses.

Who are the protesters and what do they want? To begin with, I am not talking about those persons who, for whatever reason, have sharp disagreements with the Catholic Church. I am talking exclusively about the radical fringe, some of whom are pictured in this issue. The first thing to notice about them is that they are very bitter people. The depth of their hate is enormous and it is not just their hatred of the Pope that motivates them. They are unhappy with themselves, with America, with Western Civilization, with nature and with God. Is it any wonder they find it difficult to smile?

Notice who these people are. Their interests are abortion, homosexuality and atheism. Radically self-absorbed, what they want is a world where they can do whatever they want to their bodies, with no cost to themselves, and where they are accountable to no one, not even to God. That is why they are a pathetic lot.

Listen to what they say. Just prior to the papal visit, Frances Kissling of Catholics for a Free Choice called the

Pope "a mean man." I made sure to tell that to every journalist, TV commentator and radio talk show host I could find. I want them to know exactly what kind of person they are dealing with when they talk to Kissling. Even the Pope's biggest detractors find him irresistible as a person, and that is why Kissling's remark is so valuable: it shows that she is not just another critic, she is in a class all by herself. She is also a coward.

A few weeks before the papal visit, I was asked by PBS in New York if I would debate Frances Kissling on TV. Of course, I said yes. Kissling had already agreed to the debate, though she did not know whom it was she would be debating. The week before the papal visit, I got a call back from PBS. Kissling, upon learning whom she would be debating, canceled. I was told by the producer at PBS that when my name was mentioned, she was "literally terrified."

So much for Kissling. She spends her life sucker-punching the Catholic Church but doesn't have the guts to confront her adversaries. When CNN called, I recommended a debate between Kissling and me. The producer was excited about the idea and said she would try to arrange it. She never called back.

Radical feminist Gloria Steinem showed up at the protest march in New York and delivered this gem of a quote: "We will live to see the day that St. Patrick's Cathedral is a child-care center and the Pope is no longer a disgrace to the skirt that he has on." Dream on, Gloria, your time has already passed and you still don't know it. Thirty years after her feminist movement began, women are more exploited in music, the movies, television and the theater than ever before, and now, having given up on her original goals, poor Gloria wants to bring her social engineering skills to bear on St. Pat's.

Someone from the press asked if the Catholic League would be organizing a counter demonstration against the protesters. No, I said, not on your life: I would never do anything to take

the spotlight off of them. I want the whole world to know what a sorry bunch of creeps they really are.

FOX TV Offends Again

On September 8, the FOX TV program *TV Nation* featured host Michael Moore offering an invitation to a young Catholic woman to confess her sins at several Catholic churches. The purported goal of this exercise was to compile a “consumer’s guide” to penance. “Sinners can be winners” was the line used to tease the story.

The program focused on the young woman entering a confessional and admitting to sins of lust. To be sure that the woman was confessing to real sins, a male model was hired to tempt her. The viewer is told that the woman visited 26 churches and confessed to “dirty thoughts about men, not really X-rated thoughts, more like NC-17.”

Other examples of ridicule followed, but the clincher was how the show ended. In a voice-over, Moore said the following: “The preceding was a re-enactment. All the churches and penances, though, were real. The participants were bona fide Roman Catholics who believe in the pains of Hell and the existence of a merciful God.” On the screen was a statement that said, “No actual commandments were broken during the broadcast.”

FOX Promo Withdrawn

Using Mother Teresa to make a comedic point was not seen as very funny by the Catholic League. In September, a promotional spot for the Fox-TV program, *The Preston Episodes*, featured the show's star, David Alan Grier, taking a cheap shot at Mother Teresa. Grier pretended that Mother Teresa was walking toward him while he was naked; after a short pause a female voice was heard screaming. The ad for the show was carried on several radio stations, among them being WPTF in North Carolina.

The Catholic League contacted the local Fox affiliate, Fox 22, and learned that the ad was sent to local radio stations without the consent of the affiliate. After discussing this matter with Ron Mulligan of the Los Angeles office of Fox, an apology was extended and a pledge not to run the offensive spot again was made.

NEA Play Draws League Protest

The play, *Nine*, which has been playing this fall at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, New Jersey, contains several scenes that offend Catholics. Nuns, in particular, are treated in an insulting fashion. The Playhouse, a State Theatre of New Jersey, receives funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey Council on the Arts, and lists New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman as the Honorary Chairperson of the Playhouse's Board of Trustees.

In a letter of protest to Angelo Del Rossi, the executive producer of *Nine*, and to New Jersey Governor Whitman, Catholic League president William Donohue directed his objections to

the portrayal of a nun, Sarraghina. According to the script, Sarraghina is transformed into “a voluptuous whore.” The statements that are made about her and about St. Sebastian, as well as Catholics in general, show a disposition to ridicule Catholicism.

The League centered its objections on the government-funded nature of the play.

CBS Show Ridicules Catholicism

On September 12, Tom Snyder, host of the CBS program *The Late, Late Show*, ridiculed Catholicism with his guest Cyndi Lauper. Lauper, a rock singer, made several disparaging remarks about Catholicism and was abetted in this effort by Snyder. Here is a sample of Lauper’s remarks:

Lauper offered a “theory” that God had nothing to do with nuns who “tried to be good but the whole theory of that organization [Catholic Church] is about oppression, oppression of women....”

Of the Blessed Virgin, Lauper said that “the only way that she conceived the Son of God was through this big miracle which means that the gift God gave women to give birth, the one gift...for us is an evil sin basically...”

Commenting on the clothes of nuns and priests, Lauper opined: “I’m supposed to feel bad about being a woman; these dames [nuns] they gotta look ugly and this guy’s [priest] wearing a flowing skirt...He wants to wear a skirt, he’s got the whole drag thing going, he’s got a hat like a penis...I felt it was

kind of strange.”

Lauper then proceeded to tell a story from her youth. She admitted to “baiting” a nun by asking her if she went swimming in her habit. Lauper also asked the nun if she ever menstruated.

The ridicule ended with Snyder saying, “Bless me, Father, for I’ve had impure thoughts.”

The Catholic League registered a protest with CBS over this show and encourages all members to do the same. Here is the address: *The Late, Late Show*, CBS Television City, 7800 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036.

Bravo Makes Obscene Show

In an affront to Catholics, *Windows*, a program which aired on September 24 on the cable network Bravo, featured a dance routine involving a priest dealing with temptation from a nun dressed like a hooker. The segment was the last one on the program, taking place on a dark street. “Temptation” was sung by a choir as the priest made sexual advances toward the nun, who was wearing a strapless black minidress and high heels. She also donned a habit with a pair of Rosary beads hanging around her neck. She stood seductively holding onto a pole as the priest committed one outrage after another in struggling with his sexual desires.

He danced around, crossing himself and outlining the female form with his hands.

Among the jabs at the Catholic faith were his repeatedly dropping the Bible onto the ground, trying to grab at the

nun's body, and stealing a shoe from a homeless woman. However, the most egregious element of the routine was the priest giving white wafers-obviously meant to indicate the Host-to the choir whose tongues, moving wildly, were hanging out of their mouths. After taking the wafer into his own mouth, the priest as well as the choir spat the wafers out. After looking at the Bible yet again, he started to choke while muttering incomprehensibly. He removed his collar and ended up keeling over the rail of a fire escape as smoke surrounded him.

The Catholic League registered its outrage to Bravo, the *Windows* producer Thomas Grimm, and Texaco Performing Arts Showcase, which sponsored the program.

Beijing Conference Ends But Debate Doesn't

The U.N.'s Fourth World Conference on Women ended without the virulent Catholic bashing that was evident at the 1994 Cairo Conference. Nonetheless, there was another attempt by Catholics for a Free Choice to unseat the Holy See from the U.N. And a press conference by pro-life groups was disrupted by lesbian activists.

It was expected that Catholics for a Free Choice would raise the question of the Holy See's status at the U.N., but it was surprising, as well as disconcerting, to learn that senior U.N. officials also addressed this issue. According to Marlene Gillettelnbern, a Catholic League member and attorney who works in Puerto Rico, an incident took place at a press conference that cast a shadow on the work of Jacques Lang, an advisor to

the United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali.

Mr. Lang wondered aloud why the Vatican delegation was remaining for the UN conference's deliberations, considering that its status was that of an observer. Fortunately, Therese Gastaut, press coordinator for the UN conference, responded by saying that Switzerland, which has the same status as the Holy See, was also allowed to participate in the conference's proceedings. Following the advice of Marlene Gillettelbern, who went to Beijing as part of the team from Human Life International, the Catholic League registered a protest with Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali over this incident.

The Holy See delegation, effectively led by Mary Ann Glendon, succeeded in stopping a challenge to the proposition that the family is the basic unit in society. Those who railed against the Vatican wanted to elevate alternative life styles such as cohabitation and homosexual liaisons to the status of the family.

The final document proclaimed something that most people all over the world would see as unexceptional: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and by the state." The fact that the Holy See's delegation had to join with the delegations from many non-European nations to ward off attacks on this position shows how ideologically driven the Western nations have become.

The Holy See also secured language that spoke to the positive effect of religion on women, notwithstanding the caveat that extremism in any form can have a deleterious effect. The cooperation between Catholics and Muslims on this issue should prove to have good, long-term consequences.

Children's Rights, U.N. Style

When most people hear the term "children's rights," they think of the right to basic necessities and the right to be protected from abuse. But that is not what the children's rights movement is all about. Herewith some observations by Arthur J. Delaney on what the Western nations succeeded in doing in Beijing. Art is the president of the Greater Philadelphia/ South Jersey Chapter of the Catholic League.

Paragraph 108 [e] of the final document might be called a farewell to parents.

108 [e] Prepare and disseminate accessible information, through public health campaigns, the media, reliable counseling and the education system, designed to ensure that women and men, particularly young people, can acquire knowledge about their health, especially information on sexuality and reproduction, taking into account the rights of the child to access to information, privacy, confidentiality, respect and informed consent, as well as the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents and legal guardians to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in conformity with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In all actions concerning children, the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration..."

Notice how children's rights are placed not only first but above parents' rights and not just physically but metaphysically! According to the above wording, parents really have no rights at all. If children's rights to access information, to privacy, to confidentiality, to respect, to informed consent precede parents' rights to

provide...appropriate direction and guidance, there is little need for such rights, if indeed there is any substance to their rights! The child's action will already have been completed *before* such guidance can be given! Parents cannot override the child's decision, they can merely add their *opinion* to sex educators, condom distributors and abortionists, and that, *after* the fact! Indeed if confidentiality and privacy are respected, how will parents even know if their opinion is needed?

In a final blast of insolence the paragraph clearly states that "in all actions concerning children, the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration." It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the courts will have no difficulty granting the state the right to determine the best interest of the child! They have already done so in the matter of abortion.

Additionally parents ought to be seriously concerned with the exact meaning and extent of such notions as "public health campaigns," "media," "reliable counseling," and the "educational system." What precisely do all these concepts involve and to what extent? Given the agenda of those who sponsor such notions, it ought to make every parent leery.