

SCHOOL CALENDARS SHOW BIAS

Every school year we get legitimate complaints from our members about school calendars that recognize Jewish holidays by name but not Christian ones. This year is no exception as complaints have been fielded from Cincinnati, Ohio, Peekskill, New York and other parts of the country.

The way it usually works is like this. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are listed but not Christmas and Easter: Winter Break and Spring Break are the preferred euphemisms.

There is no law against secularizing Christian holy days while acknowledging Jewish ones. It's just a matter of insult, bad taste and, arguably, bigotry. It will continue until Christian parents come together and demand a change.

Want to hear the latest? This past summer a school official at a Cape Cod, Massachusetts school said that students would be forbidden to distribute Valentine's Day cards during school hours. That, of course, isn't censorship—it's those parents who want to shield their kids from porn on the internet who are the censors. Americans believe in fairness and that is why we can still win on this issue.

GOOD THEATER

There is an alternative to "Corpus Christi," even in New York. Producer George Gordon has given us a gem in "The Jeweler's Shop," a play written by Pope John Paul II. Call (203) 251-8474 for more information. It has received high marks from the critics and should be loved by all Catholics. Here is what Gannett said of the play:

“A compelling evening of entertainment – touching in surprising ways, secular theater.”

IONA STANDS FAST

Iona is a Catholic college in New Rochelle, New York, not far from the big city. It has a president, Brother James Liguori, who is a model of what a Catholic college president ought to be. He believes in the school's mission and has the courage to stand up to his hypocritical secular critics.

“Student Says Catholic College Censored Her Published Poem,” was how the *New York Times* described Brother Liguori's decision to spike obscenities in the school's magazine. Worse was an October 2 editorial in the Gannett newspapers that read, “Iona's censorship wasn't education.” It was a lecture meant to chastise Brother Liguori for acting like a Catholic.

Try to follow this logic. A Catholic college president defends the mission of his school and outsiders tell him he's wrong. That's because Brother Liguori didn't want four-letter words in the school's literature. Now what if he decided to spike an anti-Semitic or racist poem? Is there anyone who doubts that the phonies at Gannett would be citing him for academic responsibility? Or that the *New York Times* would have had an entirely different title for this story?

The Gannett editorial took issue with Iona's policy that bars “indecent” material; it called the term “impossible to define.” In a letter to the editor, we said it was ludicrous for Gannett to make such a claim. We reminded the sages that “every Gannett newspaper makes editorial decisions everyday regarding the propriety of columns, letters and essays that it prints. Some of those decisions ineluctably involve matters of

decency.”

Why not write to the busy-bodies and let them know what you think. Write to Gannett, One Gannett Drive, White Plains, New York 10604. Want to congratulate Brother Liguori? Write to him at Iona College, 715 North Avenue, New Rochelle, New York 10801.

PIUS RAPPED BY PBS

PBS recently aired a special entitled “Reflections on Vatican II.” Most of the commentary that was elicited was balanced. One notable exception was the segment that dealt with Pope Pius XII. As usual, the old canard about Pius being silent during the Holocaust was trotted out, and no one was more unfair than Giancarlo Zizola, biographer of Pope John XXIII.

On the September 18 show, Zizola made the rather remarkable comment that during the Holocaust, “the Church was so worried about the naked arms of women in churches, about moral questions, but did not make any statement on the naked Jews who were digging their own graves.” What he failed to say is that Pius was too busy orchestrating shelter and providing phony baptismal certificates for Jews to worry about making headlines that would have backfired on his efforts.

We registered our objections with PBS, citing historical evidence. What we provided stands in stark contrast to the empty rhetoric of Giancarlo Zizola.

As readers of Catalyst know, attempts to denigrate the work of Pope Pius XII are taken seriously by the Catholic League. We know of no other world leader in the 20th century who has been lied about more than Pius. It is outrageous that after all he

did to help Jews that there is a veritable cottage industry of activists and writers seeking to besmirch his reputation.

In the end, evidence will triumph over emotion. It it doesn't, we're all in trouble.

ERSATZ NATIVITY SETS

When people talk about the commercialization of Christmas, they usually mean the extent to which material indulgence has overwhelmed the celebration of a sacred event. But there is a secularizing trend going on that is, on many counts, even more offensive than the empty-headed pursuit of profit: the introduction of ersatz nativity sets.

It used to be that a nativity set included baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the Three Wise Men, an angel, and perhaps shepherds and animals. Now all we see are the animals.

The fall edition of the catalog, Celebration Fantastic, has for sale a nativity set that features two bears, a donkey, a rabbit and a rodent. The Apple Whimseys Collectors set sells for \$899; there is no gift box available. The latest Cotton Gin catalog is selling a nativity set that includes 15 animals, most of which are mice, and it goes for a mere \$135. Then there is the Holiday edition of Casual Living: it's advertising a nativity set made up of four snowmen. You can have the Snowman Nativity Set for 60 bucks; two pine trees connected by a wire thread and star are thrown in for good measure.

Write to Celebration Fantastic at 1620 Montgomery Street, Ste. 250, San Francisco, CA 94111 (1-800-CELEBRATE). Contact Gin at P.O. Box 414, Jarvisburg, NC 27947 (1-800-637-2446). Casual

Living can be reached at 5401 Hangar Court, P.O. Box 31273, Tampa, FL 33631 (1-800-843-1881).

It is not just catalogs that are doing this, many store windows are doing the same. Just check out the malls. If you can, find out the name of the person who is in charge of the mall, and/or the store owner, and register your complaint.

A PRIESTLY REPLY TO HATE MAIL

Don Kazimir, director of the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Palm Beach, had a letter printed in the *Palm Beach Post* objecting to Planned Parenthood. Writing to him at the diocese was a young woman who proved to be a bigot. Father Thomas J. Euteneuer of Holy Cross Catholic Church in Indiantown, Florida, jumped to Don's defense and wrote her back.

Here's a small sample of what the woman had to say:

"Once I obtain my law degree, I plan to seek a career in the field of reproductive rights, and it is my sincere hope that I become a thorn in the side of men like you. Of course, I do not expect you to feel any sense of remorse or compassion for me because I'm sure you would consider me just another 'christ-killing Jew.'[sic]

"You may be interested to know that my catholic [sic] friends frequently joke that the only advice on sex that they would seek from the church is how to get away with being a pedophile!"

We only have room for a short comment from Father Euteneuer:

"You violated literally all the rules of rational

argumentation in your response to Mr. Kazimir. Your overt religious slurs, unsolicited and off-color jokes, salacious quotes from 'catholic friends' and the like all add up to an ugly display of basic religious bigotry—something which Jews decry with a vengeance when directed against them.”

“This type of gut-level venting would be humorous if it were not so hypocritical.”

We are pleased to note that the Palm Beach Regional Office of the ADL condemned the woman's letter as bigotry. So do we.

STUMPING FROM THE PULPIT: THE DOUBLE STANDARD

On October 4, Senator Alfonse D'Amato gave a highly partisan speech at Rev. Floyd Flake's Allen AME Church in Queens, New York. Rev. Flake also made highly partisan remarks.

The Catholic League took note of the duplicity surrounding this event and delivered the following message to the media:

“On the front page of the *New York Times* there is a color photo of Senator D'Amato speaking before Rev. Floyd Flake's congregation. In addition to the *Times*, the *Daily News*, *New York Post* and *Newsday* all ran articles on this story. Yet there were no editorials condemning this incident as a violation of church and state.

“Had Senator D'Amato, or any other candidate for political office, made a political speech at St. Patrick's Cathedral, the New York media would have gone ballistic. And just think what the reaction would have been had Cardinal O'Connor done

what Rev. Flake did—promise that he would soon announce his endorsement of either Senator D’Amato or Congressman Charles Schumer! The civil libertarians would be marching into federal district court today screaming church and state violations.

“The Catholic League does not regard Senator D’Amato or Rev. Flake’s actions to be of grave constitutional question. What it objects to is the two-faced, hypocritical reaction that colors the media and the double standard practiced by civil libertarians. If Cardinal O’Connor even voices his sentiments on partial birth abortion, the same gang that tolerates what happened yesterday at Allen AME Church immediately finds fault. It is high time we had one rule for all clergymen, independent of religion.”

ANOTHER “FORMER ALTAR BOY” STORY

Some young guy killed an old lady in Florida and on October 5, the Associated Press (AP) ran a story on it. Halfway through the story, we learn that the killer had a lousy upbringing and suffered from bouts of depression and other psychological maladies. This was helpful in understanding his violence. What we thought was bizarre was the characterization of him as a “former altar boy.” It appeared in the second paragraph.

This is the third time in the past few years that we have complained to AP about crime stories that gratuitously mention the former altar boy status of an accused thug. Our former complaints were answered in a letter and a phone call, and in both instances we were assured that there was no malicious intent and that such remarks would not be made again.

For the record, we have no reason to believe that malice is at work. But that doesn't mean that bigotry isn't. Prejudice can be so deep-seated that its sponsors often fail to realize their bigotry.

The AP reply to us this time gives us reason to believe that they, too, know that the problem runs deep. We hope they can exterminate this problem once and for all. AP is a big company so it's hard to root out some problems. But surely a better job can and must be done.

“DEVOUT CATHOLIC”?

The *Washington Post* did a follow-up story on the killing rampage that John Salvi went on at an abortion clinic in Brookline, Massachusetts on December 30, 1994. It was an interesting story. One of the woman whom Salvi terrorized, Deborah Gaines, was in the clinic that day to abort her baby. As things turned out, she never had the baby and is now madly in love with her three year old. But she wants the clinic to defray the cost of raising her daughter.

The story was interesting for another reason: it proved once again that bad apple Catholics are regarded as “devout” by the media.

It made sense for the article to call Slavi an “antiabortion zealot.” It made sense to label him a “madman.” But it made no sense to brand him a “devout Roman Catholic.” Unless, of course, a cheap political point was intended.

One final point: does the media have a machine that measures devoutness, or is this just a judgment call? If it's the latter, how do they distinguish between lazy, lukewarm

Catholics and devout *Roman* Catholic ones? By the way, we couldn't help but notice that the religious affiliation of Ms. Gaines went unmentioned.

IF "TRINITY" OFFENDS

The more we read about the new NBC TV show, "Trinity" (Fridays at 9:00 p.m. EST), the more our guard goes up. If it offends, let NBC Director of Broadcast Standards & Practices, Randy Flaco, know how you feel. Write to him at 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, New York 10112. Ask him why NBC can't develop a priest character whom Catholics can identify with.