

SHOWDOWN IN SEATTLE; APOLOGY FINALLY GRANTED

We've had a busy time this fall dealing with an eruption of priest-bashing incidents. One of the worst took place in Seattle. After a protracted struggle, we got the apology we initially sought.

On September 29, Ken Schram, a commentator for the ABC-TV affiliate in Seattle, KOMO, sarcastically complained about a piece of public art that the Seattle Art Museum was considering for display.

The work in question was that of a nude man reaching for a nude boy; it was to be displayed at a public park on the Seattle waterfront. Schram said that "a naked guy reaching for a naked kid has far more sordid interpretations in this day and age," and then said: "The sculpture might as well as be called the priest and the altar boy."

In our statement to the media, we said, "It is hard to think of a more vile, sweeping indictment of the over 42,000 priests who serve the Catholic Church. Because a tiny minority of homosexual priests have molested young males, commentators like Schram think now's the time to libel all priests. But if he thinks he's heard the last of this, he's not only a bigot—he's a fool."

Schram made it clear that he was not going to apologize and that he considered the issue closed. At that point, Bill Donohue contacted ABC-TV officials in New York and Los Angeles about the Seattle matter. Donohue was told to contact KOMO-TV station manager Dick Warsinske.

After speaking to Schram, Warsinske agreed to take the offending article by Schram off the KOMO website. But there was no apology. So Donohue contacted Fisher Communications,

the Seattle-based firm that owns KOMO.

On October 7, Schram yielded and wrote a column saying that there are “a lot of good priests” who are “dedicated to their parishioners and their religion.” He ended by saying that priests “were entitled to a more thoughtful reflection from me.”

Colleen Brown, the newly appointed president and CEO of Fisher Communications, wrote to Donohue on October 14 saying that Schram’s last article on this subject “clearly expressed that it was not Ken Schram’s intention to perpetuate a stereotypical image and that priests were entitled to a more thoughtful reflection from him.”

We only wish KOMO-TV had acted sooner to quell the controversy, but in the end we got what we wanted—an apology.

PADRE PIO DEFAMED

In the November issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, there is a brief article by Tyler Cabot titled, “The Rocky Road to Sainthood.” Of Padre Pio, one of the most revered priests in recent history to have been canonized, Cabot writes, “Despite questions raised by two papal emissaries—and despite reported evidence that he raised money for right-wing religious groups and had sex with penitents—Pio was canonized in 2002.”

Cabot is either ignorant or a bigot. In the September 24, 1998 edition of the *New York Times*, there was an article on Padre Pio that said he was the subject of 12 investigations commissioned by Rome; he died in 1968. One of the last investigations was a 1960 report by Rev. Carlo Maccari

alleging that Padre Pio had had sex with female penitents twice a week.

One of Padre Pio's fellow monks was so upset with such allegations that he actually snuck a microphone into his rooms (including, apparently, the confessional), but in the end yielded nothing. Now here's the clincher, not reported by Cabot: Father Maccari, who became an archbishop, later recanted his story and wound up praying to Padre Pio on his deathbed.

In his lifetime, Padre Pio was the object of great jealousy by some Vatican officials. Some, like Maccari, even went so far as to defame him. And now we have ideologues like Cabot trying to do the same thing. We're surprised that a highly regarded magazine would publish such trash.

NOTHING JUSTIFIES COLLECTIVE GUILT

William A. Donohue

How many times have we been told—rightly so—that it is wrong to say that all Jews are like Shylock? Or that it is wrong to cast all blacks as Sambo? Or that it is wrong to say that all gays are promiscuous? Or that it is wrong to brand all Italians as gangsters? Or that it is wrong to portray all Irishmen as drunkards? Or that it is wrong to depict all Chinese as inscrutable? Etc.

You get the drift—stereotypes abound for all demographic groups. The problem is that while they are everywhere condemned, there is one exception: When it comes to Catholic

priests, it is okay to paint every last one of them as a predator.

The hypocrisy that marks this issue is unbelievable. Let me give you a few quick examples.

Larry Summers is the president of Harvard University. He ended the last academic year in a storm of controversy. Why? Because he offended radical feminists on campus. His offense? He was pointedly asked, in a closed-door meeting at the National Bureau of Economic Research, to make a provocative comment that would stir discussion. So he opined that perhaps the superior achievements of males in math and science might be grounded in nature. That sure stirred discussion—when the faculty found out about it they voted to censure him.

On his ABC talk-radio show over the summer, Michael Graham commented that “Islam is a terror organization.” What followed was a series of protests from the Council on Islamic-American Relations that resulted in Graham getting canned.

This fall, former Secretary of Education and Drug Czar, Bill Bennett, engaged a caller on his radio show on the subject of abortion. The caller said that if we hadn’t aborted so many children, the Social Security fund would not be in so much trouble because many more workers would have been contributing to it. Bennett, who is pro-life, was not comfortable with this less-than-principled response, so he said that by such reasoning we could conjecture that if all black babies were aborted, the crime rate would go down.

Bennett’s point—a hypothetical case designed to show how dangerous utilitarian arguments can be—was followed with his explicit comment that such reasoning was “morally reprehensible.” No matter, he was quickly condemned by senators, commentators, editorialists and others. Some wanted him fired and even the White House wouldn’t defend him against the smear merchants.

Women, Muslims, African-Americans. Make a remark that can be construed as offensive and all hell breaks loose. And many other groups can be added to this list, as well. But not priests.

Why the exception? It is too easy to say it's anti-Catholicism. Of course, it is that. But what accounts for its enduring legacy? It comes down to this: we deserve it. How do I know this? Because I've been told many times by the bigots, that's why. They constantly bring up every sordid chapter in Catholic history—real and contrived—and throw it in our face. Yet there is not a single group or institution in history that doesn't have its dirty laundry. So why is it fair game to bash us and no one else? It all has to do with what we stand for.

We, and by that I mean Catholics and the Catholic Church, acknowledge that there is an objective moral order that colors all societies, and that every one of us will ultimately be held accountable for our behavior. To say this in a Western society today is heresy. It is so radical as to be offensive. That's because our elites—the opinion makers in the media, Hollywood, publishing industry and the academy—don't want to be told that it is wrong to yield to our most debased appetites. And so when they learn of priests who fail, they rub it in our face. With delight.

There is no reason why we should take this abuse. Who gave them the right to make us their punching bag simply because some bishops and priests have behaved badly? Besides, it is not the teachings of the Catholic Church that have failed us, it's some of our clergy.

What the Catholic bashers want more than anything else is a world in which every individual makes up his own moral code. They hate us because we're the epitome of what they fear most—a people and an institution that tells them that their world is a world that inexorably leads to degradation, despair and death. Without a moral code grounded in Truth, we assert,

there is no way civilization can proceed without morally imploding. What they want they cannot have—a world where subjectivism triumphs and moral anarchy is held in check.

Regrettably, not a few Catholics who are angry at those bishops and priests who caused the scandal have let down their guard, refusing to fight the bigots. Some border on being masochistic. Count me out. I'm angry, too, but I'm not about to let the other side bury us.

SEX ABUSE AND SIGNS OF FRAUD

By Gordon J. MacRae

Three years before the latest wave of clergy sex abuse claims rippled out of Boston across the country, Sean Murphy, age 37, and his mother, Sylvia, demanded \$850,000 from the Archdiocese of Boston. Sean claimed that three decades earlier, he and his brother were repeatedly molested by their parish priest. In support of the claim, Mrs. Murphy produced old school records placing her sons in a community where the priest was once assigned. No other corroboration was needed. Shortly thereafter, Byron Worth, age 41, recounted molestation by the same priest and demanded his own six-figure settlement.

The men were following an established practice of “blanket settlements,” a precedent set in the early 1990s when a multitude of molestation claims from the 1960s and 1970s emerged against Father James Porter and a few other priests. In 1993, the Diocese of Fall River settled some 80 such claims in one fell swoop. Other Church institutions followed that lead on the advice of insurers and attorneys.

Before the Murphys' \$850,000 demand was paid, however, Sean,

his mother, and Byron Worth were indicted by a Massachusetts grand jury for conspiracy, attempted larceny, and soliciting others to commit larceny. It turned out that Sean and Byron were once inmates together at the Massachusetts Correctional Institute at Shirley where they concocted their fraudulent plan to score a windfall from their beleaguered Church.

On November 16, 2001, Sean Murphy and Byron Worth pleaded guilty to all charges and were sentenced to less than two years in prison for the scam. The younger Murphy brother was never charged, and Mrs. Murphy died before facing court proceedings.

Local newspapers relegated the Murphy scam to the far back pages while headlines screamed about the emerging multitude of decades-old claims of abuse by priests. When two other inmates at MCI-Shirley accused another priest in 2001, a Boston lawyer wrote that it is no coincidence these men shared the same prison. "They also shared the same contingency lawyer," he wrote. "I have some contacts in the prison system, having been an attorney for some time, and it has been made known to me that this is a current and popular scam."

It is not difficult to understand the roots of such fraud. Prison inmates, like others, read newspapers. Just months before the onslaught of claims against priests, the Archdiocese of Boston landed on the litigation radar screen with the notorious arrest of Mr. Christopher Reardon, a young, married, Catholic layman, model citizen, and youth counselor at a local YMCA who was also employed part-time at a small, remote parish outpost north of Boston. As Mr. Reardon's extensive serial child molestation case came to light—with substantial and graphic DNA, videotape, and photographic evidence of assaults that occurred over previous months—the YMCA quickly entered into settlements consistent with the State's charitable immunity laws.

In a search for deeper pockets, however, a local contingency

lawyer pondered for the news media about whether the rural part-time parish worker's activities were personally known—and covered up—by the Cardinal Archbishop of Boston. It was a ludicrous suggestion, but it was a springboard to announce in the *Boston Globe* (July 14, 2001) that “the hearsay and speculation” among lawyers and clients, is that “the Catholic Church settled their cases [of suspected abuse by priests] for an average of \$500,000 each since the 1990s.”

It was a dangled lure that would soon have many takers, some of whom have been to the Church's ATM more than once. In January of 2003, at the height of the clergy scandal, a 68-year-old Massachusetts priest had the poor judgment to be drawn into a series of suggestive Internet exchanges with a total stranger, a 32-year-old man named Dominic Martin. Using a threat of media exposure of the printed exchanges, Mr. Martin demanded that the priest leave an envelope containing \$3,000 in a local restaurant lobby. The frightened priest, who never had a prior accusation, compounded his poor judgment by paying the demand. Soon after, another cash demand was made, but the priest finally called the police who set up a sting of their own. On January 24, 2003, Dominic Martin and his wife, Brianna, were arrested at the drop point, and charged with extortion.

The police report revealed that Mr. Martin had changed his name. His birth name was identified as Tod Biltcliffe, a man who, a decade earlier, obtained a lucrative settlement when he accused a New Hampshire priest of molesting him in the 1980s. At the time the priest protested that Mr. Biltcliffe was committing fraud and larceny. The Church settled anyway. Biltcliffe's claim was that when he was 15 years old, the priest fondled his genitals while the two were in a hot tub at a local YMCA. Curiously, the investigation file contained a transcript of a 1988 “Geraldo Rivera” show entitled “The Church's Sexual Watergate.” One of the cases profiled was that of a young man who claimed that a priest fondled his genitals

while the two were in a hot tub at a local YMCA.

The 1988 “Geraldo” transcript was a sensationalized account of clergy sex abuse cases from the 1970s and 1980s. The transcript is notable because it contains many of the same claims of exposing secret Church documents, archives, and episcopal cover-ups in 1988 that lawyers and reporters claim to have exposed in 2003.

Writer Jason Berry, and contingency lawyers Jeffrey Anderson and Roland Lewis all appeared live on “Geraldo” on November 14, 1988 to announce the existence of secret Church archives, cover-ups by bishops, and out-of-court settlements of Catholic clergy sex abuse claims across the country. Jason Berry, who excoriates the Church and priesthood at every opportunity, actually defended, in 1988, the existence of so-called “secret” Church archives: “Canon law says that you have to have a secret archive in every diocese....That’s funny because I’ve been attacking the Church for three years on this...I want to express my own irony of [now] being in a position of defending the Church.”

I have been in prison for eleven years. As a priest, I cringed while the latest wave of abuse claims unfolded in the press in the last few years. Inmates often feel like victims, but some saw the proliferation of abuse claims as a lucrative scam and wondered why they were letting such an opportunity pass. I have been repeatedly asked whether I would give the name of a priest who might have been present in someone’s childhood neighborhood, or if I thought the Church would quietly settle if a claim was made. When asked if the claim would be true, the answer is always the same: “Of course not!” One inmate reported that he was visited by his lawyer who asked if he is Catholic. The lawyer is alleged to have said: “If you want to accuse a priest of something, I can have \$50-grand in your account by the end of the year.”

Another inmate told of his narcotics arrest by a detective who

was apparently fielding cases for contingency lawyers. The young man reported that he was asked whether he wanted to accuse a priest who had been accused by others. The young man insisted there was nothing he could accuse the priest of, but the detective reportedly suggested: "That's sort of beside the point, isn't it? We're talking a lot of money here."

Yet another inmate claims that he indeed was molested by a priest and is awaiting settlement from a distant diocese. The man says little about the abuse beyond a vague and cursory suggestion that he somehow repressed it. He drones on incessantly, however, about plans for his expected windfall, about investment opportunities, and about how non-invasive the settlement process has been. Another, rather insightful inmate remarked: "Let me get this straight. If I say that some priest touched me funny 20 years ago, I'll be paid for it, I'll be a victim, and my life will be HIS fault instead of mine! Do you have any idea how tempting this is?"

In a 2004 article in the *Boston Phoenix*, "Fleeing the Shepherds," legal expert and author Harvey Silverglate cautioned against capitulating to significant numbers of questionable claims brought after the Church entered into huge blanket settlements. In some cases, such claims were deemed "credible"—the standard established for permanent removal of accused priests—with no other basis than their having been settled.

As accusations swept over the U.S. Church, few in the media dared write anything contrary to the tidal wave gaining indiscriminate momentum against the Church. A notable exception was the left-leaning Catholic magazine *Commonweal*, which editorialized: "Admittedly, perspective is hard to come by in the midst of a media barrage that is reminiscent of the day care sex abuse stories, now largely disproved, of the early nineties...All analogies limp, but it is hard not to be reminded of the din of accusation and conspiracy-mongering that characterized the anti-Communist witch hunts of the early

1950s.”

With media coverage of the unprecedented millions invested in blanket settlements, the trolling for claims and litigation continues unabated. Last year, a Boston area high school history teacher and coach of twenty years, a husband and father with no prior record or accusation, was caught up in an Internet sting by a detective posing on-line as a teenage boy cruising Internet chat rooms for sexual encounters. The practice has netted the detective some 400 arrests, including—by his own estimation—1 priest, 6 police officers, and 18 public school teachers. The ex-teacher, now prison inmate, related that as the handcuffs were set upon him, before he was even led out of the YMCA to which he had been lured and arrested, the detective asked some curious questions: “Are you a Catholic?” “Yes.” “Were you ever an altar boy?” Another “yes.” “Were you ever molested by a priest?”

Father Gordon MacRae is in prison for claims alleged to have occurred in 1983, and for which he maintains innocence. His case was extensively analyzed in a two-part series in The Wall Street Journal (April 27/28, 2005) by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Dorothy Rabinowitz.

BARBARA WALTERS : MADAM MEDDLER

ABC personality Barbara Walters seems to have a thing about matters Catholic these days. For some reason, she finds it necessary to offer her pronouncements about issues that don't concern her and about which she knows nothing at all. Our

final straw came when she and her girlfriends sat around a table slamming the Catholic Church about sexuality. Here is Bill Donohue's letter to Madam Meddler:

*Ms. Barbara Walters
Executive Producer, "The View"
320 W. 66th Street, Bsmt. Level
New York, New York 10023*

Dear Ms. Walters:

It seems you have a problem with the Catholic Church. On the September 22 episode of "The View," you read a selection from the Catholic Catechism on homosexuality that you found disagreeable. To be precise, you wondered aloud what the Church meant by saying homosexuality was an "objective disorder." To the approval of your co-hosts, you further added that celibacy was "unnatural" or "supposedly" so. Moreover, co-hosts Meredith Vieira, Elisabeth Hasselbeck and Joy Behar piled on by speaking in the most disparaging way about the Catholic Church's teachings on women, celibacy and homosexuality. As the executive producer of this show, you watched approvingly.

You have crossed the line. You and your friends wouldn't dare read selections from the Torah or the Koran and then castigate Jews and Muslims. Nor would you ridicule the sexual practices of Orthodox Jews or Muslims during Ramadan. That's because anti-Catholicism finds a ready audience in this country today, and it is because of people like you that the bigots are so fat. You feed them well, Ms. Walters.

Sadly, you are no stranger to this issue. On the July 20 episode of "Good Morning America," you dipped into America's ugly history of anti-Catholicism by trying to establish a nexus between John Roberts' Roman Catholicism and his ability to render an independent judgment from the bench. After noting his religion, you asked, "Do you think it might affect him as

a Supreme Court Justice?" Yet when Ruth Bader Ginsburg was being considered for the high court, you never once cited her Jewishness as a possible impediment to clear thinking. No, it took a Roman Catholic to make you nervous.

I have asked our members to contact you about this matter.

In the next day's edition of the *New York Daily News*, gossip columnist Lloyd Grove did a piece on the controversy. Enough of our members contacted ABC (on the Internet, we posted all the relevant contact information) to force them to respond. Their PR man gave the predictably limp party line—"To assert that Ms. Walters and the other ladies of 'The View' have any bias toward any group is simply absurd..."

What's really absurd is that anyone would believe such propaganda.

NOSTRA AETATE

When the Catholic League was asked by Congressman Rush Holt's office whether we would endorse his resolution commemorating the 40th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* ("In Our Time"), we did so without reservation. This definitive declaration on Catholic-Jewish relations was accepted by the Magisterium in 1965 and remains the touchstone statement on mutual respect for all religions.

Pope Benedict XVI has said that "*Nostra Aetate* has proven to be a milestone on the road towards reconciliation of Christians and the Jewish people."

The theological differences between the world religions are likely to remain, but what needs to change is the intolerance

that some people of faith have for religions other than their own. And we would be remiss if we did not add that those who need to change the most are those secularists who hate all religions.

PHILADELPHIA D.A. EXPLOITS CHURCH

On September 21, Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham released a grand jury report on cases of alleged sexual abuse by priests in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Here is what we told the media:

“The incredible amount of time and money that Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham has wasted in her fanatical crusade against the Archdiocese of Philadelphia is just cause for her being thrown out of office. After all is said and done, she has come up empty: not a single priest will be prosecuted for any alleged crime. And she knew this from the get-go: the report says that ‘much of the abuse goes back several decades’ and that ‘many of the victims were unnamed, unavailable or unable to come forward.’

“In other words, Abraham wants us to believe that many years ago (decades ago?) there were priests who molested kids she can’t identify. Other alleged victims moved away and can’t be found (perhaps they’re hiding from her). Still others are apparently too old to meet with her.

“At bottom, Abraham is a phony. From the beginning, she had absolutely no evidence that would lead her to conduct a massive taxpayer-funded investigation of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia while not similarly investigating ministers,

rabbis, public school teachers, abortion counselors, et al. But all of them got a pass nonetheless. Worse, Abraham has the gall to say she wants to tighten the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law yet never states that abortion counselors should be added to the 'Mandated Reporters' list. And that's because her friends at Planned Parenthood would then have to report cases of statutory rape.

"Some will say she is heroic simply because she successfully named some priests who apparently were molesters. But it is not an act of heroism to select one institution out of many for an investigation that was destined to fail. It's an act of exploitation."

Bill Donohue's letter to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on this issue was printed on September 30. It appears below.

It is amazing that The Inquirer's Editorial Board is so fixated on priestly sexual abuse that it never once questioned why the Archdiocese of Philadelphia was singled out by Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne M. Abraham for a grand jury investigation when it was known in advance that it would lead to no prosecutions and there was absolutely no empirical evidence suggesting that priests have a monopoly on this problem.

If the real issue is protecting children (and not in getting priests), why hasn't The Inquirer or Abraham ever shown the slightest interest in investigating public school employees, abortion counselors (who regularly learn of statutory rape cases), rabbis, ministers et al.? Instead of addressing this issue, the Sept. 27 editorial "Sad limits (or lack thereof) of statues" asks why the law allows sexual abusers who allegedly committed their crimes long ago to go free but finds it OK to go after those who haven't paid parking tickets dating back years.

That's your idea of a level playing field?

PHILLY LAW FIRM HUSTLES CATHOLIC VICTIMS

An advertisement that was recently run in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* shows how bold the bigots have become. The following ad was placed in the A section of the newspaper on October 5:

**Legal Counsel To
VICTIMS OF PRIEST SEXUAL ABUSE**

Printed below the headline was the contact information. The law firm is Eisenberg, Rothweiler, Schleifer, Weinstein & Winkler.

The law firm, which is one of those infamous slip-and-fall types, is shameless. So is the Philadelphia Inquirer for running the ad. It is not likely that it would run an ad asking public school students who have been sexually abused by their teachers to contact them. But when it comes to priests, the usual ethical precepts no longer apply.

In our news release on this subject, we said: "Because a tiny minority of Catholic priests have molested young persons, anti-Catholic bigots are having a field day: they think they've been given a green light to bash Catholicism. Those who seek to exploit the scandal usually do so for ideological reasons, but there are others who are driven by greed."

TV ELITES BASH PRIESTS

The elites are in full gear this fall bashing Catholic priests, especially on TV. For example, consider this totally gratuitous cheap shot made during the October 10 episode of the CBS show, "Two and a Half Men." Here was the question: "Do Catholic priests make good babysitters?" Here was the sarcastic reply, "Is the pope Catholic?"

Now here is what we said to the media: "The line could have been, 'Do gay priests make good babysitters?' But it wasn't. That's because the bigots who wrote this show don't want to offend homosexuals, even though everyone knows—but most refuse to admit it—that it is gay priests who account for about 80 percent of the cases of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church."

Many in the media are living in denial about the extent to which gay priests have contributed to the sexual abuse scandal. Consider Joy Behar of the ABC show, "The View."

On the October 13 program, Behar showed us her brilliance with the following comment: "This is precisely why I object to when the Church says that they are not gonna have gay priests in the Church. As if gay equals pedophilia. It does not. If it did then the gay priests would be having sex with each other if they were just gay. They're not just gay. They're sick. They're pedophiles."

We pointed out in our news release that "no one ever said that gay equals pedophilia, though there are data which show that gays are disproportionately represented in cases of pedophilia." We also said that "it's nice to know that in the same episode of 'The View,' another savant, Meredith Vieira, managed to indict most Americans when she remarked, 'I think organized religion is a dangerous thing.'" We couldn't help but conclude, "Kind of the way most of us feel about organized atheism—it is so much easier to tolerate when it's

unorganized.”\

Of the three major networks, ABC, CBS and NBC, the first two have the worst record of bashing Catholics. Thus does the pattern continue.

DECATUR DISGRACE

Decatur, Alabama was the venue of an ugly scene that took place on October 2 inside the Annunciation of the Lord Catholic Church. After Communion at the 11:00 a.m. Mass, a man and a woman rushed the altar and turned over the century-old marble altar. The altar was thrown down the steps and smashed onto the floor.

Men from the congregation subdued the man and woman, as well as three of their accomplices. Rev. Joe Culotta told reporters that “They defiled what’s sacred to us.” The vandals also screamed at the faithful that Catholics worship idols, etc. “Children were scared,” said Father Culotta, “and people were crying.”

Adam Joseph Turgeon, 27, gave an interview from jail explaining his behavior by saying he was acting on a vision from God. His common-law wife, Lisa Marie Wagner, 26, was more explicit: “We are in the end of times. This is Armageddon, the end of all things. Basically, what we’re in right now is the appearance of the antichrist who we believe to be Pope Benedict [XVI].”

One church member, who happens also to be the mayor of Decatur, Don Kyle, said he believes that a lot of people “get a lot of misinformation about the Roman Catholic Church and other denominations.” Not an uncommon trait in parts of the

South even to this day.

The five were arrested and charged with a felony. The culprits appear to be unrelated to any hate group.