

# ATTACKS ON CHURCH GET UGLY; ALL ARE GRATUITOUS

It's been a wild autumn fighting verbal and graphic bombs lobbed at the Catholic Church. Most disconcerting has been the totally gratuitous nature of these ugly incidents.

Sarah Silverman styles herself as an edgy young comedian. We see her as a foul-mouthed bigot. She began her October tirade against Catholicism by lamenting the problem of world hunger on TV, but then quickly turned with a vengeance on the Catholic Church. Out of all the institutions in the world she could have unloaded on, she chose to single out our religion, and for no apparent reason. Except hate.

Abortion mills are death chambers, pure and simple. How anyone can work there, much less own the buildings that house them, escapes us. What is even more perplexing is why the owner of a building that leases an abortion facility would bait the faithful by putting a picture in the storefront window of Jesus extending his middle finger at Christians. He obviously was not content to merely allow the killing of the unborn—he had to show his hatred of Christianity.

Hate was much in evidence when radical secularists recently celebrated the first worldwide Blasphemy Day. Ostensibly organized to protest Muslim violence, the sole object of hate was Christianity, not Islam. This should put to rest the lie that these militants simply don't believe in God: if that were true, then all the insults that marked the day would be inexplicable.

Silverman could have based her monologue on world hunger without ever singling out the Catholic Church, but it was more fun to lie about the Church as a means of bashing it. And she could have spared us the vulgar language: what she said about

the pope cannot be repeated here. Moreover, when mainstream websites post her video, we know how deep anti-Catholicism runs in our society.

Rockford's abortion-loving entrepreneur could have settled for making a profit by giving his blessings to an intrinsic evil, but that wouldn't have fulfilled his sick need to insult us. When we have an abortion mill promoting death *and* anti-Christian bigotry, it isn't a leap in judgment to say there is a demonic odor to it.

Those who launched Blasphemy Day could have celebrated atheism without lashing out against Christians, except that would have taken the fun out of it. Though there were some humanists like Paul Kurtz who argued against this religion-bashing day, the fact they their side lost tells us volumes about the future of atheism. It doesn't look pretty.

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## CBS UPDATE

In the October *Catalyst*, we described how bad the Penn & Teller season finale was on Showtime, asking members to let their voices be heard by contacting CBS, owner of Showtime. As always, they did not disappoint—CBS got walloped.

On October 15, Bill Donohue received a call from the same high-ranking CBS official with whom he spoke earlier. He pleaded with Donohue to take down the video of the show that we posted on our website. Technically, CBS had a legal right to go after us as we never received permission from them to post it. But we knew that if they did, it would be a PR bust for them: then the public would know exactly what kind of show they were associated with.

Donohue was told that Showtime and CBS were being inundated with sharp criticism, including threats. Donohue admitted there were crazies on his side, but was quick to say that there were crazies on CBS' side, as well, including two on their payroll, namely, Penn & Teller. When the broadcasting executive got testy, Donohue stood his ground. In the end, Donohue agreed to voluntarily take the video down, but not on that day.

If Showtime brings back Penn & Teller, we don't expect we will have to issue another news release (not because we trust them). Recall that we sent a copy of the video to every bishop in the nation, as well as to many other religious and secular leaders; they made their voice heard, as well. The message, it is safe to say, has been delivered.

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## **FALSE ECUMENISM**

The Catholic Church is committed to strong interreligious relations, as well it should be. Being respectful of other religions is a good thing, and it very often leads to crucial coalitions on timely political, economic, social and cultural matters. There is a difference, however, between respecting other religions and fawning over them.

Surely we want children to learn about the history and beliefs of the world religions, but do we really want them to celebrate their holidays? As a general rule, the answer should be no. Exceptions can be made when a religious holiday of one faith can be celebrated as a cultural holiday by another faith, Christmas being the obvious example. But the more religious the content of the holiday, the less it should be observed by members of another faith. That is why it would be

just plain stupid for Jews to commemorate Good Friday. And none do. It would be just as stupid for Christians to commemorate Yom Kippur. But some do.

“As I do every Monday morning when I teach at Georgetown University,” writes liberal Catholic columnist E.J. Dionne, “I pulled off Canal Road into the main parking garage. Normally, I glide right into the lot, but on this morning, 15 or 20 cars were backed up waiting to get in.”

The *Washington Post* writer soon found out it was Yom Kippur.

“Now consider that Georgetown is a Catholic and a Jesuit university—proudly so—and then consider that the campus hosts one of the day’s largest services for the holy day in the city of Washington.” Dionne was ecstatic. He quickly added that Georgetown is so ecumenical, it even has a Muslim chaplain. He did not say whether there are Muslim footbaths at the rear of the church.

Yom Kippur is not a cultural holiday for Jews—it is strictly religious. Indeed, the Day of Atonement is typically spent by observant Jews in synagogue, asking God for forgiveness. So why are Catholics sponsoring it? Is it really a demonstration of goodwill, or is it emblematic of a loss of confidence in Catholicism? Let’s put it this way: either Roman Catholicism is special, or it is not. If it is, then attempts to relativize its status must be resisted. If it is not, then why bother to observe it?

Recently, I was interviewed by Alan Colmes on his Fox News radio program about *Secular Sabotage*. At one point, he asked me something I have never been asked before on a live radio or TV show: Do I believe that my religion is better than his? Alan, who is Jewish and is married to a Catholic, is a great guy and his question was not born of sarcasm or malice. He was startled when I said, “Of course.” He then asked if my religion was better than all other religions. To which I

quickly added, "Of course it is." I hastened to add that I was not implying that he was a bad person, or was destined to land in Hell. I simply said that my religion is the one, true religion. We ended the exchange as friendly as we began, and the respect was mutual.

I've seen what happens when students are taught that all religions are essentially the same: the religion textbooks that my elementary school students used in the 1970s were so thoroughly ecumenical that it made the slide from Catholicism to another religion—or none at all—so easy as to be disturbing. If all we stand for is the Golden Rule, then, yes, all religions (as well as atheist associations) are equal. But if there is more to it than that, then it is high time we said so. This is not a call to religious chauvinism, but it is a call to stop with the religious correctness that colors ecumenical conversations.

Five years ago, Rabbi Joseph Potasnik and I signed a joint statement slamming Chrismukkah, the contrived holiday established to make Christians and Jews feel good about not celebrating their own holiday exclusively. "Chanukah and Christmas celebrated during the same period should not be fused into some cultural combination that does not recognize the spiritual identity of our respective faiths," we said.

What Rabbi Potasnik and I have forged over the years is true ecumenism: we both deeply believe in our respective religions, and we deeply respect each other's religion, but neither is willing to dilute his religion by giving his blessings to a false merger.

Is Dionne accurate when he says Georgetown is "proudly" Catholic? This is the same school that put a drape over the name of Jesus when asked to do so by the Obama administration. This is the same school that recognizes a pro-abortion club on campus, "Hoyas for Choice." This is the same school where faculty members erupted in protest when an African cardinal

spoke disapprovingly about homosexuality at a graduation ceremony. In other words, is Georgetown's recognition of Yom Kippur a sign ecumenism, or exhaustion?

Ironically, I am glad Georgetown employs a Muslim chaplain, but not for the reasons Dionne likes: it took the Muslim chaplain—not a Jesuit one—to take public issue with the planned removal of crucifixes from the classroom in 2004. That's the kind of ecumenical presence I can readily endorse.

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## **SARAH SILVERMAN'S OBSCENE RIP AT VATICAN**

Comedian Sarah Silverman appeared on Bill Maher's HBO show on October 9 attacking the Vatican. She began her monologue bemoaning the plight of world hunger, and then found a solution: "What is the Vatican worth, like 500 billion dollars? This is great, sell the Vatican, take a big chunk of the money, build a gorgeous condominium for you and all your friends to live in...and with the money left over, feed the whole f—ing world."

Speaking of the pope, Silverman continued, "You preach to live humbly, and I totally agree. So, now maybe it's time for you to move out of your house that is a city. On an ego level alone, you will be the biggest hero in the history of ever. And by the way, any involvement in the Holocaust, bygones...."

Silverman closed by saying, "If you sell the Vatican, and you take that money, and you use it to feed every single human being on the planet, you will get crazy [expletive deleted]. All the [expletive repeated]." In the background, there was a drawing of a penis.

“Silverman’s assault on Catholicism is just another example of HBO’s corporate irresponsibility,” we said in a news release. “Time and again, if it’s not Bill Maher thrashing the Catholic Church, it’s one of his guests. There is obviously something pathological going on there: Silverman’s filthy diatribe would never be allowed if the chosen target were the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem and the state of Israel.”

We ended our statement with a reality check for Silverman: “The Catholic Church operates more hospitals and feeds more of the poor than any private institution in the world. It also saved more Jews during the Holocaust than any other institution in the world.”

Members are urged to write to Bill Nelson, Chairman, HBO, 1100 Avenue of Americas, New York, NY 10036; or write to him at [Bill.Nelson@hbo.com](mailto:Bill.Nelson@hbo.com)

If this wasn’t bad enough, the vulgar video was proudly made available on the following websites: Huffington Post; Gawker; TheFrisky; New York *Daily News*; MediaBistro; Examiner; AirAmerica; Ecorazzi; TheCelebrityTruth; Newser; EOnline; TheDailyBeast; Beliefnet.

On none of these websites could we find the video of Imus making fun of black athletes at Rutgers, nor could we find the one where Michael Richards ripped blacks while performing. In both instances, Imus and Richards apologized. But when Catholicism is the object of scorn, there are no apologies. Just opportunities to flag the offense one more time.

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# CHRISTIANS PROVOKED IN ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

Bill Donohue wrote to Patrick W. Hayes, Legal Director, City of Rockford, Illinois, on September 24. Here is an excerpt:

*I am aware that the Northern Illinois Women's Center has long been the subject of controversy in Rockford; the rights of pro-life demonstrators have allegedly been violated. That is an important issue, but that is not the reason why I am contacting you. My concern rests with the egregious provocation of Christians attendant to the enclosed graphic of Jesus Christ extending his middle finger; the inscription, "Even Jesus Hates You," appears below it. This graphic is currently being displayed in the window of the Center, in full view of adults and children; it has also been displayed, at various times, in the past.*

*This incendiary picture, designed to inflame Christian passions by assaulting their sensibilities and denigrating their religion—in a vile and obscene manner—constitutes such an infraction [of a city ordinance]. As such, I am requesting that you take appropriate action against the Center to put an end to such needless provocation. Thank you for your consideration.*

The next day, Donohue received a letter from Hayes saying that his office asked the owner of the Northern Illinois Women's Center to remove the offensive poster. Donohue thanked Hayes for his intervention, but also took issue with him about some other matters. Below is an excerpt of his letter:

*Your analogy between the poster in question and pictures of aborted children fails. The pictures are a representation of real life—they are not deliberately doctored. Nor are they a bigoted portrayal. Moreover, anti-war protesters regularly*



*show pictures of combatants and innocents killed in war, yet no one seeks to compare them to hate speech. By contrast, depicting Jesus Christ telling Christians “F– You” is not only contrived, it is an in-your-face obscene provocation, coming dangerously close to “fighting words” (“fighting words” are not given free speech protection by the U.S. Supreme Court).*

*You are factually incorrect to say that American newspapers carried the inoffensive pictures of Muhammad: not only did none of the mainstream newspapers reprint them, not a single network or cable television station carried them. Therefore, there is something bizarre, if not insulting, about your parallel sympathies for Christians and Muslims in these two very different situations: none of the cartoons came even close to showing Muhammad telling Muslims “F– You.”*

After the poster was taken down, the building owner got testy and put up two more. Accordingly, Donohue wrote to Hayes again. The Rockford mayor then dispatched Hayes to confront the owner and got h

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## **BLASPHEMY                  DAY                  TARGETS**

### **CHRISTIANITY**

The Center for Inquiry, an atheist organization, launched the first International Blasphemy Day on September 30. It chose that day because it marked the anniversary of the 2005 publication of the Danish cartoons that so inflamed Muslims worldwide.

Billed as a free speech event designed to oppose such things as a Muslim-sponsored U.N. resolution banning criticism of religion, the day drew the support of people like PZ Myers.

Myers, a professor at the University of Minnesota known for intentionally desecrating a consecrated Host, said the day was established to “mock and insult religion without fear of murder, violence, and reprisal”; he wants every day to be Blasphemy Day.

Bill Donohue responded with a statement to the press: “The Center for Inquiry is factually incorrect to say that ‘Free speech is the foundation on which other liberties rest.’ Freedom of conscience is the first liberty, and it is inextricably linked to freedom of religion. Moreover, the whole concept of inalienable rights presupposes a belief in the Creator. In other words, atheists have the right to mock religion because our Christian Founding Fathers afforded them human rights.”

They are all such phonies. The stated purpose of Blasphemy Day has nothing to do with any religion but Islam, yet there was not one scheduled event insulting Muslims. We can only guess why. So the religious haters showed once more that it is Christians, especially Catholics, that they want to bash.

The events were run by crazies. Artist Dana Ellyn wandered to Washington, D.C. to show her masterpiece, “Jesus Does His Nails,” a portrait of Jesus polishing a nail jammed into his hand. In Los Angeles, there was a film about a gay molesting priest and another about a boy who is so angry about being sent to bed that he asks God to kill his parents. Oh, yes, American Atheists conducted “De-Baptisms” in New Jersey.

“Nice to know that even the atheists know that Christians can be counted on to react to their antics like good Christians,” Donohue said. “Which is why there will be no violence.”

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# "THE SIMPSONS" CROSSES THE LINE

On October 18, Fox broadcasted the 20th episode of "The Simpsons" Halloween special. One of the three stories, "Don't Have a Cow, Mankind," was about people in Springfield becoming zombies after eating hamburgers infected with tainted meat.

After 28 days, Bart (the son) tries one of the infected hamburgers, but proves immune to the virus. He becomes the "Chosen One" and the Simpsons go off to find the safe zone where the rest of the uninfected people have gathered. When they get there a guard says, "Welcome, son. To survive, all we must do is eat your flesh." Marge (Bart's mother) responds by saying, "What kind of civilized people eat the body and blood of their savior?"

The day after the program aired, we issued a news release. The following is what Bill Donohue said to the media:

"What kind of uncivilized people work at Fox? Last year, when they poked some gentle fun at the Apostle's Creed on the Halloween episode, we said nothing. That's because it didn't cross the line. This year is different: mocking the heart of any religion always crosses the line, and mocking the Eucharist does it for Catholics. They know this at Fox, which is precisely why they did it."

Contact Peter Rice, Chairman of Entertainment, Fox Broadcasting: [peter.rice@fox.com](mailto:peter.rice@fox.com)

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# OBAMA IS NO MOTHER TERESA

Most people, including many of those who like President Obama's policies, were taken aback when they learned that he won the Nobel Peace Prize. We were stunned, too, but for a different reason: it was not his short tenure as president and relative lack of accomplishments that made us wince, it was his constrained idea of what constitutes peace.

Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, and her understanding of peace was much more generous than Obama's. She called abortion "the greatest destroyer of peace." That is not something Obama would ever say.

We are aware of the fact that the president recently said that no federal dollars will be spent on abortion in the health care bill he intends to sign. And although the bishops understandably commended him for saying this, their plaudits didn't last long.

On October 8, the bishops issued a letter, stating, "we remain apprehensive when amendments protecting freedom of conscience and ensuring no taxpayer money for abortion are defeated in committee votes." In reply, White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said, "there's a law that precludes the use of federal funds for abortion that isn't going to be changed in these health care bills." Gibbs was referring to the Hyde Amendment.

The president, however, does not support the Hyde Amendment. Indeed, he does not support any restrictions on abortion. That's because he doesn't see abortion as a destroyer of peace. Which is why he is no Mother Teresa.

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# CELEBRITIES GET A PASS ON SEXUAL RECKLESSNESS

The Catholic League has long suspected that, in many quarters, the outrage over priestly sexual abuse has had more to do with the status of the accused than the crime itself. The evidence became indisputable when we saw Hollywood defend and lionize Roman Polanski and David Letterman. Clearly there is a major difference between the two: Polanski is a child-rapist who drugged, penetrated and sodomized a teenage girl; Letterman is a philanderer who has admittedly had sex with female staffers.

How Polanski kept his hero status after fleeing the country following the rape of a teenage girl in the 70s is astonishing. But when Polanski was recently arrested in Zurich, and faced extradition to the U.S., he was defended by the Hollywood elite.

When actress Debra Winger showed up at the Zurich Film Festival—at which Polanski was scheduled to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award—she said she came “to honor Roman Polanski as a great artist, but under these sudden and arcane circumstances, we can only think of him today as a human being.” She was not alone: the festival’s jury proudly displayed red badges reading “Free Polanski.” Woody Allen, a man who speaks from experience, also came to Polanski’s defense.

Whoopi Goldberg showed her ignorance when she declared that Polanski’s crime “wasn’t rape-rape.” And noted photographer Otto Weisser agreed: “He made a little mistake 32 years ago.” That’s right—it’s only a big mistake when priests do it.

Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post* noted that it’s been “over 30 years” since Polanski molested the girl. Similarly, movie critic Tom O’Neil exclaimed that it was “mind-boggling

why they're still pursuing this." Yet there is no statute of limitations afforded priests—men long dead have been accused of crimes extending back to the 1920s.

Movie executive Harvey Weinstein also chimed in to defend his friend: "We're calling on every film-maker we can to help fix this terrible situation." The terrible situation, of course, wasn't what Polanski got away with—it was his pursuit by the authorities.

The week after news broke about Polanski's arrest and possible extradition, David Letterman opened the week laughing about the situation; he ended the week laughing and joking about his own sexual exploits.

Letterman's fans, of course, didn't care. "We love Letterman no matter what he does. He brings us joy," said a fan in New York. CBS quoted a Hollywood publicist who said "the star wouldn't be hurt by the revelations and might even be helped by them."

It certainly didn't hurt Letterman's career when he laughed at the Church for what happened in 2002. That summer a man and a woman had sex in St. Patrick's Cathedral. They did so in plain view of men, women and children and had their performance described on the radio as part of some sick contest. Most of the people were aghast, the radio hosts who rigged the event were fired, and apologies were issued by the radio station. Letterman, however, found it so hysterical that he used the story to tell jokes about it for three nights.

There was a time, not long ago, when feminists would demonstrate in the street demanding Letterman be fired for sexual harassment. As defined by feminists, sexual harassment typically kicks in whenever a boss, usually a man, uses his position of power to initiate sex with his subordinates. But Letterman didn't have to worry.

The National Organization for Women lists six different issues

as “Key Issues” and twenty more as “Other Important Issues.” Sexual harassment is not one of the six hot issues, nor is it one of the twenty “Other” issues.

But the ultimate hypocrites were those from the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU). This London-based organization condemned the Vatican for not dealing responsibly with the issue of sexual abuse. We noted that IHEU is an ethical disgrace. Consider that Vern Bullough, a noted world humanist, was past vice president of the organization. He was also a man who held Alfred Kinsey in high esteem, despite the fact that Kinsey was a sado-masochistic, child-abusing, voyeuristic pervert.

When Bullough died in 2006, he was fondly remembered by William A. Percy, a gay activist who unsuccessfully offered a bounty of \$20,000 for the outing of a living American Cardinal. Percy maintained that Bullough “never denounced NAMBLA,” the organized group of gay child molesters. Moreover, he rushed to support the infamous Rind study that put a sweet gloss on man-boy sex. Dr. Judith Reisman explained why: Bullough was the “self-confessed pedophile editor of *The Journal of Paedophilia*.”

Catholics don’t need any advice from IHEU on the subject of child sexual abuse. The organization so fully discredited itself that it forfeited the moral right to point fingers at any person or institution.

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## EYE ON CBS

When questions arose whether CBS was up to covering, as well as investigating, the Letterman scandal, we seconded that concern. But we preferred that CBS concentrate on the

malicious thrashing of Catholicism delivered by Penn & Teller on their August 27 season finale on Showtime (CBS owns Showtime).

What Letterman did was indefensible. But Penn & Teller crossed the line and engaged in the most hurtful, bigoted and immoral behavior ever seen on TV. If Imus and Michael Richards suffered for their transgressions, then justice demands that at the very least CBS not renew Penn & Teller's contract.