

HATS OFF TO BRAZILIANS

When some crazy evangelist slapped and kicked a statue of the Virgin Mary on Brazilian TV, it wasn't just Catholics who were outraged—the authorities were also. Preacher Sergio Van Helder was sentenced to two years in prison for showing disrespect for a religious symbol.

Imagine how the ACLU would react if we imported this splendid idea from the Brazilians. And wouldn't it be great to see Rosie O'Donnell in jail?

ERRATUM

Two issues ago we mentioned that Louis Farrakhan sought a meeting with Cardinal Bevilacqua and that His Eminence refused to meet with him. This is not accurate. What actually happened is that the Mayor of Philadelphia, Edward Rendell, supported a prayer meeting between Farrakhan and leaders of all faiths. Cardinal Bevilacqua, as well as Jewish leaders, refused to attend.

VICTORY OVER SONY

Editor's Note: *This victory over Sony is emblematic of two important characteristics of the Catholic League: a) it shows what can be done "behind the scenes" and b) it is a tribute to our members. While much of what the league does is high profile in nature (our protest against*

*"Nothing Sacred" is an example), we sometimes choose not to go public with our objections. In this case, we chose to pressure Sony without initially contacting the press. It is important to recognize that the threat of retaliation that the league made against Sony was only credible because of our members. If we did not feel that you would financially support our ad in the **New York Times**, we would never have made this threat. In short, the reason we won is due to you—the Catholic League has the greatest members in the world.*

Sony releases a pro-abortion "Christmas" CD, scoffs at its Christian critics, and then does a 180 by permanently withdrawing the album. What caused the sea change? Sony met the Catholic League.

It was in October 1996 that Columbia Records, which is owned by Sony, released the CD, *O Come All Ye Faithful*. What made this album so outrageous was its intent: the holiday album was explicitly designed to fund the pro-abortion message of the performers, Rock for Choice. Rock for Choice is a creation of the Feminist Majority, a militant pro-abortion group headed by former NOW director, Eleanor Smeal.

When the league learned of this travesty last winter, it registered its objections in a letter to Sony President Thomas Mottola. We got nowhere, as did several distinguished Catholic and Protestant leaders. We then wrote to Sony Chairman and CEO Norio Ohga in Japan. Again, we got nowhere (Ohga refused to answer anyone who wrote to him). Then we got tough. And that's why we won. Here's what happened.

On January 16, 1997 William Donohue wrote to Thomas Mottola stating that he found it highly objectionable "to abuse the traditions of a world religion" by making a pro-abortion statement. Arguing that the heritage of Catholicism was being "exploited for political purposes," Donohue maintained that even those who do not see abortion as representing "the certain death of innocent human beings" should at least restrain themselves "from appropriating the season of Christmas to register a pro-abortion stance."

Donohue asked Mottola to retire the CD, pledging that if it's available next year, "you won't hear the end of it."

The response was insulting. Writing for Mottola was Patricia Kiel, Senior Vice President for Communications (her form letter was sent to everyone who wrote to Mottola). She assured the league that "there was no intent on Sony Music or Rock for Choice's part to mock or attack Christianity or Christmas," adding that she regretted that the album "caused you such concern and discomfort."

The league's next move was to contact Norio Ohga. On January 31, Donohue told him that *O Come All Ye Faithful* was "not the kind of reverential tribute that Christians (and others) would expect, rather it was nothing more than a blasphemous promotional device used to further the agenda of pro-abortion forces." Donohue also took strong exception to the statement on the CD that proclaimed legal abortion as "the most spiritual of gifts." He branded this action as "inflammatory, reckless and bigoted."

Donohue then took aim at Kiel's letter calling it "blatantly dishonest." He promised a boycott if the CD wasn't retired once and for all. This time Sony's response was to simply ignore everyone by refusing to reply. Knowing that it was too early to devise a new strategy to kill the CD for the 1997 Christmas season, a decision was made to wait until June before trying a new tactic.

On June 13, Donohue wrote to Mottola expressing his exasperation with Sony. He cited the letter by Patricia Kiel wherein she regretted that the CD "caused you such concern and discomfort." He then wrote that "I now regret to inform you that what I have planned may cause you much more than concern and discomfort."

Before outlining his plan, Donohue repeated his objection: "It is not the existence of artists called Rock for Choice that is

the central problem. It is not the fact that they are funded by the pro-abortion organization, Feminist Majority, that is the central problem. The central problem is that these people are abusing Christmas to hawk their pro-abortion message.” He then asked one more time that the CD be retired, only this time a specific pledge was made in the event Sony refused. The rest of the letter is reprinted here in full:

“In the event you refuse to cooperate, I have decided on the following course of action. The week before Thanksgiving, just as the Christmas shopping spree begins, the Catholic League will publish on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times* a statement asking the public to boycott all Sony products; I will raise the funds needed to publish the ad—approximately \$22,000—in the league’s October appeal to its 350,000 members.

“In addition, I will seek the cooperation of dozens of Christian, Jewish and Muslim organizations that are likely to join with us in this protest (the boycott will be based on gross insensitivity to religious convictions, and not on abortion, per se); obviously, I will also tap the support of the many pro-life organizations that dot the country. Indeed, I will ask all these groups to join me in a press conference denouncing Sony for its irresponsibility.

“If you decide to retire the album, there will be no boycott, no statement in the *New York Times*, no organized effort against Sony, no press conference. Please let me know your decision by August 31. If there is no reply, or if your decision is to continue to market *O Come All Ye Faithful*, then the strategy I have outlined will be triggered.

“When we called for a boycott of Calvin Klein, the company had the good sense to withdraw an objectionable ad. When we called for a boycott of Target Stores, it had the good sense to redress our grievance. And when we called for a boycott against HBO, it had the good sense to retire a program that was incredibly offensive to Catholics. It is my hope that you

will also act responsibly and do what is right to protect Sony's good name."

That did it. Mottola wrote back on July 7: "Since the release of this album last October, the sales cycle of this album as run its course. We have no plans of re-releasing this album or another similar album this Christmas." To which Donohue said in a news release, "Let him say what he wants—we are only too glad he got the message."

SUSAN POWTER GETS EXERCISED OVER CHURCH

Susan Powter is mostly known for her bald head and her exercise techniques. But lately this jumping-jack queen has shown another side to her, and it is a side that has caught the attention of the Catholic League: she's an anti-Catholic bigot.

On Powter's radio program, which is syndicated in many parts of the country, she has increasingly bared her bigotry towards Catholics. In a show that she did in late July, she went on an extended tirade that really flaunted her true colors. She prefaced her remarks by saying that she was "raised in the Dominican Catholic Convent in Sydney, Australia, so I can say anything I want about the Catholic Church cause I got that Jesus thing wrapped around my ankles." Here's a sample of what she said:

- I also got thrown out of the Vatican in Rome because I was wearing a halter top and my skirt was too short and I asked a priest about idolatry because there were all those dead embalmed priests there in glass coffins.

- This religion that is soaked in blood, this religion that has murdered millions, millions, what do you think the Crusades were about? They skinned people alive, they're murderers.
- The incidences of priests molesting children, they're common. Not uncommon, it is common.
- Has anybody out there had sex with a priest? I have. I slept with a Catholic priest. Has anybody out there had sex with a priest that isn't an altar boy? I mean, you know, it's unbelievable. Do we really believe that these guys are not screwing people?
- Do you think that the Catholic Church should be dissolved?
- What I want to ask is, let's say I'm a Catholic and let's say that I want to live in the Catholic religion, why would I tolerate molestation, murder, destruction of indigenous cultures?
- The truth of the matter is many people have had sex with priests and nuns.
- It's adultery in the Catholic Church to enjoy sex.
- How do you walk into that [Catholic] church without vomiting?
- Do you tolerate the Church raping and pillaging?
- Why don't we bring old pope, whatever the hell his name is, down to the court, stick him in the chair, and say excuse me pope, the boys that work for your company are screwing young children. What are you going to do about it? What do you think he'd say then? Would he just waive behind his glass box? Is he even alive? I think he's stuffed. I don't think the pope is really alive. I think they took him off the mantle, they took him from the taxidermist.

What's nice about this is that we don't have to editorialize about Powter's comments. Her words prove that she's in a class of her own.

Members can write to Susan Powter's publicist, Ms. Rusty Robertson at: **RPR and Associates, 2211 Corinth Avenue, Suite 310, Los Angeles, CA 90064**

SAN DIEGO CHAPTER LASHES OUT AT "LASH WEDNESDAY"

The president of the Catholic League's San Diego chapter, Carl Horst, moved in August to mobilize tens of thousands of area Catholics to lash out at the Catholic-bashing radio spot, "Lash Wednesday." The offensive segment is part of the "Dave, Shelly & Chainsaw" program, a show that previously earned the ire of Horst when it was broadcast on ROCK 102.1-FM; it now airs on 101 KGB.

Predictably, callers "confess" all kinds of sins of the flesh. One man phoned reporting how his date wore crotchless panties and a see-through bra, explaining that he "nailed" the woman on his boss' desk at work. A woman called "confessing" that she cheats on her sailor-husband when he's away by sleeping with another woman. When a caller said something about a friend's "rumpus room," Shelly and Chainsaw replied, "The Reverend has a rumpus room and his favorite decoration is altar boys in his RUMPUS ROOM" (the emphasis is deserved).

Horst's previous campaign against "Lash Wednesday" took place in the winter of 1996. At that time, the national office assisted him by placing an ad in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* calling attention to this offense. Horst then did several interviews with the media explaining the league's position. This time, however, Horst decided to up the ante.

In August, Horst contacted virtually every parish in San Diego requesting that priests ask their parishioners to send a printed postcard to the program manager, Todd Little. The response was fantastic: tens of thousands of postcards were sent. Members can add to the protest by sending a letter of their own to Mr. Little at 5745 Kearny Villa Road, Suite M, San Diego, California 92123.

KUDOS TO AMBASSADOR FLYNN

In July, Vatican Ambassador, Raymond Flynn, wrote to President Clinton and Vice President Gore asking them to be more aggressive in combating anti-Christian persecution around the world. He reminded President Clinton that in 1994 he recommended that there be an Assistant Secretary for Religious Affairs, but that his appeals “have fallen on deaf ears because religious issues in general, and religious persecution in particular, have not been our government’s top priority.”

In his letter to Gore, Flynn wrote that “I have repeatedly passed on concerns by leading Catholic Church officials in the Vatican of the outrageous violations of human and religious rights to State Department officials.” Flynn then commented, “There seems to be in the U.S. government, however, an almost institutional denial of religious violations which are so apparent throughout the world.”

We are grateful for Ambassador Flynn’s courage. We are also delighted that he sent us copies of these letters. And we are particularly happy that he sent to the vice president the “Open Letter to Gore” that the league signed in March; Flynn photocopied the letter from the *May Catalyst*.

MTV'S "THE REAL WORLD" SLAMS CATHOLICISM

The sixth season premiere of MTV's "The Real World" opened July 16 with an attack on Catholicism. The show featured a group of strangers from various backgrounds who come to work and live together. Two of the seven characters were identified as Catholics; curiously, we learned nothing of the religious affiliation of the other five. What we did learn was that Catholicism was viewed with disdain. Here is a sample:

- The roommate of a Catholic woman says that discussions about the Catholic Church make her "scared."
- The same person admits that she is proudly anti-Christian because the Church is "really bad for women."
- A "Virgin Mary night light" is dubbed "kind of funny" by the owner.
- Catholicism is labeled "dogmatic Christianity."
- The Catholic woman is accused of trying to bring her values into the bedroom; she is also targeted by the group as a candidate that "we're gonna corrupt."

The league sent the following statement to the press regarding this show:

"MTV has often been criticized for showing bad taste, but its latest venture into Catholic bashing surpasses its previous decadence. None of the attacks on Catholicism can be seen as merely controversial commentary, for if that were the case then other groups would be selected for ridicule as well. No, this is calculated old-fashioned anti-Catholicism.

"No doubt the reason that Catholicism is made the butt of such derision has to do with the contrasting values that MTV and

the Church have: MTV's hedonistic message is constantly being challenged by the Roman Catholic Church and that is not something the trendy-types can stand.

"It is our hope that TV media critics take due note of MTV's latest foray against elementary standards of decency. The more the public learns of MTV's bigotry, the less likely they will be to support it. We hope to do our part by contacting the program's sponsors."

In response to the league's news release, a formal statement was issued to the media by Bunim/Murray Productions; Mary Ellis Bunim and John Murray are the executive producers of "The Real World." They defended the program by saying that it is "a non-scripted show, based on diversity, where everything expressed is the opinion of the speaker. It is a program where we make it a point to bring in various voices that express non-edited, personal opinions of cast members."

This is quite a statement. What Bunim and Murray want us to believe is that the actors are free to espouse anything they feel (somehow we don't believe an actor would last long if what he espoused was anti-Semitic). In any event, someone decided to identify who the Catholics are, and someone decided it wouldn't be a bad idea to let the anti-Catholic bigots have free reign at them. Finally, if Bunim and Murray are the producers for this remarkably free-spirited, open-ended show, then they ultimately must take responsibility for its content—scripted or not.

NPR DELIGHTS IN OFFENDING

CATHOLICS

The Weekend Edition of National Public Radio (NPR) for July 5 aired a segment with host Scott Simon and musical satirist, Tom Lehrer, that was as insulting as it was unwarranted. Lehrer sang "The Vatican Rag," a song that disparages Catholicism by ridiculing the Eucharist ("Try playing it safer, Drink the wine and chew the wafer") the doctrine of Transubstantiation (Two, four, six, eight, time to transubstantiate) and other Catholic teachings.

After the song was finished, Lehrer said that he did not think it was sacrilegious because "it just makes fun of rituals, not the doctrines." In fact, just the opposite is true. It should be noted that Simon praised Lehrer.

The league pressed its case before the media, issuing the following statement: "When Catholics object to the insults of a Howard Stern, it is with the understanding that the marketplace allows for such abuse. But when Catholics object to the insults of NPR, the situation is much more serious because it is government that allows for the abuse. As a publicly-funded entity, NPR is entrusted with public responsibilities, and surely among them is the duty not to unwarrantedly offend the sensibilities of any segment of society."

The league contacted every member of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in the hope that they will consider this incident the next time NPR is up for funding.

LEAGUE ASSISTS KNIGHT IN CINCINNATI

In June, Michael Kain, the Grand Knight-Elect of the Glenmary Knights of Columbus in Cincinnati, was driving home late at night listening to WSAI, Cincinnati's "Original Hits Station." He was startled to hear a lengthy attack on the Catholic Church being conducted by a preacher, Brother Stair. Kain wrote the station manager and also contacted the Archdiocese of Cincinnati; the Archdiocese kindly referenced Kain to the league.

The letter that Kain received from WSAI was mixed. He shared it with us, asking for assistance. The league wrote to station manager Peter Zolnowski requesting that he make some tough decisions.

William Donohue praised Zolnowski for refusing to grant Brother Stair the right to purchase additional air time, but he chastised him for not doing anything about the current situation. Donohue asked, "Is there nothing in the contract that allows you to discontinue your relationship with someone who defames a large segment of the population?"

Zolnowski tried to make a First Amendment defense of his inaction. Donohue wrote saying, "As to the issue of the First Amendment, you are mistaken: no one has a First Amendment right to voice his or her opinion about anything in any privately-held medium. The First Amendment puts restraints on government from engaging in censorship, but it says absolutely nothing about the obligations of the private sector to disseminate ideas."

The weakest argument that Zolnowski made was his pitch that Brother Stair was "not anti-Catholic," it was just that Mr. Kain "happened to tune in on a night when he [Brother Stair]

was on his Catholic-bashing soap box.” To which Donohue replied, “So, Mr. Zolnowski, which is it? If Mr. Kain just happens to listen to a notorious white racist will you defend the racist as not being a bigot against blacks merely because Mr. Kain just happened to tune in at the wrong time?”

Donohue recommended that WSAI review its contract with Brother Stair and “find a way to drop him.” Failing that, it was urged that the station put Brother Stair on notice that his contract will not be renewed. Members can write to Zolnowski at: **WSAI, 1111 St. Gregory Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45202.**

WWDB APOLOGIZES

WWDB, an FM station in the Philadelphia area, recently made some jokes that we found offensive. Art Delaney, the Greater Philadelphia/South Jersey chapter president, let host Susan Bray know that Catholics do not take kindly to any jokes aimed at Our Blessed Mother. We are delighted to report that Bray apologized for her wrongdoing.