

PROTEST OVER “CORPUS CHRISTI” IN HIGH GEAR

Over the summer, the Catholic League garnered the support of over 40 Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim national organizations, all of which signed a statement of protest against the Terrence McNally play, “Corpus Christi.” The names of the organizations will be released to the press prior to September 22, the night of the preview, and will appear in next month’s *Catalyst*.

Most of those who will attend the preview of “Corpus Christi” are subscribers of the Manhattan Theatre Club (MTC), the play’s producer. The play will hold its premiere, or opening night, on October 13; Catholic League president William Donohue and league director of communications, Rick Hinshaw, are scheduled to see the play before its premiere.

The Catholic League is calling on all of its members in the New York area to picket the site of the play, the City Center, on opening night. We will assemble across the street from the City Center at 7:00 pm on Tuesday, October 13; it is located on 55th Street between 6th and 7th Avenue. The police have been notified of our protest.

The MTC says that the play presents McNally’s “own unique view of ‘the greatest story ever told.’” But there is nothing unique about blasphemy, especially in the artistic community in the late twentieth century: it’s the norm.

The review of the play that appeared in the *Guardian*, the well-respected London newspaper, was shocking.

Many Congressmen and Senators are under the impression that the MTC, which receives funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), did not receive a grant for “Corpus

Christi." This is mistaken.

In 1996, the NEA awarded \$31,000 to the MTC for "Corpus Christi." However, the MTC subsequently asked the NEA if it could use this grant to fund some other play, to which the NEA said yes. In other words, the NEA is guilty as charged and the MTC is guilty of playing games.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY HITS COURTS

A Cincinnati attorney is suing the United States government because Christmas is recognized as a legal holiday. On August 4, Richard Ganulin filed suit yesterday in U.S. District Court arguing that it is unconstitutional for Congress to proclaim Christmas as a national holiday. In his lawsuit, Ganulin said that he is "damaged" by enforcement of the law because he does not believe in Jesus.

The Catholic League was the first organization in the nation to confront Ganulin. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* broke the story, citing the league's position.

"Ganulin doesn't have a leg to stand on" we said. Reviewing judicial rulings in this area, we mentioned that in the 1980s, the U.S. Supreme Court rendered two decisions that recognized the secular, as well as religious, meaning of Christmas. As such, the law that grants Christmas a national holiday passes muster with the strictures laid down by the Supreme Court in its 1971 ruling, *Lemon v. Kurtzman*.

"But beyond the legalisms lies the real issue," commented the

league, namely “the determination of secular zealots to scrub our society clean of all religious influence. This represents not only a war against our heritage, it represents an authoritarian impulse to restructure our culture according to the dictates of devout atheists. In the end, what bothers these people is that those who believe in Christ have Christmas to celebrate while those like themselves have, by definition, nothing to celebrate.”

ACCOUNTING FOR SUCCESS

William A. Donohue

In the past five years, the Catholic League has grown faster than any other civil rights organization in the country. Inextricably tied to that achievement is our public visibility: it has grown enormously, as has our impact on the culture. That’s because of you.

If there is one refrain that I’m tired of hearing, it’s this one: “I’m only one person, so what can I do?” Now if this were true, there would be no discoveries, no inventions, no creativity of any kind. It’s also a good thing that Father Blum didn’t believe such nonsense, otherwise there would be no Catholic League.

Contrary to what is taught in the schools these days, history is not the creation of all those who have lived it. No, history is result of the cumulative efforts of those men and women who decided to make a difference, whether for good or ill; a spectator status is not one of their characteristics.

Those who belong to the Catholic League are players, not spectators. They write letters, make phone calls, debate

friends, galvanize their parish, photocopy articles, tape shows, contribute to appeals, garner new members, alert the national office, leak information, etc. And they pray. What they don't do is watch and whine.

To be sure, we have a dedicated staff, housed in New York, and we have a sprinkling of chapters, spread throughout the nation. But we have nothing without our members.

To prove this point, consider how we defeated "Nothing Sacred." A copy of the pilot for the new series was sent to me by someone at Twentieth Century Fox, the producer of the show. Why? Because he learned through the Hollywood grapevine that at some point Fox had to reckon with the Catholic League. Reason? Your past efforts, many of which proved to be successful.

Once we previewed the first edition of the show, we knew we had to act. That is why we took out the ad in *Advertising Age* warning prospective advertisers what they would be in for if they sponsored "Nothing Sacred."

To be quite honest, we didn't have a budget for the ad when we launched it. But we went ahead anyway, counting on an emergency appeal to cover the cost. And, as always, you came through. The result: we set the stage, putting corporate sponsors on notice.

Every week we posted on our website the names and addresses of the previous week's sponsors of the show; we printed them again in *Catalyst*. And again, our members picked up the ball and ran with it.

This, then, is how it's done. One member gets fired up, and then another. Next thing you know a storm of protest has been unleashed, the seeds of which go back to the "lone individual." In short, the "lone individual" is more fiction than fact, and the sooner we learn this verity, the more progress we're bound to have.

The Catholic League members that I've met, and the letters that I've read, convince me that they have a deep love of the Church, a strong sense of citizenship, uncommonly good common sense and a fierce determination to change the culture. They also have a great sense of humor, something which cannot be said of our harshest critics. Perhaps most important, when I meet Catholic Leaguers, I meet people who inspire. Here's a quick example.

Over the summer, I traveled to Chicago to address the Confraternity of Catholic Clergy. Without doubt, they are the most dedicated group of priests I have ever met. Loyal to the magisterium and to the Holy Father, these priests love the Catholic League. Meeting men like Father Trigilio, Father Day and Father Krause was something very special. Listening to, and meeting, Cardinal George, was another highlight of my trip. The collective blessing that the group bestowed on me is something I will always treasure.

Sometimes we forget that there are so many good people out there. Knowing this to be true is the real reason why I'm fundamentally optimistic: the clock is ticking our way, not the way of our adversaries. So please keep this in mind the next time you think things can't change. And remember, we're not the only ones who know which way the clock is ticking. After all, why do you think the other side is so glum?

MOMENTUM BUILDING FOR SCHOOL CHOICE

By Rick Hinshaw

"Courts no longer see religion as an allergen in the body

politic.” That’s how Kevin Hasson, president of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, viewed the June 10 ruling by the Wisconsin Supreme Court upholding inclusion of religious schools in Milwaukee’s school voucher program. Some might see such exuberance as a bit premature. The ruling will surely be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and the powerful opponents of school choice—led by entrenched public school interest groups and self-appointed guardians of separation of church and state—are not going to give in without a fight.

Yet momentum is now clearly on the side of school choice. According to the Heritage Foundation, in 1997 “nearly 32 states considered a school choice program of some kind,” and “at least 45 governors stated their support for different degrees of school choice or charter schools.” Charter schools, public schools exempted from some of the regulations and union controls that can stifle innovation, offer parents a limited public school option. Vouchers offer a much wider latitude for parental choice, giving parents the right to designate which school—public or private—will receive the government funds allocated for their child’s education. Four other states—Arizona, Maine, Vermont and Ohio—currently have voucher cases pending before their state Supreme Courts.

Some voucher plans, however, pointedly exclude religious schools, fearful of raising constitutional church-state issues. That’s what makes the Wisconsin case so significant. “The robed justices in one of our more liberal states,” wrote Maggie Gallagher in the *New York Post*, “solemnly declared: Religion doesn’t have cooties, after all.”

Government resistance to vouchers—or their exclusion of religious schools—have spawned an outpouring of private grants for school choice. By the end of 1997, Heritage notes, there were over 35 privately sponsored programs providing vouchers for nearly 20,000 low-income children—and over 40,000 parents had put their names on waiting lists for these scholarships. Sol Stern and Bruno Manno report in the Manhattan Institute’s

Summer 1998 *City Journal* that a group of philanthropists led by venture capitalist Ted Forstmann and Wal-Mart heir John Walton have “announced a \$200 million national fund” to provide education vouchers for 50,000 low income children. The success of many of these private initiatives has subsequently spurred more state and local governments to action.

Emblematic of the surge in support for school choice was the conversion of Long Island’s *Newsday*, long an ardent foe of anything that even hinted at public support for religious education. In a June 21 editorial endorsing a trial for targeted vouchers in low-income communities, the paper embraced inclusion of religious schools. The editorial focused on some of the central issues cited by Heritage as fueling the drive for school choice: low test scores, level of safety, and lack of accountability among inner city public schools.

“Let’s face it,” *Newsday*’s editors wrote. “City public school systems around the nation have shown they are not up to the challenge. If you examine the performance of public schools in most older urban centers, you will find decades of disaster and precious few success stories. From New York to Chicago to East St. Louis, Ill., urban schools have fallen smack on their faces when confronted with the poorest children.”

In contrast, the paper cited St. Luke’s (Catholic) Elementary School in a South Bronx area “where the median income is \$8,644 a year, where scores of children live in foster care and shelters, where upheaval and violence are a common feature of daily life.” With a student body which is 77 percent Hispanic and 23 percent African American, “last year, 59 percent of St. Luke’s third graders tested at or above the state minimum in reading, and the story gets better in later grades,” *Newsday* noted. “Last year, 68 percent of its sixth graders were reading at or above the state minimum—compared with 40 percent at PS 65,” the neighboring public school.

Clearly, the failures of inner city public schools account in

great measure for the snowballing support for school choice among minority groups. A 1997 poll by Phi Delta Kappa, a professional education association, found that while 49 percent of the general population favor school choice, the figure is 62 percent among African Americans.

Yet a hunger for spiritual values is also evident—witness the outpouring of community support for the Bronx public school teacher fired for leading her class in a prayer. Profiled recently in the *Boston Globe*, theologian Thomas Groome, a foremost authority on Catholic education, cited such spiritual substance as the key to the popularity of Catholic schools among Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

“In general, as a system of education,” Groome stated, “there is probably no more successful system in the history of humankind.” While noting a wealth of empirical evidence that Catholic schools outperform public schools— particularly in educating children in low income communities—he says that the real strength of Catholic education is its emphasis on developing the student’s soul and character, as well as intellect.

While academic and spiritual concerns have thus forged a strong school choice coalition, opponents remain adamant and formidable. It is “unconscionable,” American Federation of Teachers president Sandra Feldman said of the Wisconsin ruling, “to give public funds to private religious schools for just a few students, when those same tax dollars could be put into proven, public school programs that would benefit every child in Milwaukee.”

Newsday, agreeing “on principle” with that sentiment, nevertheless concluded that “something must be done to jolt failing schools from their complacency; vouchers for the poorest are worth a try.” Rather than “destroy public education,” a targeted voucher program “if it’s done right...could force the public system to pull itself together.”

Milwaukee Mayor John Norquist recognized the value of competition in improving education, predicting that the city's voucher plan would improve the quality of its public schools because "the district won't be able to take kids for granted."

Ms. Feldman's suggestion that religious schools would serve "just a few students" hinted at the old canard that parochial schools are elitist. In fact, statistics consistently show that the demographics of most Catholic schools are consistent with those of the communities they serve—predominantly poor students in poor communities, middle income students in middle class areas, etc. And it is precisely the public school monopoly on tax dollars that prevents more poor families from choosing parochial schools. The Choice Scholarship program in New York City, columnist Cal Thomas noted, receives 22,000 applications each year for the 1,000 slots available, while there were 7,000 applicants last year for the 1,000 scholarships available through a similar program in the nation's capital.

The real private school elitists, then, are those who use their affluence to send their children to private school, while imposing government policies which deny poor parents the opportunity to make that choice.

Anti-Catholicism is an undeniable element of opposition to school choice. A glaring example was the June 20 letters page of the *Wisconsin State Journal*. Most of the letters attacking the pro-voucher court ruling were tinged with anti-Catholic bias. The most egregious, under the headline, "Turning state Capitol into Catholic Church," found it "ominous" that the majority of members on the state Supreme Court are Catholic, and castigated "Wisconsin's Catholic governor, Tommy Thompson," for having "appointed so many Catholics to positions of power that the statehouse resembles a Catholic Club."

More subtle, but just as hostile to religious freedom in

education, are those who invoke church-state separation. "Taxpayers shouldn't be forced to pay for religious schools," said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "We are not throwing in the towel," he said. Phil Baum, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, saw a critical choice between preserving "the principle that the Constitution imposes stringent and special restrictions on government financing of religion," and "an uncharted course" which would "put at risk the religious liberty Americans enjoy."

Groome would differ. "When you look at the Constitution, at the Declaration of Independence, they presume great spiritual values" he told the *Boston Globe*. "The Founding Fathers presumed that the educational system would be grounded in great spiritual values."

It should be noted that American college students are already permitted to use government assistance for religious schools if they wish; and last time we checked, the Constitution was still intact. Beyond that, it is simply hard to fathom how allowing people to choose to educate their children according to their religious beliefs threatens their religious freedom. It would seem that the opposite is true: creating a public school monopoly on taxpayer funds for education deprives many people of modest means of the freedom to make religion an integral part of their children's formal education.

As the momentum for school choice grows, so do organizations working in each state to make it a reality. United New Yorkers for Choice in Education (PO Box 4096, Hempstead, NY 11551-4096; 516-292-1224) typifies such statewide efforts. UNYCE works to pull together a diverse school choice coalition—Catholic school parents, other religious groups, inner city parents and community activists, and those who see competition as essential to academic excellence. While trying to promote school choice through various educational projects, UNYCE has also drafted a proposed voucher pilot program,

similar to Milwaukee's, which would target several low-income communities.

A national organization of particular interest to Catholics is the Blum Center for Parental Freedom in Education (Marquette University, Brooks Hall, 209, PO Box 1881, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881; 414-288-7040). The Blum Center is named for the late Father Virgil C. Blum, S.J., founder of the Catholic League, who was fervently devoted to the cause of parental choice in education.

Other national organizations who were instrumental in the Wisconsin victory were the Institute for Justice and the Landmark Legal Foundation.

REWARDING BIGOTRY

Over the summer, we noticed that young writers won prizes for their attacks on the Catholic Church.

The most serious case we uncovered concerns The Scholastic Art and Writing Awards. Every year this organization, under the tutelage of its Alliance for Young Artists and Writers, Inc., conducts an essay contest. This year's Silver Award Winner, Raymond Lutzky, Grade 12, wrote a piece about a child-molesting Catholic priest. We asked the executive director, Susan Ebersole, "whether there were any submissions that addressed a) heroic Catholic priests or b) child-molesting clergy of another religion?" You can write to her at Alliance for Young Artists and Writers, 555 Broadway, NY, NY 10012.

Rochester High School in Rochester, Vermont, published an anti-Catholic essay by sophomore Jess Matthews in the Summer edition of *Rocketimes*. Jess was struck by how her father's

faith was rekindled on a recent trip to Ireland. The article reeked with snide comments made about her dim-whited father, reciting all those Hail Marys, etc.

Jess bragged how she "committed my biggest sacrilege of the day: I relieved myself on Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holiest site aside from the shrine of Knock." She concluded by saying, "Atheism is "a wonderful thing." For this she received Honorable Mention of the Kingdom Awards and had her work of art reprinted in *Rocketimes*. The editor-in-chief is Ms. Marty Gephart, Rochester High School, Rochester, VT 05767.

The July 29 edition of the *Reno News & Review* published the work of Laura Vlasek Boren, a local ad executive. Her contribution, entitled, "Catholic Girl," was First Runner-Up in this year's RN&R fiction contest. She opens her statement saying, "I like the taste of Communion. It does not taste like the body of Christ, which I imagine to be salted by the sweat and the spray of Galilee."

You can write to RN&R editor Larry Henry at 708 North Center Street, Reno, NV 89501.

Then there is the effort by Katie O'Neill, the 11 year-old daughter of Peter O'Neill, editor-in-chief of *Trumpet Sounds*, the newsletter of New Ministries, Inc. (P.O. Box 7328, Prospect, CT 06712). She recently wrote that Catholics have incorrectly complained that her father's newsletter is anti-Catholic. This is crazy, Katie says, "All we try to do is help you break free of the Catholic Church." How thoughtful.

"Let me ask you why you go to the Catholic Church and pray to Mary who has to tell Jesus what you asked her for," writes Katie. She adds that "There probably is more Catholics [sic] than any religion, but it's not because the Catholic church teaches the right things." She concludes her article by saying that she knows her father is right and that "I've learned from him," which, of course, cannot be doubted. Like father, like

daughter.

COURT BACKS YALE

In August, a U.S. District Court judge ruled that Yale University “cannot be considered a state actor” and is therefore not subject to First Amendment guarantees recognizing the free exercise of religion. The league filed an amicus brief in the case arguing that the school’s sexually-correct residency rules violated the religious liberty and freedom of association rights of Orthodox Jewish students. The case will be appealed to the Second Circuit.

WILD GENERALIZATIONS

This past spring, Bishop J. Keith Symons, the Ordinary of the Diocese of Palm Beach, resigned after an admission of child sexual abuse. In the wake of his resignation came a flood of wild generalizations: pedophilia was rampant among Catholic priests. In this regard, no source of journalistic irresponsibility rivaled the news stories, essays, editorials and cartoons of the *Palm Beach Post* (the first and third cartoon below are from this newspaper).

From the pen of Steve Gushee, we learn that “The Roman Catholic Church is both the world’s oldest totalitarian state and the quintessential old boys’ club.” From the editorial page, we learn that it is “questionable” whether the pope, who

appoints every bishop, can “keep child abusers out.”

Why not write to Edward Sears, the editor of the *Palm Beach Post*, and let him know what you think of his newspaper? His address is: P.O. Box 24700, West Palm Beach, FL 33416.

Once again, we would like to recommend to our members the most authoritative book on the subject, *Pedophiles and Priests* by Philip Jenkins (Oxford University Press). Jenkins, a Penn State professor and an Evangelical Protestant, debunks the prevailing mythology regarding Catholic priests, celibacy and sexual abuse.

SLANDERING STEPINAC

Over a chorus of protests, the beatification of Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac will take place next month. The protesters want us to believe that the Croatian cardinal was an anti-Semite who worked with the Nazis against Jews in World War II. The evidence shows that it is all a lie.

In the 1930s, Stepinac became bishop of Zagreb. He was known for his outspoken criticism of Serbian terrorism and for his work in aiding Jews escape Nazi Germany. When the war was over, Yugoslavian dictator Marshall Tito plotted against Stepinac, making sure that the archbishop would be tried for collaborating with the Nazis. On October 11, 1946, Stepinac was sentenced to 16 years of hard labor. Even though he was forbidden to resume his duties, Pope Pius XII made him a cardinal in 1953.

Like the pope who made him a cardinal, Stepinac has been the target of scapegoating anti-Catholics determined to brand him an anti-Semite. Most recently, Stepinac has come under

criticism from the *Boston Globe*. But given the fact that the newspaper's editors spent most of their summer firing their own journalists for fabricating stories and for plagiarism, the charges levied against Stepinac can be dismissed as prototypical of the *Boston Globe*.

Cardinal Stepinac is also hated by the Simon Wiesenthal Center. In the summer edition of the Center's publication, *Response*, Stepinac was labeled a "war criminal." Registering its objections to his beatification, *Response* said that "Afer [sic] WWII, he was convicted as a collaborator but the Church hails him for his resistance against religious persecution by the post-war Communist regime." The facts are otherwise.

After the war, Marshall Tito demanded that Stepinac break with Rome and establish a new "patriotic church." Stepinac refused. Hence, he was the subject of trumped up charges of collaborating with the Nazis.

The show trial was so farcical that Louis Brier, president of the American Association of Jews, said at the time that "This great man [Stepinac] was tried as a collaborator of Nazism. We protest this slander. He has always been a sincere friend of Jews and was not hiding this even in times of cruel persecution under the regime of Hitler and his followers. He was the greatest defender of the persecuted Jews."

Further proof that Cardinal Stepinac was not guilty of working with the Nazis came in 1985. That was the year that the man who originally tried him, Jakov Blazevic, admitted publicly that Cardinal Stepinac's trial was framed from beginning to end and that the only reason he was tried was his refusal to break with the Roman Catholic Church.

It is for these reasons that the Catholic League contacted Rabbi Abraham Cooper, editor-in-chief of *Response*, asking him to comment on these facts. We also asked him, "Are you similarly quiescent in accepting the convictions of Jewish

dissidents, like Natan Sharansky, by Soviet courts?"

Look for more slanderous attacks in October. The league will respond to as many unfair assaults as possible and is proud to defend a man that the Vatican has rightfully chosen to beatify.

BRAVO HOSTS "LAST TEMPTATION"

The cable television network, Bravo, recently aired the movie, "The Last Temptation of Christ." Roundly scored as one of the most blasphemous films ever produced, its reappearance on cable TV led one citizen, Bob Boffa, to lead a protest against Bravo. Boffa, the owner of Gardendale Jewelers in Gardendale, Alabama, was told by the network that its license to air the movie had expired and there were no plans to renew it.

The Catholic League learned, however, that Bravo is not making any commitment not to air it again. We therefore encourage all members to write to Bravo, lest we be faced with this situation again. Write to Kathleen Dore, Executive Vice President and General Manager, Bravo, 100 Crossways Park West, Woodbury, New York, 11797. You might add that just as Bravo wouldn't air the racist film, "The Birth of a Nation" (its heroes are the KKK), airing "The Last Temptation of Christ" is equally offensive.

“MILLION YOUTH MARCH” RUN BY BIGOT

Khalid Abdul Muhammad, former aide to Louis Farrakhan, says he plans to hold a “million youth march” in Harlem on September 5 despite being denied a permit for the march on that date or in Harlem. Muhammad has rejected offers by New York City to hold the march on September 19 on Randalls Island or in Van Cortlandt Park.

In November 1993, Muhammad gave a speech at Kean College in New Jersey that was laden with anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic rhetoric. As a result of his disparaging remarks, Muhammad was denounced by the U.S. black Catholic bishops, the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, the Catholic League, ADL and other civil rights organizations.

The Catholic League released the following comment to the press on this issue:

“Mayor Rudolph Giuliani is right to condemn the bigoted comments made by Khalid Abdul Muhammad. An equal opportunity bigot, Muhammad does not discriminate between Catholics and Jews in launching his attacks: he hates both groups.

“Hate mongers have a right to march, but no one has a right to inform the authorities of the time, place and manner of the march. If the authorities decide that another time and place is in the best interest of public safety, that is their call. For Muhammad to say that he will march anyway is to show contempt for the law.

“In 1994, Mayor Giuliani allowed radical gays to march naked past St. Patrick’s Cathedral without a permit. It will be interesting to see whether he allows Muhammad to march without a permit on September 5 in Harlem.”