

ANTI-CATHOLIC RING PULLED FROM CATALOG

The Catholic League scored a victory this summer, with the help of a member, in pulling an anti-Catholic ring from the Crow's Nest Trading Company's website and catalog. The item, "Catholic Ring," was a sterling silver piece of jewelry with the inscription of "Recovering Catholic" emblazoned on it.

We got word that Crow's Nest was selling this item from a member who was understandably upset with the product. She wrote a letter to Crow's Nest voicing her displeasure; we quickly did the same. In Bill Donohue's letter to Crow's Nest president Douglas Tennis, he wrote that the ring was "grossly inappropriate" and requested that the piece be removed from the catalog and website.

A few days later, we received a letter that was sent from Crow's Nest CEO Cary Tennis to our member apologizing for the piece saying that she "cannot justify offending anyone, let alone a hard-earned customer of Crow's Nest Trading Co. or a fellow Christian." Tennis also said, "Let me assure you that you have opened our eyes and caused us to look at the offensive merchandise through another perspective, and it has been removed from our line."

We appreciate the sincerity of Crow's Nest and trust that it will use better prudence when selling items in the future. We thank our member for contacting us, because without her this victory would not have been possible.

OBAMA CHAMPIONS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

On August 14, President Barack Obama announced that he supports the right of Muslims to build a mosque near Ground Zero.

Technically speaking, the president was right: the government has no business telling any religion where to build a house of worship. But the real issue is whether Muslims should build a mosque near this hallowed ground. Most Americans, and most New Yorkers, do not want the mosque to be built there, making disingenuous the argument on the part of its supporters that it is designed to bring people together: it has already had the opposite effect.

To justify his position, Obama proclaimed that “our commitment to religious freedom is unshakable.” It most certainly should be. But since when has he been so serious about this issue?

Under Obama, his administration effectively gutted faith from his faith-based initiatives, worrying infinitely more about separation of church and state than religious freedom. Just last Christmas, his administration seriously weighed stripping the White House of manger scenes, and offered tree ornaments with the picture of mass murderer Mao Zedong on them. When he spoke at Georgetown University last year, his advance team made certain to put a drape over IHS, Latin for Jesus, just to show how sensitive they were to the freedom *from* religion crowd. School vouchers for sectarian schools are always rejected by his administration, yet he always finds a way to fund abortion. The Obama administration scored a first in U.S. history when it invited radical atheists to the White House, promising them a place at the table. Moreover, when he was running for president, his Catholic advisory board was stacked with Catholic dissidents.

So for Obama to choose the building of a mosque at Ground Zero as his moment to declare his “unshakable” commitment to religious liberty strikes us as contrived.

MAYOR BLOOMBERG DISCOVERS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

In August, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg made remarks endorsing the building of a controversial mosque near Ground Zero.

Regrettably, the mayor’s record in dealing with issues affecting Catholics has not been so robust. Just last month, he was almost alone in his refusal to criticize the Empire State Building owner Anthony Malkin’s decision not to honor Mother Teresa on August 26; he simply said it was Malkin’s call. Over the last few years, when the Catholic League and New York City Councilman Tony Avella sought to get his support for putting a nativity scene alongside a menorah in the public schools, he refused to cooperate.

In 2007, when an artist made a huge vulgar naked “Chocolate Jesus” and sought to place it in the street-level gallery of a midtown hotel during Holy Week, Bloomberg refused to criticize the artist; he merely advised not to draw attention to it. In 2005, when the Bronx Household of Faith, an inner-city Christian church, won a ruling in federal district court maintaining it had a right to hold religious services on Sundays in a New York City public school, the Bloomberg administration sued to block this exercise in religious liberty.

In 2002, when asked why he would join in an event that bars

gays from having their own contingent (the St. Patrick's Day Parade), his office said, "The mayor believes the best way to change an organization is to do so from within."

In other words, Bloomberg is not a sincere advocate of religious liberty: he just seems to discover it when it suits his interests.

NEW YORK TIMES TRIES TO TAG POPE—AGAIN!

In July, the *New York Times* ran a front-page article that attempted to blame Pope Benedict XVI for the sexual abuse scandal. As it did in March, the paper failed to do so.

In the article, we were told that when Joseph Ratzinger (now the pope) was in charge of the Office of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he had authority over sex abuse cases, but never exercised it. It cited as evidence some old instructions dating back to 1922 that Australian Archbishop Philip Edward Wilson "stumbled across" when he was a student in the early 1990s. When he mentioned this 10 years ago at a Vatican meeting, "few people in the room had any idea what [he] was talking about." In other words, there is no proof that even Ratzinger knew of this alleged authority.

"Bishops had a variety of disciplinary tools at their disposal" when Ratzinger headed the Doctrine of the Faith Office. This is not only true; it undercuts attempts to blame him. We also learned that there were at least a half-dozen offices (besides the one run by Ratzinger) that bishops reported abuse cases to. This is also true, and while it does suggest a bureaucratic problem, this is not the same as moral

irresponsibility.

We also learned that Ratzinger was preoccupied with all kinds of issues at the time, which is also true, but it is malicious to say he went after Latin American priests for preaching on behalf of the poor: the few liberation theology priests who were questioned were Marxist sympathizers.

The most accurate summation came from Irish Bishop Eamonn Walsh. At the meeting a decade ago, he said of Ratzinger, "This guy gets it, he's understanding the situation we're facing." Yet he also acknowledged that those in Rome never had firsthand experience with some devious priests, and therefore took the position that the accused was "innocent until proven guilty." Not only is this understandable, from a civil libertarian perspective, it is highly commendable.

NEW YORK TIMES HAS NO MORAL AUTHORITY

A week after the *New York Times* tried to tag the pope again, it ran an editorial taking Pope Benedict XVI to task for being too lenient in dealing with priestly sexual abuse. Within no time, we hit right back at the paper.

When New York State was considering two bills dealing with the sexual abuse of minors, the *New York Times* endorsed the one that *did not apply* to the public schools. And in its editorial, the *Times* had the nerve to lecture the pope for not having a universal policy on this issue. Too bad the pope didn't hold a news conference saying he is taking his cues from the *New York Times* and has chosen to adopt the weakest of all measures.

When Family Planning Advocates, the lobbying arm of Planned Parenthood, and the New York Civil Liberties Union, blocked a bill in New York State mandating that all cases involving the sexual abuse of minors be reported, the *New York Times* said nothing! It appears that it saves its condemnatory language for the Catholic Church. By the way, the two liberal groups did so because they know that Planned Parenthood learns of cases involving statutory rape on a regular basis.

Does the *New York Times* want to compare the record of the Catholic Church to all other religious and secular institutions on this issue? Not for a moment. Indeed, when it was reported earlier this year that there were exactly six credible allegations made against over 40,000 priests between 2008 and 2009, the newspaper gave it a whopping 92 words.

The *Times* wonders why the Catholic Church doesn't have the same policy everywhere. Does the *Boston Globe*, which the *Times* owns, have the same policies on misconduct as the *Times*? What about all the other companies the *Times* owns? Does it have even a clue as to how incredibly *decentralized* the Catholic Church is?

Finally, let's get it straight, one more time. There is no "pedophilia scandal" as the *Times* has ceaselessly indicated. It's always been a "homosexual scandal," but the gay-happy *New York Times* doesn't have the guts to tell the truth. In short, its moral authority is spent.

DISSIDENT CATHOLICS LECTURE

BISHOPS

In a recent post on the *Washington Post's* "On Faith" blog site, Chris Korzen of Catholics United, a fraudulent Catholic organization, lectured the bishops for being misinformed about the health care bill that they opposed. He said "the USCCB's [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops] opinion was based on a misunderstanding of the bill's abortion funding provisions."

In other words, all the bishops, lawyers and pro-life experts who worked on the bill were duped. That would mean that the "pro-life politicians" who refused to support amendments banning the funding of abortion were also duped: if funding wasn't in the bill, what difference would it have made? Moreover, how does one explain the award that Planned Parenthood just gave to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi?

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities, supports legislation that would essentially ratify the Hyde Amendment that bars federal funds for abortion. So does the Catholic League. Does Catholics United? We already know the answer: last year Korzen said, "I wouldn't call us pro-abortion rights or anti-abortion rights." That's an interesting comment coming from a so-called Catholic group—we have no problem saying the Catholic League is a pro-life, anti-abortion organization.

Whatever the source of Korzen's reluctance to identify with the teachings of the Catholic Church, he should at least stop with the false advertising: if Catholics aren't united against abortion, then they cannot in any way be taken seriously. One more thing: it's time for Korzen to drop the patronizing posture he has adopted towards the bishops.

“RAISED CATHOLIC” GIRLS GONE WILD

Recently we have been asked to comment on some of the actions taken by young female stars who were raised Catholic.

After a poster for the upcoming movie, “Machete,” was revealed showing Lindsay Lohan dressed in a nun’s habit licking the barrel of a gun, we said, “Lindsay doesn’t have what it takes to tease the movie, but she is eminently worthy of exploitation (she wasn’t featured in the movie’s trailer).”

We also recently dealt with Lady Gaga strutting around as a trampy nun in her music video for her song “Alejandro.” Later, at an event in Chicago, she threw herself half-naked into a crowd of crazies. How is this considered artistic?

17-year-old Taylor Momsen was also in the news for making outrageous comments about her sex life and saying that she was “raised Catholic” and jokingly saying that she “f***ed a priest once.” Bill Donohue said that if she were to really sit down with a priest, she would be “disabused of her sick thoughts.”

What is it about these Catholic-raised girls that makes them so adolescent, so silly and rebellious at the same time? Madonna takes liberties with the crucifixion; Lohan dresses as a nun and takes phallic pleasure in a firearm; Lady Gaga struts her trampy stuff playing a nun and stage-dives half-naked; and Taylor Momsen decides it is funny to joke about having sex with a priest.

No matter what, something sick is going on.

FRANK RICH'S SELECTIVE INDIGNATION

In a recent column in the *New York Times*, writer Frank Rich called Mel Gibson a “bigoted blowhard,” branding his movie “The Passion of the Christ” anti-Semitic; he also attacked several Christian leaders who befriended Gibson, including Bill Donohue.

If Rich were as sensitive to anti-Catholicism as he is anti-Semitism, there would be no problem. But the fact is that he has an ugly record of attacking those who object to anti-Catholicism, but not the bigotry itself. The following examples suffice: the 1995 movie “Priest”; the 1998 play “Corpus Christi”; the 1999 Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibition, “Sensation”; the 1999 movie “Dogma”; the vitriolic reaction to Catholicism that accompanied “The Passion of the Christ”; his own newspaper’s hypocritical and selective crusade against priestly wrongdoing, etc. In every instance, his ire was directed at the protesters, not the object of their protest.

Rich is particularly angry with anyone who dares to mention the role played by secular Jews in fomenting anti-Catholicism. It is painfully obvious that most of the anti-Catholicism that exists today comes from two major sources: ex-Catholics (and those with one foot out the door) and secular Jews. This doesn’t mean that all of those who fall into these two groups are bigots, but it is to say that the worst offenders tend to belong to one of those two segments of the population.

Indeed, the “raised Catholic” types and secular Jews have long replaced the Protestant community as the primary source of anti-Catholicism in the United States.

We asked our members to contact Arthur S. Brisbane, the new public editor of theTimes at public@nytimes.com

THE POLITICS OF PROP 8

It came as no surprise to us when we found that U.S. District Court Judge Vaughn Walker overturned Proposition 8, the 2008 California measure that defined marriage as between a man and a woman. In one ruling, Judge Walker discounted the votes of millions of Californians who believe in traditional marriage. It has never been the people that have voted for homosexual marriage, it's always been lawmakers and unelected judges.

In his ruling, Walker found as fact that "religious beliefs that gay and lesbian relationships are sinful or inferior to heterosexual relationships harm gays and lesbians." Walker's unmitigating arrogance was evident when he decided that his ruling should not be reviewed by any other judges, believing that his ruling should be the end all be all.

In an interview with Catholic News Agency, Bill Donohue said that the Church's teachings on homosexuality are shared by many religions throughout the world and that Walker's arrogance "would be hard to top." When asked about Walker's citation of the document on the legal recognition of homosexual marriage signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, when he was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Donohue said, "Listing the pope's remarks in a judicial ruling designed to prove the harmfulness of Church teachings on homosexuality is invidious" and that it seeks to "stigmatize the defense of marriage."

Although the ruling was not surprising, the fact that the express will of the people in the nation's largest state was

summarily ignored by one unelected judge is cause for alarm; in over 30 attempts, gay marriage advocates have never won in any state.

We knew from the get-go that this issue would land on the desk of the U.S. Supreme Court, and that now looms as the next step. There is always the option of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, a step that may be necessary given the reality of judicial activism on the bench.

ORLANDO SENTINEL GETS TOO CUTE

Recently on the front page of the website of *Orlando Sentinel*, there was a picture of a man and a woman posing as Joseph and Mary cradling a puppy (in lieu of baby Jesus). The caption above said, "Smile for the Camera?", and below the picture it said, "Check out these awkward family photos." We did so and determined that the *Sentinel* was just being a little too cute.

When we first looked at this issue, we thought we'd give it a pass. But when we scratched a little deeper, we thought otherwise.

For example, clicking on the picture brought us to twenty-six "Awkward Family Photos," with the Joseph, Mary and dog picture writ large (it appears as the eighth photo in the series). None of the other twenty-five photos ridicules any other religion; most of them are merely silly shots of family members.

Furthermore, the reader is directed to a site that features a

book on this subject, *Awkward Family Photos*, the cover of which shows five family members awkwardly lying on top of each other.

In other words, the book on this subject does not highlight the photo mocking the Christian scene: the decision to do so was entirely the choice of the newspaper. This tells us more about the *Orlando Sentinel's* idea of humor than the two authors of the book on this subject.