

TED TURNER INSULTS CATHOLICS; APOLOGY FOLLOWS PROTEST

On March 6, Brit Hume of Fox News Network reported that CNN founder Ted Turner stunned CNN employees in Washington when he made an anti-Catholic remark on Ash Wednesday. Seeing ashes on the foreheads of some workers, Turner said, "What are you? A bunch of Jesus freaks? You ought to be working for Fox."

The Catholic League immediately contacted the Corporate Affairs department of CNN in Atlanta seeking more information. Their first response was to refuse to confirm, or deny, the validity of the story. Declaring this position unpersuasive, William Donohue issued a statement to the press that recounted Turner's previous remarks regarding Christians in general, and Catholics in particular.

Donohue pronounced Turner a recidivist. "Like all repeat offenders, he said, "Turner evinces an animus against a particular portion of the population. For him, it is Christians whom he despises." Indeed, in 1999, Turner sent an apology to the Catholic League after we blasted him for insulting the pope.

The Catholic League president reminded the media that Turner was on record for a) branding Christianity a religion "for losers" b) labeling pro-life Christians as "Bozos" c) insulting the pope with one of his cheap jokes at a pro-abortion meeting and d) blasting Christianity for being "very intolerant." Donohue then said, "Now he's back, this time slamming those who wear ashes on Ash Wednesday."

Both the print and electronic media picked up on the Catholic League's response (it made the front page of the *New York Post*) and within 48 hours, Turner issued the following statement: "I apologize to all Christians for my comment about

Catholics wearing ashes on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday. I do not believe in any form of prejudice or discrimination, especially religious intolerance.”

In reply, Donohue released told the media that we are “torn by what has happened.” He explained “On the one hand, our religion teaches us the virtue of forgiveness and the necessity of penance. On the other hand, we don’t like being played for a fool. So let’s put it this way: we’ll bite our lip and drop the issue, skeptical though we are.” Donohue also requested a meeting with Turner to “find out what’s bugging him.” We are awaiting Turner’s decision.

We hope this is the last time we have to press Turner into an apology.