

# THE PEDOPHILE AS HERO: JEAN GENET'S "ELLE" COMES TO NEW YORK

The French playwright Jean Genet penned "Saintete" in the 1950s and it is now being performed in New York as "Elle." The play recently opened at the Zipper, an off-Broadway site, and will close July 31. The play thrashes the papacy in particular and Catholicism in general. Catholic League president William Donohue took note of the literary reaction to Genet's work:

"Jean Genet was a direct descendant of the Marquis de Sade. Which is to say he was a pedophile, homosexual, sado-masochist, pervert and prostitute. He was also a convicted felon. When not engaging in buggery, he was known to practice burglary. He also wrote plays and had sex with Sartre. This made him a hero in literary quarters. His latest admirer is Ben Brantley of the *New York Times*.

"Brantley calls the play 'richly theatrical entertainment.' His colleagues at the *New York Post* and the *Daily News*, Donald Lyons and Robert Dominguez, respectively, were not impressed. But Brantley was. What he likes about the play is that it is 'an impeccably vulgar production' that will force the 'blasphemy police [to] bring out their brass knuckles.'

"Brantley's half right. It is true that the Catholic League is the blasphemy police (he didn't say we were but we know what he was thinking) and it is also true that we possess brass knuckles. But he's wrong in assuming we will use them on this occasion. That's because the play is not 'impeccably vulgar'—it is merely vulgar. In short, when vulgar plays that attack Catholicism are deeply flawed productions—as is the case in 'Elle'—we do not reach for our weaponry. Not even

when the author of the play is a pedophile, homosexual, sado-masochist, pervert, prostitute and thief. Those may be truly stellar qualifications in the literary world, but they are not persuasive enough to clear the bar at the Catholic League. We have higher standards. We have to: We answer to a higher source."