

# THEY REALLY DO HATE US

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This past spring, while addressing the Orlando chapter of Legatus, I entered into a discussion with a man who questioned why there was so much Catholic bashing these days. I could have given him a long dissertation on the subject, but chose not to. Instead, I simply said, "Because they really do hate us." He seem momentarily puzzled but soon got the point.

Who are the "they," and is it fair to say that they "hate" us? To begin with, it must be said that most of those who take unfair aim at the Catholic Church do not hate us, per se, they simply reject with anger some teachings of the Church. But there is a minority within that group that definitely hates us, the "us" being the Church and those who defend it. That is the group I wish to discuss.

More often than not, "they" are men and women whose idea of liberty, especially sexual freedom, conflicts sharply with the Church's embrace of sexual reticence. Indeed, it is no stretch to say that for those who hate us, their idea of freedom is genitally derived.

"Hate" is a strong word and can lose its force if overused. But there is no other word I know that accurately describes the reaction to the Catholic League's protest of "Corpus Christi." The hate mail and phone calls have been as alarming as they have been voluminous. The distortions of what we have said have kept pace with the bashing, enough so that it makes me wonder what it is that possesses these people.

The uproar over "Corpus Christi" has led to a string of radio and TV debates. Not surprisingly, those who are integrally involved with the play refuse to debate anyone from the Catholic League.

When I recently showed up at a TV studio in New York for a debate on this issue, I was told by the producer that she had contacted a long list of notable playwrights and columnists who were supportive of the play, but unfortunately they were all busy that day. In no uncertain terms, I told her that I didn't believe it for a moment, commenting that they were all cowards. Because she wasn't persuaded, I made her a challenge: call them every day to debate me—I'll be there, I said—but the result will be the same. She never answered.

The person I finally debated was the vice president for People for the American Way. It wasn't much of a debate. But I did appreciate Barbara Handman's spin on "Piss Christ," that artistic masterpiece by Serrano that displayed a crucifix in a jar of urine. Claiming that it was "reverential," Handman opined that "what it was saying was that the current Catholic community was destroying the teachings of Christ." By such logic, it could be argued that the display of a Star of David in a bowl of feces was simply a statement on how the current Jewish community was destroying the teachings of Moses.

The need to lie is understandable. When it gets to matters like "Corpus Christi" and "Piss Christ," defenders must either run and hide, or lie. What they don't want is an honest debate, for that would mean that they would lose. Like Marx and Lenin before them, they not only lie, cheat and steal, they actually boast of the necessity to do so. The good news is that by drawing even a few of them out, we prove victorious. Consider the piece by Craig Lucas in this issue of *Catalyst*.

Lucas' defense of "Corpus Christi" is a marvelous contribution. Incoherent and absurd, Lucas wanders all over the place venting his hatred of the Catholic Church. It is a marvelous contribution because no matter how hard we try to make the case against the play, it would be impossible to improve on Lucas' offering: he has provided all the evidence we need to demonstrate that those who love "Corpus Christi"

are fundamentally different from the rest of us. With logic and reason, Rick Hinshaw destroyed Lucas' argument, but with anger and hatred, Lucas exposed his motive, and there is nothing sweeter than this when it comes to debate.

Likewise, it was no shocker to learn that I was called anti-gay, anti-Jewish and anti-black, simply because I wrote the "Shylock and Sambo" ad. Tony Kushner, a prominent playwright, made such a charge, knowing full well that my piece was designed to rock those who support "Corpus Christi." So I'm a bigot for drawing this analogy and he's a free speech advocate for embracing "Corpus Christi." Gotcha.

So they really do hate us. Now where does that leave us? Obviously, we should not hate back. But we should also not hold back. We are called to defend the Church and that means we should responsibly and aggressively engage our adversaries. And win.