

VERMONT RESORT'S IDEA OF HUMOR

On February 28, J.J. Toland, communications manager for Vermont's Sugarbush Resort, sent an e-mail to his mailing list that offended many Catholics. Titled "March Snow is on the Way," Toland's letter ended with remarks about current skiing conditions, things to do, etc. But it opened with the following two paragraphs:

There are a lot of downsides to attending Catholic school. For starters, there's a dress code. Being made to wear a tie with a shirt whose top button creates a hermetic seal around the wearer's neck is the equivalent of water boarding to a teenager. Secondly, there is the discipline. Slight to authority, real or perceived, were not met with anything as passé as a ruler to the wrist. (The Augustinian Order prides itself on creativity.) Rather, punishments skewed to the psychological. Evildoers were often made to write out in reverse entire textbook chapters or gawk at an analog clock for hours on end. (If you think your life is moving too fast, just try staring at a sweep hand for two hours.)

But the most chafing of all torments was their masochistic use of biblically inspired maxims. Try denying a crime? You got, "A leopard cannot change its spots. "Bomb a test?" "Don't you know knowledge is power," was hissed as the paper was spiked down football-like on your desk. The most excruciating platitude, however, was the one that was taunted during the clock-staring showdowns. "Good things come to those who wait, Mr. Toland. And wait you will."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue addressed this issue as follows:

"At one level, this kind of screed may be dismissed as

juvenile scribble. But what makes it offensive is a) its wholly gratuitous nature and b) the fact that a noted business establishment would post these remarks in an e-mail. In any event, we are contacting the owners of Sugarbush Resort, the Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce (listed as a 'Friend' of the company), the six members of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce's Executive Staff, the Diocese of Burlington and many media outlets in Vermont. We believe in free advertisement."

ADDENDUM: Within minutes of the Catholic League sending out this news release, both J.J. Toland and Win Smith, Sugarbush's owner and president, phoned the league to extend their apologies. We accepted their apologies and consider this matter closed.