

Were We Fair, or Unfair, to Jane Pauley? You Decide

Dear Dr. Donohue,

I think the thing that makes me saddest about the complaint registered in Ray Kerrison's column is your perverse desire to turn a friend into an enemy. I may be a member of a sometimes snide and cynical industry, but I think I have a reputation that should have earned for me, at the least, the benefit of a doubt.

I hope you will also read my letter on your radio appearances and print it along with your denunciation. I ask that your listeners and readers contemplate an alternate explanation, that my words were written in a spirit of admiration for a man whose religious faith was exemplary, a beacon in a world where cynicism too often prevails. Let us all pray for a more generous spirit and an understanding soul.

I am not a member of the Catholic Church, but I know in my heart that I remain a friend in good standing.

Sincerely,

In the July/August *Catalyst* we ran a critical piece about a comment that Jane Pauley made when interviewing Scott O'Grady, the U.S. pilot who was rescued in Bosnia last spring. In the course of the interview, Ms. Pauley said the following about Mr. O'Grady: "God has long been Captain O'Grady's co-pilot. A devout Roman Catholic, O'Grady made his confirmation at age thirteen, and unlike many of his peers never left the Church." [Emphasis added.] Catholic League president William Donohue chided Pauley for the remark, calling it "snide" and "gratuitous."

Ms. Pauley and several of her supporters complained that Donohue was unfair to her, arguing that he gave the wrong interpretation to her comment. Printed below is the letter that Ms. Pauley wrote, along with Dr. Donohue's response. We'll let you be the judge as to who has the better of the argument.

Dear Ms. Pauley:

Thank you for your letter of June 27. I am taking the liberty of responding to many of the parties that have contacted this office regarding the Catholic League's criticism of a remark you made while interviewing Scott O'Grady.

Your reply, the letter from Father Smith of Providence College, and the communication between Bob Wright and Father Eichner, have convinced me that no ill will was intended toward Catholics when you made the comment in question. For that reason, I am prepared to drop this matter altogether. But in fairness to you-and to the Catholic League-I will print your letter, and this one, in the September edition of Catalyst, the journal of the Catholic League (the July/August edition will carry the original story; I will send both copies to you). Having said that, I would like to defend the criticism that was made.

You state that your "words were written in a spirit of admiration for a man whose religious faith was exemplary..." But the problem I have with your remark has nothing to do with your admiration for Mr. O'Grady, rather it has to do with your comment that "unlike many of his peers [he] never left the Church." I do not see how this demonstrates admiration for anyone, including Mr. O'Grady. Indeed it strikes me as an unnecessary statement, one that appears to say something less than flattering about the allegiances of young Catholic men and women to their religion. As I said in the news release, if it were said about blacks or gays-that unlike many of his peers he's never been arrested or never contracted AIDS-the

remark would be seen as baiting.

I am enclosing a copy of the May Catalyst. Please read the cover story on the AP as I believe it bears resemblance to the matter with you and Mr. O'Grady.

Again, I want to thank you, and your supporters, for convincing me that no ill will was intended. I will let our readers judge whether the effect of your remark was to bait or to enlighten.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue
President