

# WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE...

Call to Action bills itself as a progressive lay Catholic organization. It rejects the Church's teachings on sexuality and other matters, but it nonetheless maintains it is a loyal Catholic group. Though it has the support of some bishops, it would not be surprising if Cardinal Adam Maida, Archbishop of Detroit, and Bishop Paul S. Loverde of Arlington, Virginia, are wondering, "with friends like these who needs enemies?"

The Detroit chapter of Call to Action is planning many protests this spring. All the demonstrations will protest the exclusion of women from the priesthood. Among its ventures, there will be a demonstration at the rededication of Blessed Sacrament Cathedral. The blessing of the Church's oils will also be an occasion for a demonstration, as will the ordination of the next class of seminarians. A billboard advocating women's ordination will be posted just a few blocks away from the renovated cathedral, the home church of Cardinal Maida.

Call to Action in Arlington, Virginia, is seeking to bankrupt the diocese. It is urging a boycott of the Arlington Diocese's annual Lenten appeal. It says it is not satisfied with Bishop Loverde's reaction to the sex abuse scandal. Call to Action wants area Catholics to clip a coupon that says "Zero Dollars" and mail it to the diocese's Lenten appeal.

Catholics for a Free Choice is not a Catholic organization and it has twice been condemned by the bishops as a fraud. But this hasn't stopped its leader, Frances Kissling, from selling herself as a Catholic. What is striking about Kissling these days is that she has finally said something nice about Pope John Paul II, though her insincerity is obvious.

Kissling, like most on the left of the political spectrum, is opposed to the war against Iraq. More than that, Kissling and

her ilk find it much more difficult to say anything bad about Saddam Hussein than about George W. Bush. That she has taken to praising Pope John Paul II for failing to support the war shows how utterly shameless the woman is.

On CNN's "Crossfire," Kissling said, "I think the Vatican tends to see things in humanitarian ways." How sweet. Maybe now she'll begin to discover the humanity of unborn babies and start protesting child abuse in the womb.

It was nice to hear Kissling say "the Vatican is a voice for peace." Too bad she doesn't agree with Mother Teresa that nothing destroys peace more than abortion. It was also fun listening to her discover the wisdom of papal authority. In a defense of the pope, she offered, "Religious authority also has legitimate authority." Now if only she meant what she said, we might have cause to celebrate.

The Interfaith Alliance is a rag-tag bunch of religious leaders that have a problem with religion. Their latest target is "In God We Trust." They are incensed that some lawmakers in Colorado want to see our national motto on plaques in every public school in the state. One of those objecting to this initiative is Sister Maureen McCormack of the Sisters of Loretto. "I want to know in whose God we are trusting," she said. One is tempted to say, "Yours," but that would no doubt be rejected as hopelessly chauvinistic. Better to have the god of some indigenous band of tribal warriors—that might win Sister Maureen over.

Another group that makes us wonder is Voice of the Faithful. Those who belong to the group are Catholics upset with the sex abuse scandal; they seek a greater voice for the laity. What made us sit up and take notice recently was the reaction of some of their Long Island members to a miscreant priest. They defended him and blasted those Catholics who exposed him.

It seems that Rev. Charles Papa has visited hundreds of

pornographic websites. He has been accused of accessing child pornography, though he disputes this. In any event, when some parishioners found out about his porn hobby, in textbook Voice of the Faithful fashion, they contacted the authorities. And who rushed to his defense? Why the high priests of “zero tolerance,” Voice of the Faithful.

As one of its most active members put it, “he [Father Papa] is a human being and a loving, sharing, giving, kind priest. Although porn is not how we want priests to spend their time, let the one without sin throw the first stone.”

To understand the behavior of Voice of the Faithful, it is important to know that Rev. Papa supported church members for founding a local chapter of the group last summer. He has also been criticized by parishioners for his dissidence and rejection of certain Church practices. Had he been orthodox, his defenders might have taken a different tact. So much for Voice of the Faithful’s commitment to principles.

One more example of this group’s affinity for politics was demonstrated in March when the Greater Philadelphia chapter admitted lobbying the papal nuncio to the U.S., Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo, on the right of the laity to help select the next bishop of Philadelphia (Cardinal Bevilacqua will soon be retiring). It would be neater, and surely a lot quicker, if Voice simply detailed those areas of ecclesiastical life it isn’t interested in controlling.

So if these are some of our friends these days, we don’t look forward to meeting our enemies.