



Catholic Civil Rights League

www.ccrl.ca

Monthly highlights

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Media Watch

Toronto gallery featuring anti-Catholic work challenged

The League has asked Toronto's Bezpala Brown art gallery to cancel its planned exhibit 'Persona Non Grata – The Veil of History', which features Popes Benedict and John Paul II as despots of "oppression, pain and suffering" and includes a portrait of Benedict "riddled with bullets." The gallery claims the latter is "an expression of the hurt and anger directed at a pontiff and an institution that has abandoned its flock, choosing to focus on dogma while its subjects suffer and, in many instances, die from its archaic policies." Its publicity release also mentioned the sex abuse scandal, though it's not clear that the exhibit itself does.

Because the private facility receives no significant public funding, we can only ask the gallery why it is focusing on violence and hatred, especially given recent events in the city and elsewhere. "In a violent world, (Pope John Paul) was himself almost killed by an assassin in the early 80s, but survived and went on to forgive the perpetrator. This is the image of a dictator? To give space to a portrait of Benedict "riddled with bullets" is both hateful – and could be interpreted as such under Canada's hate speech laws, I might add – and grossly insensitive to Catholics. I will never understand why some so-called artists and entertainers regard the sex abuse scandal as a suitable subject to exploit, without a shred of regard for the victims or their families...I strongly encourage you to reconsider this insulting "exhibit" and instead give more thought to contributing to a peaceful environment for our city," said Joanne McGarry, League executive director. Further action is being considered by our board.

Super Bowl ad contest entry cancelled

Thanks to the many League members, especially those belonging to our Facebook group, who urged Pepsico and the Super Bowl corporation to cancel one of the submissions to the annual Super Bowl advertising contest. The submission satirized Holy Communion, showing a pastor substituting Pepsi and Fritos for bread and wine. As the League said in its letter to Frito-Lay, we appreciate that

the company had no control over what contestants might submit, but it was up to them to remove the entry from corporate websites and encourage YouTube to do the same. Fortunately this was done after just a few days.

Discriminatory policy at CBC.ca cited

Over the past year, the League has been following closely some correspondence between one of our members and the moderator of CBC.ca's message boards. The corporation's response suggested that passages from the Catholic Catechism discussing homosexuality are not allowed on the message board, which we consider to be an unacceptable limitation on religious freedom for those wishing to post messages on the publicly-funded forum. We have therefore asked that the policy be changed. Our open letter to CBC can be viewed on our website, www.ccrl.ca

Ottawa gallery's funding challenged

The League has asked the Canada Council for the Arts and Ontario Arts council to re-consider its funding of Ottawa's Gallery 101, which recently screened "A Fire in My Belly", in protest of its being removed from the Smithsonian. In our letter, we noted that few of the published remarks about the film cited any artistic merit or other redeeming quality to the work, only claims that it was "misunderstood." And yet few could be unaware that many Christians and others would be offended by the sight of large ants crawling all over Jesus on the cross. We asked that the incident be considered when the gallery's next application is reviewed; Canada Council assured us it would be.

Let the League know: Articles, cartoons and advertising that you believe have anti-Catholic content should be sent to ccrl@ccrl.ca to help us respond in a timely way.

National Roundup

League supports religious freedom for Saskatchewan marriage commissioners

The League Jan. 10 expressed concern that the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal has rejected two proposals to provide religious and conscientious freedom to the province's civil marriage commissioners in the matter of same sex marriage. We appeared on CBC's Power and Politics Jan. 14 to discuss the implications of the decision.

The provincial government asked the court to consider two draft bills: One allowing all marriage commissioners to refuse to perform civil marriage ceremonies which are contrary to their religious beliefs; and another that would grant the exemption only to those commissioners who held office when same sex marriage was legalized in November 2004.

"The League intervened in numerous court cases to argue against the change in the definition of marriage, including the Supreme Court reference, and one of our concerns was the eroding effect the change would have on the religious and conscientious rights of marriage commissioners," said League President Phil Horgan. "This decision detracts from the provisions of the federal Civil Marriage Act, the federal law which ultimately was passed in 2005, to implement same sex "marriage" across the country."

The 2005 law contains a provision, which was intended to address this situation in respect of the federal ability to re-define marriage: "For greater certainty, no person or organization shall be deprived of any benefit, or be subject to any obligation or sanction, under any law of the Parliament of Canada solely by reason of their exercise, in respect of marriage between persons of the same sex, of the freedom of conscience and religion guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or the expression of their beliefs in respect of marriage as the union of a man and woman to the exclusion of all others based on that guaranteed freedom." (s.3.1)

The court in its decision released Jan. 10 said both of the proposed laws would be unconstitutional. If enacted, such a law would violate the equality rights of gay and lesbian individuals and would not be a reasonable and justifiable breach of those rights, the court said.

In reaching this decision, the League notes the Court of Appeal has adopted a significant restriction on a robust understanding of freedom of conscience and religion, and has rejected the duty on the Province to accommodate marriage commissioners who sought to exercise their conscientious rights.

The reality of these competing rights, in this case the right to access a service from a government official, and the right of religious and conscientious freedom of the marriage commissioners, was "balanced" by ignoring the latter. In 2009, 0.4 per cent of marriages solemnized in Saskatchewan were to same-sex partners. Most provinces and territories have arranged for accommodation of religious and conscientious beliefs of civil marriage commissioners either in practice or by legislation.

Prostitution appeal pending

The League and its partners, REAL Women of Canada and Christian Legal Fellowship, are preparing their joint intervention in support of maintaining Canada's prostitution laws in anticipation of the appeal to Ontario's Court of Appeal. We think it's vital that the morality shared by most Canadians continue to be heard in court, and our coalition was the only group to speak to it directly. (Prostitution decision sends wrong signal, says League. Press releases, Sept. 28/2010.) We hope you'll agree that this initiative in support of the dignity of women and the family is an important one.

Court challenge to Quebec's ECR course

The League is preparing a joint application to intervene in the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of Quebec parents seeking an exemption for their children from the province's new, mandatory Ethics and Religious Culture Course. Our application, in conjunction with the Quebec Association of Catholic Parents and Coptic Orthodox Community Association of Montreal, will emphasize support for parental rights in education.

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