



Catholic Civil Rights League

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Monthly highlights

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Media Watch:

World Youth Day coverage misleading

As we noted in a membership message Aug. 17, World Youth Day in Madrid did not attract a great deal of media coverage and what there was tended to focus on a small protest rather than on the large number of pilgrims. Concerns about costs were reported deadpan, despite the easily available facts that sponsors were covering the expenses and that, given the money the pilgrims would bring in, the net benefit was likely to be in the neighbourhood of \$72 million in costs and \$142 million in benefits.

More problematic, however, was the report by several wire services that priests hearing confessions at the event had been given special permission by the archbishop of Madrid to "lift" excommunications incurred by penitents who confessed abortions. While these reports were not inaccurate, the potential for misunderstanding was great enough that the League asked Father Tom Lynch, pastor in the Peterborough Diocese and professor of theology, for some clarification.

"To incur an excommunication (for having an abortion), a woman has to be over 18 and free of fear, non-coerced and know what she is doing. I have spoken to well over 100 post-abortion women and never found anyone free of fear or non-coerced and even full knowledge is often lacking. Because of the severity of the action of killing a child, it is held that excommunication would be automatic if those conditions were met. The sin, if any, arises from the degree of responsibility.

I have heard almost all of them speak about being almost "robots" as they come up to and go through the procedure. This seems to strongly mitigate any responsibility and therefore sin and the possibility of excommunication.

"Normally, a priest has the power to hear confessions about anything in the entire world (its called "jurisdiction") unless a) his bishop or superior has restricted him - anywhere in the world or b) the local bishop has restricted or forbidden him within that ordinary's diocese. I think two things are at play here.

"(Chances are) the ordinary of Madrid wanted to be sure that all priests who came for the WYD know that they can lift the possible excommunication of abortion. The WYD can be powerful occasions of repentance and grace. Also, he may want to make a political statement about the awful and stark reality of abortion as the killing of the unborn."

Pope "a divine figure," says Star

A sense of humour was in order when The Toronto Star, perhaps looking for a quick way to summarize historic doctrinal differences in a few lines, stated in a news report that Catholics regard the Pope as "a divine figure" while Coptic Orthodox regard him as "a human being." The rest of the August 8 article was an accurate account of the threat of a Coptic Orthodox group to withdraw children from the Toronto Catholic school system if some changes aren't made to the board's proposed equity policy.

In our letter, we pointed out that while Catholics recognize the Pope as the authoritative voice on matters of Catholicism, we also know that he is indeed a human being. Although no letters were printed on the topic,

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there was a correction August 20. Thanks to numerous League members for bringing the article to our attention.

CBSC downplays concerns about “watershed hour”

On July 28, HBO Canada aired the documentary “Hugh Hefner, Playboy, Activist and Rebel” at 3:30 p.m. Because the program featured adult topics and nude photographs it was clearly outside the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council’s guideline for restricting such material to after 9 pm. In a letter in support of several League members’ complaints, the League pointed out that this traditional “watershed hour” is widely disregarded, particularly by specialty networks. “Most will include a viewer advisory, but these advisories tend to lose their meaning, if not go unnoticed entirely, when they’re repeated over and over again. A far better course would be to observe the 9 pm guideline consistently.”

Their response – saying they couldn’t deal with our concern because it wasn’t about just one program – displayed only a limited understanding that our complaint concerned a general and growing problem. Nevertheless, they stated that they will process and attempt to resolve our members’ complaints, and we will report on the outcome.

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.

School policies must respect parents’ rights, says League

TORONTO, August 24, 2011 - As schools re-open across Canada, many League members are involved in situations involving parental authority in religious education, such as in Quebec, where moves against traditional religious content are extending even to day-cares and nursery schools, or controversial curriculum content in public schools, such as in British Columbia. In Ontario, the requirement for all publicly-funded boards to adopt the provincial government-approved equity and inclusive education policy statement (with templates available for public and Catholic schools) has led to conflicts over concerns that some aspects of the policy concerning sexual orientation could conflict

with the teachings of the Church.

While the League expects parents to take the lead in exercising their rights over the education of their children – indeed, many of the groups involved in Catholic education are strongly supported and often led by our members – it is not in our mandate to provide direct leadership in day-to-day matters of Catholic education. We are, however, involved in the Supreme Court of Canada appeal of the mandatory nature of Quebec’s ECR course and have provided tools such as our synopsis, available on our website, of how the constitutional guarantees for Catholic schools in Ontario are compatible with genuine equity.

Our most recent publication is the *Declaration on the Authority of Parents and Guardians in the Education of their Children*, prepared by CCRL Western Region Director Sean Murphy and available on our website. We hope it will prove a useful tool in asserting the responsibilities and rights of parents as the first educators of their children.

Mark your calendars: The League’s annual general meeting takes place Oct. 13 in Toronto, beginning with the 5:30 Mass at St. Michael’s Cathedral with the business portion and guest speaker immediately following at the school auditorium 66 Bond Street. Guest speaker will be Daniel Santoro, lawyer for Linda Gibbons, who will discuss the civil rights implications of Linda’s important free speech and freedom of religion case.

Chapter contacts

For upcoming meetings of our *Windsor-Essex chapter* contact Bob Baksi at robert@baksi.com.

Antigonish chapter: Contact Greg MacDougall, chapter president danielgregmacdougall@hotmail.com, for details. From September to June the chapter meets the first Tuesday of each month.

BC Chapter: E-mail ccrl@ccrl.ca and we will forward to the appropriate contact.

To inquire about forming a chapter in your area, contact Joanne at 416-466-8244 or ccrl@ccrl.ca.

Catholic Civil Rights League
500—120 Eglinton Ave. East
Toronto, ON M4P 1E2
416-466-8244; ccrl@ccrl.ca