



# The Catholic Civil Rights League

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Quarterly highlights, June 2012  
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## Michael O'Brien receives League award

The League held its annual dinner in Toronto June 7. The evening began with a tribute to Tom Langan, one the League's founding members, past-president and President Emeritus since 2004, who died on May 25 (see tribute in this edition, page four).



Pictured: Joanne McGarry, executive director, Michael O'Brien, Phil Horgan, president and Christian Elia, director.

The League honoured artist, author and Catholic thinker Michael O'Brien with this year's Archbishop Exner Award for Catholic Excellence in Public Life. After Mr. O'Brien was presented with his award, he briefly presented some profound thoughts about the faith and the cultural battle against Christianity. He said that all his works have been an attempt to show the eternal beauty of every human being and the true story of man. He reminded us that we cannot forget our Christian faith narrative otherwise we risk forgetting our conception of who we truly are. Souls are being lost because of a toxic culture that hides man's true identity and calling.

"The world needs the Catholic voice, founded on Jesus our spiritual rock, to defend, to nourish and make possible the future of mankind. We must always remember that God is

our Father and grieves over abortion, euthanasia and all sins against life. We must be the voice and witness to His truth, to His love and to His grace. " A standing applause followed.

Born in Ottawa in 1948, Michael O'Brien is known the world over for his novel *Father Elijah: An Apocalypse*. His most recent book is *Father at Night*. His non-fiction books include these titles: *A Landscape with Dragons: The Battle for your Child's Mind*, and *Harry Potter and the Paganization of Culture*. Mr. O'Brien is also an internationally renowned artist. His works are found in many places including churches and monasteries all over North America, Europe, Africa and Australia. Many of his books have been bestsellers in the Catholic and secular world. He has written extensively on how current children's books and films paganize young readers. His works have been translated into many languages. He is married to Sheila and they have six children. For more information, visit his website at [studio-brien.com](http://studio-brien.com).

League President Philip Horgan had this to say about Mr. O'Brien: "Through his ability to engage strong Catholic themes in his writings and the unique religious imagery in his paintings, Michael has given a powerful witness in the world of art and literature, and his work has given spiritual enrichment to countless individuals. It is an honour to recognize Michael's work and give our supporters an opportunity to meet him."

The evening keynote address was delivered by Professor Robert Ventresca, chair of the History Department at King's University College, London, Ontario and author of a soon-to-be released biography on Pope Pius XII. His talk centred on how the Catholic faith is often poorly portrayed in the public square and the media. Professor Ventresca stressed the importance of learning to distinguish myth from facts in order to get the most accurate view possible of Church and other aspects of cultural history. Facts and religion do and

must go together.

He used the conflicting historical views of Pope Pius XII regarding his efforts to fight Nazism and save the Jews and others both in Italy and the rest of the world. An example of Catholic myth making at the expense of truth can be found, according to Dr. Ventresca, in John Cornwell book, *Hitler's Pope*. In order to present Catholicism in its proper light, the historian and others need to discern the true facts behind cultural mythology, debunk the falsehoods and reveal the truth. The complexity and nuance surrounding historical facts are too often reduced to caricature or falsehood.

The League has presented the Archbishop Exner award annually since 2004. Past recipients include Toronto's Michael Coren, author and broadcaster, for his very public defence of Catholicism; Suzanne LaVallee of Quebec for her leadership in education; Frank Chauvin of Windsor, Ontario, founder of Haiti's first orphanage for girls and for initiating the review process of the Order of Canada after it was given to Henry Morgentaler, and Dr. Andrew and Mrs. Joan Simone of Toronto, co-founders of the Canadian Food for Children, for services to philanthropy and international aid.

We would particularly like to thank our generous benefactors who made additional donations so that students could attend the dinner on a pay-what-you-can basis.

### **League welcomes repeal of Section 13**

OTTAWA, ON June 8, 2012 – The Catholic Civil Rights League is pleased that Parliament has voted to repeal Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act, in a vote of 153 to 136 June 6.

Section 13, which prohibits hate speech on the Internet, (and Section 54, which prescribes penalties available), was the subject of a Private Members' Motion by MP Brian Storseth (CPC – Westlock-St. Paul). Now that it has passed third and final reading, it will become law after Senate review, royal assent and a one-year implementation period.

Because Section 13 has been used to penalize the expres-



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sion of unpopular opinions based on religious beliefs, including columns and articles written during the debates on same sex marriage, the League was active in calls for its repeal. Cases brought at the federal level included that against Catholic Insight magazine, which was forced to incur substantial defence costs in having the complaint dismissed, while the complainant faced little if any expense. Further publicity was afforded to a subsequent case against MacLean's magazine commenced in 2006 for publishing a book excerpt from Mark Steyn, which complainants purported to be hateful to Muslims, and which was dismissed after a lengthy hearing.

"Human rights tribunals are not the appropriate forum for testing claims of hate speech," said League Executive Director Joanne McGarry. "Criminal Code provisions regarding hate speech, libel and slander laws help ensure that complainant and defendant are on a level playing field with respect to costs, and that rules of evidence and procedure are followed."

Even with the federal provision removed, hate speech claims can still be brought to human rights agencies in some provinces. The case against Bill Whatcott for distributing literature strongly critical of homosexual conduct, currently pending a decision from the Supreme Court of Canada, began with a complaint to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. The League filed an intervention in the appeal.

### **B.C. assisted suicide decision**

VANCOUVER, BC June 15, 2012 – Today's ruling of the B.C. Supreme Court calling for liberalization of Canada's assisted suicide laws devalues the lives of the disabled and is not in keeping with how Parliament has voted on the issue, says the Catholic Civil Rights League.

In a 395-page ruling in the case of *Carter v. AG Canada*, Justice Lynn Smith said the ban on assisted suicide is unconstitutional. Since suicide itself is not illegal, she wrote, the current law discriminates against the disabled who cannot end their own lives without assistance. This, she reasoned, violates the equality section of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"The prohibition of physician-assisted suicide upholds the dignity of each human person, regardless of disability," notes League Executive Director Joanne McGarry. "It is no more legal for an able-bodied person to request a physi-

cian to assist in one's suicide than it is for someone who cannot end his or her life without assistance.

"The Court has ignored the existing precedent of the Supreme Court of Canada, from the Rodriguez decision from 1993. The Court's ruling has trivialized the serious concerns about the impact of the liberalization of assisted suicide laws, and the impact on those with severe or costly disabilities to make use of that option. There is little comfort for doctors who may be asked to participate in such requests contrary to their conscientious rights."

When Parliament last voted on this issue (on Bill C-384, in 2010), the proposal for liberalization was defeated by a vote of 228 to 59 due to concerns about the potential for abuse of seniors and people with disabilities, the lack of an effective national suicide prevention strategy, and the lack of access to good palliative care in Canada. Little if anything has changed since that vote, so it is of particular concern that a court is over-ruling what Parliament so recently voted. **The League urges an immediate appeal of the decision.**

### **Debate held on Motion 13**

MP Stephen Woodworth's motion to revisit an old law that defines human personhood as commencing only at live birth received its first hour of debate April 26. The debate was not well-attended and most who spoke opposed the motion. It will come up for debate and voting again in the Fall. We urge you to support this motion through communication with MPs and by participating in online polls. Surveys and polls about issues of interest to the League are often included on our Facebook page as well as in our e-news service.

### **Bill 13 ignores significant opposition**

The League commented June 5 on the passage of Ontario's Bill 13 ("Safe Schools Act"), which passed in the Ontario legislature in a vote of 65-36 with support from the Liberal and New Democrat parties, and opposition by Progressive Conservatives. The amendment to the Education Act is meant to combat bullying. It was considered in tandem with the opposition Private Members Bill 14 (later Bill 80), which opposed all forms of bullying and proposed numerous measures to combat it without singling out any one group of students.

Among other provisions, Bill 13 will require all schools to provide Gay-Straight Alliances, so-named, if request-

ed by students. The League was among the organizations that appeared before the Standing Committee on Social Policy in support of an approach to combatting bullying that addressed the needs of all students and which respected the constitutional rights of Catholic schools.

"It is unfortunate that the government has chosen to ignore over 10,000 petitions opposing Bill 13, as well as numerous presentations – 75 to 80 per cent of which favoured Bill 14 over Bill 13 - and hundreds of briefs and letters, as well as several protest rallies, all of them with serious objections to some of Bill 13's provisions," says League President Philip Horgan. "Chief among our objections were the labelling of any and all opponents as "homophobic", and ignoring the constitutional rights of Catholic schools in dealing with issues touching on the faith and morals of its students. It remains our view that the government's legislation intrudes into denominational guarantees preserved by the constitution, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

It is hoped that Catholic high school students, as confirmed members of the faith, will be respectful of Catholic teaching in creating anti-bullying clubs. They should have reference to the [Respecting Differences](#) document published by the Ontario Catholic School Trustees Association in January. It is expected that the formation of such clubs will be subject to existing school policies in respect of staff participation, oversight, and board rules for invitations to outside groups.

What has been made clear is that the McGuinty government, with the support of the provincial NDP, has engaged in a focused challenge to the constitutional protections afforded to Catholic schools, over the objections of elected Trustees, the Ontario Assembly of Bishops, and numerous other stakeholders.

### **National museum hosts graphic exhibit**

OTTAWA, May 16, 2012 - The League wrote May 11 to federal Heritage Minister, James Moore, as well as to the museum itself to protest the exhibit "Sex: a Tell-All Exhibition", scheduled to run at Ottawa's Museum of Science and Technology May 18 to early next year. The exhibition, which includes detailed, "non-judgmental" information about sexual relations, masturbation, abortion and other topics, complete with photographs and interactive questions-and-answers, is geared to youth age 12 and up, with younger children admitted if accompanied by an adult. By the time of the show's opening, our protest had caused the museum to raise the admission age to 16 and drop a few of the worst photos.

# League tribute to co-founder Tom Langan

The Catholic Civil Rights League joins the family, friends and colleagues of Tom Langan in giving thanks for Tom's many contributions to the Church and for the guiding role he played in the lives of so many of his students and associates.



Tom, who died Friday May 25 at the age of 83, was part of the original steering committee that established the CCRL in 1985. He served as president for many years, helping to guide the organization from a loosely-organized group of volunteers to a professional organization with a paid staff and national support base. He became President Emeritus in 2004.

"We know our entire membership joins us in praying for Tom and all his family at this time," said Phil Horgan, President of the League. "As well as being respected scholars, authors, and teachers, active in their faith community, Tom and Janine have also been role models for thousands whose lives they have touched over the years. The board of CCRL thinks of the Langans as very much part of our family."

Tom was on the faculty of philosophy of the University of Toronto from 1967 to 1994, with St. Michael's College

from 1978 to 1994. He served as chairman of the Commission on the Family for the Archdiocese of Toronto, as a member of the Board of Regents at Athol Murray College of Notre Dame, Wilcox, Sask, and as a Consultor for the World Organization for the Family, Vienna. He was chairman of the Spiritual Development Committee of Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Toronto, from 1981 to 1983. He was a graduate of St. Louis University and the Institut Catholique de Paris.

Tom received the papal knighthood Knight of St. Sylvester in 2006 in recognition of his outstanding service as a Catholic educator and for his long-term leadership of the League. Janine received the honour "Lady of St. Sylvester" at the same time for her service to education. Tom was the author of many books, including *Surviving the Age of Virtual Reality*; *Human Being, a Philosophical Anthology* (with Antonio Calcagno), and *The Meaning of Heidegger*.

The Langans were both active in the Communion movement, and contributed frequently to its journal and conferences. They have five children, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandson.

*As the League's tribute, we plan to compile a book of Tom's writings, focusing on work he did for the League. We have also prepared memorial prayer cards that will be included in League mailings for the balance of the year.*

## Do we have your e-mail address?

If you would like to receive our monthly electronic newsletter, just send your request with your name and e-mail address to [ccrl@ccrl.ca](mailto:ccrl@ccrl.ca)

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