

DIOCESAN NEWS

League president criticizes anti-Catholic acts

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

PENFIELD — When Home Box Office aired a program in May about priests involved in pedophilia, the network's honchos got an earful from Dr. William Donohue, president of the New York City-based Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

Donohue said he suggested to HBO executives several other programs they could air. How about a show on the Native American contribution to alcoholism, he asked them, or a show on why there are so many Jews in Hollywood?

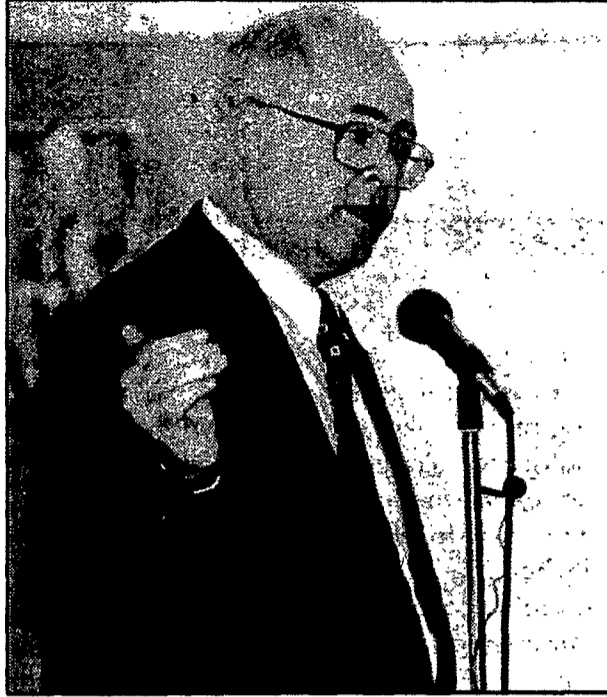
Donohue said that the executives had no response to his questions. But he then told them why they wouldn't air such programs: "It would be irresponsible."

Donohue related that experience and others from among his continuing efforts to stem anti-Catholicism in the communications media, during a Sept. 28 speech to almost 200 people at the Church of the Holy Spirit, 1355 Hatch Road.

His speech was sponsored by Western N.Y. Catholics United for the Faith, a lay organization whose annual two-day conference began Sept. 27 with a speech by Father Joseph Fessio, SJ. Father Fessio, founder and editor of Ignatius Press and such publications as *Catholic News Monthly* and *Catholic World Report*, spoke at the Party House in Rochester. The next morning, Donohue spoke at the parish.

Despite the news and entertainment media's sensitivity to the feelings of non-Catholic groups, Catholics remain fair game for slurs, slights and irresponsible characterization by the same media, Donohue said. He pointed out, for example, that even seemingly innocent news reports often slight the church as in the instance of criminals being called "ex-altar boys" in stories and reports.

He noted that in his meeting with HBO executives



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer
President of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, Dr. William A. Donohue spoke at Holy Spirit Church, Penfield, on Sept. 28 as part of the annual Catholics United for the Faith conference.

about the pedophilia show, he told them that independent studies have shown that a smaller percent of Catholic priests are charged with child sex abuse than are married Protestant clergy who, he contended, have not been as scrutinized as publicly as their Catholic peers.

Through full-page advertisements in such newspapers

as *The New York Times*, and through appearances on radio and television, Donohue said he has and will continue to respond to any ad, show, article or movie that he perceives to be anti-Catholic. Such actions have resulted in fashion companies, radio stations and magazines pulling pieces that the Catholic League criticized, he claimed.

"The one thing nobody wants in public life is to be publicly embarrassed," Donohue said.

The Catholic League also publishes a monthly newsletter, *Catalyst*, which details what the organization considers anti-Catholic activity in society. Although the league is quick to respond to what it sees as unfair attacks on Catholicism, Donohue stressed in his speech that he has no problem with above-the-belt criticism of the church.

"If a protester wants to have a sign that says 'Pope Go Home,' I don't have a problem with that," he said. "But when you introduce vulgarity, that crosses the line."

One of the most vulgar anti-Catholic moments in recent history took place during a 1994 Gay Pride Parade in New York City, Donohue said. Several marchers yelled anti-Catholic slogans as they walked past St. Patrick's Cathedral. Others did "satanic dances," Donohue said, noting that several marchers also shed their clothes in the process.

The Catholic League lodged several protests with New York City officials and with parade organizers, and such activities, for the most part, did not take place at subsequent annual parades, he said.

"I don't care if you're gay or straight, if you act like an animal in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral, you're going to hear from me," he said.

Following his speech, Donohue was asked why the church is the target of ridicule.

"The Catholic Church is a counter-cultural institution," he said. "The Catholic Church teaches the virtue of restraint in a society which preaches the abandonment of it."

Women's Hall of Fame adds Mother Cabrini

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini will be inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls Oct. 5, along with 10 other notable women.

Often called simply Mother Cabrini, she will become the second saint inducted into the hall: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton is one of 125 women previously inducted.

The hall is honoring Mother Cabrini for establishing orphanages, day-care centers, schools, clinics and hospitals for immigrants in the United States and around the world, as well as for the missionary order of women she established.

Ironically, the honor comes a week after legislation to cut assistance to immigrants virtually breezed through the U.S. House and went on to the Senate.

Pope Leo XIII sent Mother Cabrini to the United States in 1889 to help the immigrants, though her desire had been to work in China. Refused entrance to an existing order because of frailty due to a bout with smallpox, she had founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Within days of arriving in New York with six of her religious sisters, she established an orphanage. She went on to buy a hospital and establish schools. She also offered religious and language education for immigrant parents and their children, and provided instruction in skills necessary for jobs.

Over the next 28 years, her congregation spread across the United States,

starting schools, medical and day-care centers and various missions, some still operated by the Missionary Sisters and lay collaborators. In 1909 she became a naturalized U.S. citizen.

By the time of her death in Chicago in 1917 from malaria, she had established 67 religious houses.

She became the first American citizen to be recognized as a saint, when she was canonized July 7, 1946, by Pope Pius XII.

Accepting Mother Cabrini's honor in Seneca Falls will be Sister Ursula Infante and Dr. Antoinette Iadarola, both of Cabrini College in Radnor, Pa. Other women to be inducted into the Hall of Fame this year are authors Louisa May Alcott, Edith Wharton, and Anne Morrow Lindbergh; ballerina Maria Tallchief; physicist Maria Goeppert Mayer; women's rights advocates Ernestine Louise Polowski Rose, Mary A. Hallaren, Charlotte Anne Bunch; the first woman U.S. colonel, Oveta Culp Hob-

by; and Wilhelmina Cole Holladay, who founded the National Museum of Women in the Arts.

The induction celebration will begin with a private reception Friday, Oct. 4, and conclude with an honors ceremony at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 5, at the Seneca Falls Presbyterian Church, 23 Cayuga St. Tickets (\$30-45) for the ceremony and following reception may be purchased at the door or from the Hall of Fame, 315/568-8060.

—Kathleen Schwarz

Southern Tier Hospice launches annual drive

Southern Tier Hospice, Inc., has begun its annual fund drive, "Friends of Hospice."

The hospice has set a fundraising goal of \$45,000. Southern Tier Hospice provides care for terminally ill people and their families in Chemung, Steuben and Schuyler counties.

Donations may be mailed to the hospice at 244 W. Water St., Elmira, NY, 14901.

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