



CATHOLIC LEAGUE

*For Religious
and
Civil Rights*

July 23, 2012

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William C. Powers, Jr.
President
University of Texas at Austin
Office of the President
Austin, Texas 78713

Dear President Powers:

I have several reasons for writing to you about the controversy over the work of Professor Mark Regnerus, but my principle concern is the vile anti-Catholic commentary made by his senior critic, Scott Rose. Before addressing this issue, I would like to mention some ancillary concerns.

Higher education is something dear to me. To be specific, I taught for 20 years, 16 as a professor, and have long had a strong interest in academic freedom. Not only do I have an equally strong distaste for those who seek to abridge it, but I abhor those who seek to create a "chilling effect" on the pursuit of truth; heterodoxy should be welcomed, not trashed. This commitment to unfettered scholarship is what led me to become a member of the board of directors of the National Association of Scholars for two decades. I mention this because of the highly politicized charges made against Professor Regnerus. That they emanate from someone who has no academic standing makes them all the more pernicious.

Another interest I have is that I am a sociologist; I received my Ph.D. from New York University in 1980. I have also taught and written widely on social issues, including family matters. While I do not know Professor Regnerus, who is also a sociologist, I have cited his findings in my writings (most recently in my latest book, *Why Catholicism Matters*). His work is impressive. This was no doubt one reason why the University of Texas picked him up from the University of North Carolina.

One of the persons named by Rose as an ally of Regnerus is Princeton Professor Robert George. Full disclosure demands that I acknowledge our relationship: George sits on the advisory board of the Catholic League. He was accused by Rose in his June 21 letter to you of having “a long history of telling dehumanizing lies about gay people.” That comment is scurrilous.

For eminently good reasons, George has chosen not to respond to Rose (I should add that Professor George did not solicit my assistance in this matter). But unlike George, I have a very good reason to respond: as president of the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization, I cannot ignore the anti-Catholic bigotry displayed by Rose.

In his letter to you, Rose “summed” up his case by saying, “Regnerus converted from evangelical Protestantism to Catholicism; his Church is very aggressively involved worldwide in fighting against gay rights, including in the United States, where in June-July 2012, while making use of Regnerus’s study, NOM [National Organization for Marriage] and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops are joined in running the ‘Fortnight for Freedom’ event.”

Rose’s comment is invidious as well as ignorant. If a non-academic ideologue were to register a complaint with you about a faculty member’s research, summing up his case by noting the professor’s conversion to Islam, would that not alone be cause for concern? Since when did a researcher’s religion become grounds for indictment?

For the record, the Catholic Church’s defense of traditional marriage is wholly unexceptional: no world religion disagrees with the position that marriage is a union between a man and a woman. More to the point, the “Fortnight for Freedom” events that were organized by the bishops had absolutely nothing to do with same-sex marriage: they were a series of events, uncoordinated with other organizations, that were held to garner Catholic support for religious liberty.

Rose's Catholic-bashing is hardly limited to Regnerus. He notes with alarm that "All of NOM's leaders—in other words—*all* of Regnerus's funders—are Catholic, and not just Catholic, but strong political enablers of the Catholic Church in the U.S. It is perhaps necessary to remind readers that the Catholic Church fights dirty in its politics." [His italic.]

Though this was not part of the letter that Rose wrote to you, I must ask the following: How would you respond if someone were to write to you complaining that all of those involved in a research study were Jews? Or that they were strong political enablers of Israel? Or that such persons were known to fight dirty?

Rose's hatred of Catholicism is well documented. Consider his piece of January 21, 2012, "What's the Real Reason The Catholic Church Wants to Keep Gays Oppressed?" In it he wrote the following:

- "The Catholic Church is the world's single largest anti-gay hate group."
- "By socially stigmatizing gay human beings and driving young gay people to despair about their chances for satisfying adult domestic lives, the Church as good as tortures young gay people into signing up to be priests and nuns. The fall-off in the number of young people signing up for lifetimes slaving for the Church corresponds almost precisely to the gradually increasing social acceptance of gay human beings."
- "The greedy gay-bashing monsters of the Catholic Church are mounting a war against gay people; gay people and those that support their rights—must fight back against this *evil cult*." (My emphasis.)

This is not the voice of reason. Nor is it the voice of someone in a position to scrutinize the scholarship of any professor, especially one who is Catholic. It hardly exaggerates to conclude that Rose has no credibility as a fair-minded observer.

On May 11, 2012, Rose wrote the following in his article, "Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Gay Bashing, And Children":

- "The Catholic Church's worldwide economic plan is to keep stigmatizing and discriminating against gays and lesbians, in order to get them to despair of successful adult domestic lives, so they will sign up for lifetimes of near-slave labor of the Church, keeping Dolan and others of his level in the Church hierarchy living off the fat of the land."

Rose's animus against Cardinal Dolan is particularly sick; he has called the New York Archbishop a "gay basher and child rapist enabler." He has also accused Dolan of writing a "threatening letter to President Obama." To demonstrate just how Rose's pathological hatred of Catholicism has impaired his judgment, I am enclosing a copy of the "threatening letter." As you will see, there is not a single threatening sentence in the entire letter.

Given Rose's mindset, it is hardly surprising to learn that he has contacted the IRS asking them to strip the Catholic Church of its tax-exempt status.

It is not the business of the Catholic League to sit in judgment of the way the University of Texas handles complaints against its faculty. But when it comes to bashing a professor because of his Catholicism, and when the Catholic Church is treated with vitriol in such a public manner, it takes on a dimension that transcends ordinary campus issues. That is why I felt obliged to enter this discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William A. Donohue". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President



Office of the President

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Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President

September 20, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write with a growing sense of urgency about recent actions taken by your Administration that both escalate the threat to marriage and imperil the religious freedom of those who promote and defend marriage. This past spring the Justice Department announced that it would no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in court, a decision strongly opposed by the Catholic Bishops of the United States and many others. Now the Justice Department has shifted from not defending DOMA—which is problem enough, given the duty of the executive branch to enforce even laws it disfavors—to actively attacking DOMA's constitutionality. My predecessor, Cardinal Francis George, OMI, and I have expressed to you in the past our strong disappointment about the direction your Administration has been moving regarding DOMA. Unfortunately the only response to date has been the intensification of efforts to undermine DOMA and the institution of marriage.

The Justice Department's move, in addition to other troubling federal decisions occurring recently, prompts me yet again to register my grave concerns. The content of this letter reflects the strong sentiment expressed at a recent meeting by more than thirty of my brother Bishops who serve on the Administrative Committee of our episcopal conference. I know they are joined by hundreds of additional Catholic bishops throughout our nation. My observations are offered in the spirit of respectful, but frank dialogue.

The Catholic Bishops stand ready to affirm every positive measure taken by you and your Administration to strengthen marriage and the family. We cannot be silent, however, when federal steps harmful to marriage, the laws defending it, and religious freedom continue apace. Attached you will find an analysis prepared by my staff detailing the various executive activities of late that warrant our increasing apprehension.

Mr. President, your Administration's actions against DOMA and the values it stands for contrast sharply with your excellent Mother's Day and Father's Day proclamations issued earlier this year, which are also referenced in the attached analysis. In these perceptive and heartening statements, you correctly emphasize the critical role played by both a mom and a dad in a child's life, and you rightly call upon society to do all it can to uphold *both* mothers *and* fathers.

I know that you treasure the importance that you and the First Lady, separately and as a couple, share in the lives of your children. The Mother's Day and Father's Day proclamations display a welcome conviction on your part that neither a mom nor a dad is expendable. I believe therefore that you would agree that every child has the right to be loved by both a mother and a father.

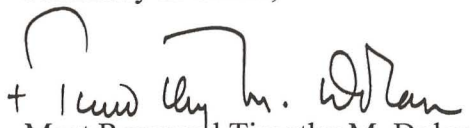
The institution of marriage is built on this truth, which goes to the core of what the Catholic Bishops of the United States, and the millions of citizens who stand with us on this issue, want for all children and for the common good of society. That is why it is particularly upsetting, Mr. President, when your Administration, through the various court documents, pronouncements and policies identified in the attached analysis, attributes to those who support DOMA a motivation rooted in prejudice and bias. It is especially wrong and unfair to equate opposition to redefining marriage with either intentional or willfully ignorant racial discrimination, as your Administration insists on doing.

We as Bishops of the Catholic Church recognize the immeasurable personal dignity and equal worth of all individuals, including those with same-sex attraction, and we reject all hatred and unjust treatment against any person. Our profound regard for marriage as the complementary and fruitful union of a man and a woman does not negate our concern for the well-being of all people but reinforces it. While all persons merit our full respect, no other relationships provide for the common good what marriage between husband and wife provides. The law should reflect this reality.

Mr. President, I respectfully urge you to push the reset button on your Administration's approach to DOMA. Our federal government should not be presuming ill intent or moral blindness on the part of the overwhelming majority of its citizens, millions of whom have gone to the polls to directly support DOMAs in their states and have thereby endorsed marriage as the union of man and woman. Nor should a policy disagreement over the meaning of marriage be treated by federal officials as a federal offense—but this will happen if the Justice Department's latest constitutional theory prevails in court. The Administration's failure to change course on this matter will, as the attached analysis indicates, precipitate a national conflict between Church and State of enormous proportions and to the detriment of both institutions.

Thus, on behalf of my brother Bishops, I urge yet again that your Administration end its campaign against DOMA, the institution of marriage it protects, and religious freedom. Please know that I am always ready to discuss with you the concerns raised here and to address any questions that you may have. I am convinced that the door to a dialogue that is strong enough to endure even serious and fundamental disagreements can and must remain open, and I believe that you desire the same. Also please know that you, your family, and your Administration continue to be in my prayers.

Faithfully in Christ,


+ I am with you.
Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Attachment: USCCB Staff Analysis of Recent Federal Threats to Marriage April-August 2011