Sex and the single priest

by L_Brent_Bozell

The dictionary defines prejudice as premature judgment: making a decision before becoming aware of the relevant facts of a case or event. Some forms of prejudice are fading; racism being the primary and obvious example. The backlash against prejudice is so intense it has spurred its opposite, the call toward tolerance.

But for one sector, prejudice remains intact. It is perfectly acceptable to spew intolerance against Christians in general and Catholics in particular. But the bonanza of prejudice is reserved for Catholic priests.

In our sex-drenched society, the idea of a single man taking an oath of lifelong celibacy sounds sacrificial to the point of freakish. The world says abstinence is impossible, and pledging abstinence is ridiculous. So when the crisis over child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church erupted, it didn't matter that a tiny minority of unfaithful priests (and their supervisors) had betrayed the faithful. Hollywood and other champions of unbridled lust broke out the prejudice, smearing all Catholic priests as stunted at best, and predatory at worst.

Many assume priests are miserable in their celibacy. That's dead wrong. A Los Angeles Times survey completed in the midst of abuse scandals in 2002 found that 93 percent of more than 1,800 priests surveyed said that they'd become priests if they had to choose their careers again. Only two percent said that they would probably leave the priesthood. In general, priests are more likely to find happiness in their life's work than doctors, lawyers, teachers and even married Protestant clergy.

The tidal wave of outrage inside and outside the Catholic world is long past its peak, but Hollywood keeps whipping on priests as sexually retarded. Two examples emerged within four days of each other recently.

On the Feb. 12 edition of the NBC sitcom "30 Rock," the gags were flying when the show's capitalist-pig character, Jack Donaghy (played by Alec Baldwin), was dragged to Mass on Valentine's Day by his devout Latina girlfriend (Salma Hayek).The lowlight was his trip to the confessional. Before the priest, he refused any opportunity to express remorse for his comically flagrant sins, even as he listed them for several minutes. When he described to the priest the glorious earthly delights of romancing a woman, the priest had enough, charging out of the confessional, a very frustrated and unhappy man. "Harvard didn't prepare me for this!" he lamented.

On the Feb. 16 episode of Fox's "House," the show began with a demoralized priest being rude to a poor man who knocked on a church door wanting a winter coat. He then sat depressed in his dingy apartment, smoking and drinking. (What a miserable life, the priesthood.) This priest had been accused of inappropriate contact with a teenage boy, and had been shuttled from church to church across about six states.

The show's atheist title character delighted in the priest's vanished faith when he came to the hospital after a vision of a bloody Jesus (without a cross) knocked on his door and floated unhappily before him. The doctors all assumed the priest was a drunk.

The scriptwriters wanted everyone to assume the priest is guilty. The doctors unanimously did. Dr. House reveled in the priest's misery â€" "a priest that doesn't believe in God. It's cool that God did to him what he did to the kid." After talking to him, he proclaimed: "God, I wish you weren't a pedophile!" He also called him "our pederast priest."

The assumptions of guilt grow heavier and nastier when they determined the priest had a compromised immune system. "Father Nietzsche has AIDS," House declared, after the philosopher who famously suggested God was dead. (That's one of only two times in the script that the priest is described as "Father.")

One doctor insisted they find the child who accused the priest and get him an AIDS test: "This is an innocent kid who's been molested." The priest, a lifelong virgin, refused a similar AIDS test, fearing a false positive. "Heaven forbid, a diddler has job issues," a doctor responded. But the doctors learned it wasn't AIDS after all. And when notified he "needs" an AIDS test, the teenaged accuser recanted. He came to the priest's hospital bed, cried and apologized.

Vindication for the priest? A lesson in tolerance for the audience? Hardly. After it was revealed that the priest had been telling the truth all along, not one of the doctors felt remorse or apologized for all their premature judgments and cruel remarks. When it comes to traditional religion, Hollywood feels very comfortable in its anti-Catholic prejudice, even when they know it's repugnant.

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