



Catholic Civil Rights League

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Quarterly highlights, June 2010

League celebrates 25 years, honours lay achievement in education and advocacy

The advocacy and education work of the Catholic Civil Rights League is needed now more than ever, Rev. Raymond J. de Souza told those attending the League's June 10 anniversary gala.

Noting that the media has grown rapidly and embraced new technologies in the past 25 years, Father de Souza said that while there are better sources for news and commentary about the Church available now, there is also greater potential for bias and falsehood to spread in an instant.

"The League began in 1985, a time of renewed confidence for the Church. The synod that year celebrated and gave fresh impetus to the achievements of the Second Vatican Council. It was a good time for harnessing that confident spirit and creating a force for challenging media bias and participating in debates on public policy," said Father de Souza, National Post columnist, Chaplain, Newman House and adjunct faculty at Queen's University.

Some of the fights in which the League has been involved, such as the change to the definition of marriage, complete legalization of abortion and proposals to liberalize euthanasia, were barely on the horizon when the League was formed, Father de Souza said. The League has become a respected force in these debates, he added, and as an independent lay organization has more freedom than the Church hierarchy to participate in issues that sometimes have political overtones.

"One of the good things about a silver anniversary is that

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many of the founders are still part of the League. They deserve our thanks and congratulations for seeing a problem and doing something about it. Theirs is a real achievement."

Greetings were read from the League's chaplain, Archbishop Adam Exner, O.M.I., retired archbishop of Vancouver. "The League has made and is making a significant difference in upholding and protecting our faith and morals which constantly seem to be under attack. The need for the League is not likely to diminish. As we look to the future, I pray that the League will forge ahead with renewed energy and will strive to bring about the new springtime of faith and Christian living that Pope John Paul II hoped and prayed for at the beginning of the new millennium."

Certificates of honour were presented to League co-founders Keith Cassidy, Rev. Alphonse De Valk, C.S.B., David Dooley and Tom Langan, president emeritus. Their achievements, and those of many others who have been active in the League over the years, were celebrated in a message by President Phil Horgan. Noting that the earliest battles of the League involved newspaper attacks on Ca-



Father de Souza with Phil Horgan

message by President Phil Horgan. Noting that the earliest battles of the League involved newspaper attacks on Catholicism related to the abortion debate, Mr. Horgan noted that the League continues to combat attacks on faith based on the Church's moral teaching.

"There is a strong belief in many quarters that people of faith should not participate in public debate," Mr. Horgan added. "We owe a debt to the League's founders for providing a vehicle for countering that sentiment."

Joanne McGarry, executive director, presented certificates of appreciation to League regional directors who have served for 10 years or more. They are Jean Morse-Chevrier, Quebec, Edward De Vita, B.C., Joseph MacLellan, Nova Scotia and Dr. John Shea, Toronto.

This year's Archbishop Exner Award for Catholic Excellence in Public Life was presented to Suzanne LaVallee of Drummondville, Quebec for leadership in community advocacy. Ms. LaVallee, with her husband Daniel Jutras, led the court challenge by Drummondville parents seeking an exemption from the province's new Ethics and Religious Culture Course.



Suzanne LaVallee with Joanne McGarry

She was introduced by Mrs. Chevrier, who is also president of the Association of Catholic Parents of Quebec. She said that the court challenge to the ERC course is an effort to uphold the right of parents to direct the religious education of their children.

Ms. LaVallee thanked the League for the honour, and said that all the legal work her family has undertaken has been motivated by a desire to have schools that do not contradict the Catholic faith they are teaching in the home. (See League press releases of June 21, June 2 and Sept. 3, 2009 for more information about the court challenges.)

"I am delighted to receive this award from Catholic Civil Rights League, which has always shown support for parental rights in the education of their children. A great many people and organizations have helped us in this fight, and the award honours all their efforts as well."

More than 120 people attended the dinner, which also featured door prizes donated by artist and author Joan Levy-Earle, Justin Press (www.justinpress.ca) and Salt and Light Television (www.saltandlighttv.org.)

League pleased with Quebec court decision on religious education

MONTREAL, June 21, 2010 – The Catholic Civil Rights League is pleased that the Quebec Superior Court has upheld the right of Loyola High School to be exempt from a provincial government requirement that it teach the new Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) course as mandated by Québec's Education Dept. The League hopes, however, that parents and students in all schools will be offered the same degree of choice in religious education.

"While we are pleased that this ruling is a victory for the rights of private schools to adapt the material to suit their religious focus, and therefore recognizes the rights of parents who have chosen private schools for religious reasons, we would hope to see the same spirit of choice and respect for parental rights upheld for all students," said League President Phil Horgan.

The judgment criticized what it called a dictatorial attitude on the part of the government in its dealings with the school, comparing the province's attempt to impose a secular focus on Loyola's teaching of the course to the intolerance of the Spanish Inquisition. "In this age of the respect of fundamental rights, of tolerance, reasonable accommodation and multiculturalism, the attitude adopted by the (Education) minister, is surprising," wrote Judge Gérard Dugré in a 63-page judgment released June 18.

"Canadian democratic society is based on principles recognizing the supremacy of God and the primacy of the law – both of which benefit from constitutional protection." The obligation imposed on Loyola to teach the ethics and religious culture course in a lay fashion assumes a totalitarian character essentially equivalent to Galileo's being ordered by the Inquisition to deny the Copernican universe." Justice Dugré ruled that by trying to compel *Loyola High School*, a Catholic institution founded in 1848, to adhere to rigidly secular teaching guidelines, the provincial government violated the school's freedom of religion as guaranteed by the Québec Charter of Rights. "

The government will appeal the decision.

National roundup

League pleased that Bill C-384 is unsuccessful

The Catholic Civil Rights League today expressed gratitude April 22 that Bill C-384, which would have liberalized euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, did not receive enough support to proceed. The measure was defeated in the House of Commons by a vote of 228 to 59.

The League would like to thank every member of parliament who voted against Bill C-384. We would also like to thank all of our supporters who helped achieve this result through their messages of concern to MPs and in letters and articles in the media.

However, the League cautioned that the subject is likely to continue to be brought forward for legislative action, due to Canadians' concerns about end of life care and lack of knowledge about what is legal now. In the League's view, legalizing euthanasia would lead to diminished respect for life, challenge the religious and conscientious freedom of health care providers and even lead to pressures to make use of the option, especially for the chronically ill and disabled.

What was envisioned by Bill C-384 is not the working out of an individual choice, but rather a deliberate, life-ending act that would require the cooperation of others. This would raise serious challenges for the conscientious freedom of doctors, nurses and other health care providers. A commitment to comfort care and other palliative measures is much more consistent with a life-enhancing ethic than an option for directly and intentionally causing death. This vote in the House of Commons is an affirmation of respect for life and for religious and conscientious freedom.

A multi-party group of MPs spanning the political spectrum has announced the formation of a new, non-partisan Parliamentary group aimed at promoting awareness of glaring deficiencies in Canada's palliative and compassionate care framework, fostering constructive dialogue and substantive research on an array of related subjects, and implementing policies to address this critical deficiency in the nation's approach to long-term health.

The Parliamentary Committee on Palliative and Compassionate Care (PCPCC) is an ad-hoc organization whose membership is open to any legislator who shares the pressing concerns of a growing number of Canadians about present levels of care available to an aging society and people with disabilities. The group's founders include Joe Comartin (Windsor-Tecumseh), Harold Albrecht

(Kitchener-Conestoga), Kelly Block (Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggan), Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest) and Frank Valeriote (Guelph).

League supports Bill seeking to end abortion coercion

The League April 15 expressed support for a private member's bill (PMB) introduced Wednesday by MP Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg-South) that would make it a criminal offence for anyone to coerce a woman to terminate her pregnancy.

'Roxanne's Law' ([Bill C-510](#)) is named in memory of a pregnant Winnipeg woman who was murdered by her partner after she refused to have an abortion. Working as the chair of the multi-party parliamentary pro-life caucus, Mr. Bruinooge, a staunch supporter of the pro-life position, said he has heard of several cases of intimidation of young pregnant women to have an abortion, and hopes making it a crime will curb those instances.

"The League is in favour of legislation that would recognize the sanctity of all human life, from conception to natural death. We support this measure that aims to prevent women from being forced to have abortions against their will," said Joanne McGarry, League executive director.

Numerous Christian groups participate in Saskatchewan marriage reference

Arguments were presented in the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal May 13-14 in the Saskatchewan marriage commissioner reference case. Last July, the Justice Minister of Saskatchewan asked the Court of Appeal for an opinion on potential legislation which would permit marriage commissioners to decline performing same-sex marriages if contrary to their religious beliefs. There are two options being considered, one which would give the right to decline to perform such ceremonies to commissioners who were already serving when the definition of marriage was changed, and another which would give the right to all. Most of the Christian groups intervening, including the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, support the latter option. After hearing arguments from all sides, the court reserved its decision. Three Saskatchewan marriage commissioners have been penalized for declining to perform same sex ceremonies for religious reasons, and ordered in 2008 to pay compensation by a Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal after refusing to marry a gay couple. The tribunal's decision was subsequently upheld by the Court of Queen's Bench last year in a ruling that found Nichols, as a public official, was not permitted to consider his personal religious view in performing a public function.

Media Watch

No response on columnist's remarks

The League has had no response to its complaint to the Quebec Press Council and La Presse newspaper to distance itself from some remarks by one of its columnists, Patrick Lagace, who May 17 expressed the wish that Cardinal Marc Ouellet, archbishop of Quebec and Catholic Primate of Canada, would "die a slow and painful death."

Cardinal Ouellet addressed a pro-life rally May 15. Among other remarks, he lauded the exclusion of abortion from Canada's proposed G-8 initiative on maternal health and lamented the absence of any abortion law in Canada. Later, in response to questions from a reporter, he affirmed Church teaching that life begins at conception and stated that this means abortion would be wrong even in cases of rape. Commented Joanne McGarry, executive director of the CCRL, "The League has been involved in media debates on life issues for 25 years, long enough to know that abortion is an issue on which people disagree, sometimes profoundly. That is why civil debate and dialogue are important. The statement of Patrick Lagace is below any standard of journalistic fairness or respect, and is frankly hateful. If La Presse has any regard for its reputation, it will apologize and distance itself from its columnist's remarks."

While the League is not surprised that the newspaper has made no comment against its columnist, the incident is a disturbing reminder of how strongly some corners of the media react to any suggestion that faith-based positions should be expressed in public debate. A human rights complaint is being considered.

"JC" cartoon protest continues

Comedy Central Network is facing a barrage of protests, including many from the League, over a proposed TV show

featuring Jesus Christ. The network often shares its programming in Canada through The Comedy Network (Civil Rights, April highlights).

Executives at the TV firm behind South Park are working on a new animated project, which sees Christ attempting to live a normal life in New York, desperate to escape the shadow of his "powerful but apathetic father," according to the Hollywood Reporter.

The show, which is currently at the pre-production stage, has caused a storm of criticism. The Coalition Against Religious Bigotry (CARB), is already urging advertisers to boycott the planned series.

Under the title "Comedy Central's Long History of Defaming Christianity," Citizens Against Religious Bigotry says on its website: "Based on Comedy Central's history of mocking Jesus on shows like South Park, we have every reason to believe that the 'JC' show would take attacks against Christians to a new level."

If you have not yet written the network in protest of the series, Comedy Central's CEO, Doug Herzog, can be reached at doug.herzog@comedycentral.com.

Gallery offering challenged

The League has written to the National Gallery of Canada to challenge the misuse of religious imagery in its summer exhibit "Pop Life: Art in a Material World." There will always be much in any modern art exhibit that lacks widespread appeal, but the League's particular concern is the use of the Good Friday INRI script in an installation of a dead horse. Since the show's promotional material includes a warning that some areas of the exhibit are not suitable for children, we have requested a similar alert about offense to religious believers. The Gallery is a publicly-funded institution.

Support the League

We rely completely on your generosity to continue our work. Gifts can be made online (ccrl.ca) or by mail to CCRL, 500 – 120 Eglinton Ave. E., Toronto, ON M4P 1E2., using this convenient form:

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