

## The all American clerical culture team

Eugene Cullen Kennedy | Jun. 3, 2010 Bulletins from the Human Side

Once bestowed on the clergyman who best exemplified the worst of clerical behavior, the Monsignor Moron Award has been retired out of sensitivity to morons.

A single prize also ignored the Thanksgiving Day parade of over-inflated nominees who, were it not for the guy lines of ambition that tie them to chancery offices and to any place mail might come from the Vatican, would be lost in the smoke over Iceland by now.

Here, then, is the All-American Clerical Culture Team. Its members do not really constitute a team because each one exhibits the hallmark of the classic cleric, the autocratic demand to call all the plays and get credit for all the scoring.

Skating onto the ice under the roving spotlights is our first nominee, Bishop Thomas Paprocki, newly appointed to Springfield, Illinois. Paprocki has been previously recognized with the Near Death Experience Award because few, if any, have ever died so to become a bishop.

Bishop Paprocki once changed the seating cards at a Chicago Catholic Lawyers dinner so that Cardinal George would not sit next to the late County Board President, John Stroger, a Catholic who tolerated abortions at the large public Cook County Hospital. Attending to such details is like throwing roses in one's own path to the bishopric.

Paprocki, famous for trying to explain what he meant when he claimed that the devil caused the sex abuse crisis, is a hockey player who allows himself to be called the "Holy Goalie," is said to display his Episcopal coat of arms and motto on his helmet. Springfield, can you drink of this Stanley Cup of a cleric now being passed to you?

Next up is Bishop Thomas Olmstead of Phoenix who may be paired mythologically with the late hanging judge Roy Bean who styled himself "the Law west of the Pecos." Olmstead is a nice man but in his recent excommunication of a hospital nun who, in tragic circumstances, allowed an abortion to proceed to save a young mother's life, he skipped any possible intermediate steps to employ the nuclear option of exiling a saintly woman from the Church and work she loves.

Leaving yourself no alternative is a good way to start a war but it is not a good way to keep peace in what is supposed to be a Church that champions care over condemnation. Olmstead manifested, however, a common Episcopal need: a guarantee that, when the sun goes down, they have not done anything that would displease the Pope.

The Captain of the All-American Clerics is, by acclamation, Frank Dewane, formerly in the soft drink business, but now making a hard sell of fascist Catholicism as if he were the Doge of medieval Venice in Italy rather than just the bishop of Venice in Florida. According to John Hushon, international lawyer and former CEO of a multinational energy company, who earned a theology degree after retiring and became active in church matters,

Dewane has ignored, eliminated, or condemned any activity that he cannot personally control.

He has eliminated parish councils, ruled out women's participating in the liturgy in any way when he presides, assigned spy-like agents to make sure that his orders are carried out by pastors, some of whom he has imported from a religious order with which he has close ties and all of whom must subscribe to his view of Catholicism. Even parish bulletins must be cleared at the chancery. He has banned well-known Catholic speakers as "dissidents," a word that he uses like "snow" to cover everything. Not only has he withdrawn from all inter-faith activities and fired even volunteer church workers suspected of being "liberal." While building a large home in a location he prefers to keep undisclosed he cut the Catholic Charities budget "for financial reasons."

He deserves a place on the team but I wonder if he knows that, behind his back, he has cloned various versions of himself. While the bishop tried to control every nickel that drops into a collection plate, a pastor at a Mass I attended told the people how to game the system so that he could rake off more for himself than the bishop allows. Well, Bishop, that's what being a big-time cleric gets you, followers who know how to use your methods against you. While some take this as a proof that there is a God, the Caesar-like Bishop Dewane should be careful where he goes on the Ides of March.

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