



Has a venerable Catholic institution been compromised by wealth?

(Re: The Wanderer Catholic newspaper)

Thursday, May 06, 2010

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I received my *Wanderer* newspaper in the mail yesterday, as always a week late thanks to the postal service that discriminates against small publications. As usual I gave it a quick scan to see what the main issues are. When I got to the back page the piece that particularly drew my attention was the "retraction and correction" related to recent articles on Tom Monaghan and Ave Maria University and town. I read all the articles and was disappointed that the paper was caving in the face of Monaghan's pressure. The retraction on its face is simply not credible.

Since the very first controversy at Ave Maria over the Monaghan-designed monstrosity of a church, I've followed the events at the school closely. My husband and I were thrilled to hear of a new Catholic college and town and joined the "founders club" early on with regular contributions. However, we withdrew in the light of growing problems over, not only the design of the church, but the draconian actions taken against the Ave Maria Law School in Ann Arbor MI.

We were appalled at the forced move to Florida including the removal of Dr. Charles Rice from the governing board and the suspension of three law professor who sued the president of the law school, Dean Bernard Dobranski, and Tom Monaghan. The professors subsequently won a settlement including full reinstatement and an undisclosed financial award. But a promising institution that had a 100% pass rate for the Michigan Bar Exam in 2004 and was accredited in the shortest time possible, ranked at the bottom in the 2010 U.S. News and World Report review of law schools.

The Wanderer's series of articles by Marielena Montesino de Stuart on the situation in Ave Maria were very disturbing, but subsequent events indicate the criticism of Monaghan and University president, Nicholas Healy, are thoroughly justified. Naming the sports center after billionaire Tom Galisano with his consistent funding of pro-abortion politicians was shocking. Galisano gave a million dollars to the Obama extravaganza democrat convention, consistently supports dozens of NARAL-backed politicians, and most recently promised to support publicly pro-abortion Charlie Crist after he fled the Republican party to run as an

independent. These are the actions of a man who claims he is pro-life?

With regard to the problem of Ave Maria's town charter that allows abortion, what is there to retract? No less an authority than constitutional scholar Charles Rice wrote an article in *The Wanderer* in the February 18th edition titled *The Controversy Behind Monaghan's Ave Maria "Scheme"*. Professor Rice affirmed all the documentation from the previous article and concluded:

A curious question arises from the conclusion that the absolute prohibition of abortion in the first sentence of Section 6.5(V) is unconstitutional and void. If that prohibition is void, all that could possibly be left of Section 6.5(V) is the restriction on promotion, counseling and referrals. But if "promotion" of abortion is not counseling or referral, what is it? Does it include the performance of abortions? Can you promote abortion by performing abortions? The drafters of Section 6.5(V) drew a distinction between performance and promotion of abortion. But how can you perform abortions without promoting abortion? Promotion, unlike counseling and referrals, is a vague term and should not have been used in that context. If the absolute prohibition of abortion is void and if promotion of abortion can include performance of abortions, Mrs. Marielena Montesino de Stuart's criticism has merit.

In any event, Mrs. Montesino de Stuart understated her case. Will Ave Maria Town be required to permit the performance of some abortions? Yes, if, as seems clear, Ave Maria is subject to the Fourteenth Amendment under the criteria of Marsh v. Alabama.

The underlying problem here is that the architects of the Ave Maria scheme undertook to create a town and exempt it from the constitutional restrictions that apply to state and local governments and to private persons assuming public functions by the operation of such a town. The incoherence of that course legally means that it will apparently be up to the abortionists to decide whether some abortions will be performed in Ave Maria Town.

Any claim to the contrary is, in my opinion, a misrepresentation.

Since Dr. Rice wrote this, Ave Maria has stepped into another morass (Is it because they're located in a swamp?) over Monaghan turning over a section of land so that eugenics pioneer Jackson Labs can locate in Ave Maria Town. In view of all these problems with Ave Maria and the obvious accuracy of the articles illustrated by the analysis of a constitutional scholar, exactly what is really going on at *The Wanderer* and why did they print a retraction (with a face-saving refusal to concur on one issue)?

Here's my educated guess. First, everybody knows *The Wanderer* is in financial trouble. It's mentioned in almost every issue. Second, Tom Monaghan has plenty of money to engage in a frivolous lawsuit which the paper can ill afford and he has shown himself perfectly willing in the past to go after those who disagree with him (Remember the professors at the law school in Ann Arbor?). Third, and this pains me to consider, Monaghan can "help" *The Wanderer* with its difficulties. All it takes is throwing a troublesome journalist under the bus and retracting a few facts that are true, but unpleasant for Monaghan.

If my third supposition is true, you will never see another critical item about Tom Monaghan and Ave Maria appear in *The Wanderer's* pages. You may even see full page ads for Ave Maria gracing the back page. And anyone who thinks Monaghan would buy an ad from a critic needs a reality check.

The Wanderer has been described as a "witness to the truth," a well deserved accolade. But if the paper caved to Monaghan over money, that witness is in mortal jeopardy: a

newspaper that has been fearless in its reporting for over 100 years has sold its soul. It's integrity will have been bought by a pragmatist who, while paying lip service to the faith, is willing to compromise Catholic values to get what he wants. Is Ave Maria really about the Blessed Mother and the promotion of the faith or is it the legacy of a man building a shrine to himself? Pray for Tom Monaghan and all those he is willing to injure to reach his goals. The list is growing. Pray especially that this is not the death knell of *The Wanderer*. I love the paper and have myself written articles for it. The mourning will indeed be great if the great witness to the truth becomes one more jockey in Tom Monaghan's stable.

Mary Ann Kreitzer is a founder of the Catholic Media Coalition. She blogs at Les Femmes-The Truth.

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