Tom Monaghan and the art of pointless provocation

In the midst of ceremonies celebrating the latest stage of his Ave Maria dreams in Florida, Tom Monaghan made his own, or repeated without rejecting, the hate-phrase "academic terrorists" to describe those in Michigan who, three or four years ago, resisted his sudden dismantling of a fine Catholic college there. Monaghan added that his Michigan opponents "did everything they could to stop" him (which resistance he took as proof of God's approval of his actions) and opined that his obviously incendiary remarks "dramatized" the recent Florida festivities.

Assuming the truth of those sad days matters anymore, let me say one more time that I did not see faculty and staff of Ave Maria College in Michigan doing "everything they could" to stop Ave Maria in Florida: instead, I saw them doing what little they could within the law and their meager resources to save Ave Maria College in Michigan. Such a simple distinction, and so many can't or won't see it. Anyway, it's moot now. The Michigan people lost.

Perhaps businessmen don't get to be billionaires thinking this way, but it seems to me that in politics, sports, and so on, victors take one of two stances toward those they defeat: either they say something vaguely complementary about their opponents (here, something as simple as "Well, they thought they were doing the right thing, and I can respect that, but they were wrong"), or at the very least say nothing at all.

Not Tom Monaghan. Instead, he feels free to label those upright men and women as
"terrorists", a particularly vile thing to say or even to repeat today. But beyond being mean, his remarks strike me as pointless. What *good* did he think it would to do?

As many know, I stood up for the Michigan faculty and staff who opposed the abrupt destruction of Ave Maria College and, like others before me and others after, I was duly shown the door by the Ave Maria empire. Maybe I should have seen that as evidence of God's approval of my actions, but it's hard to be poetic when one suddenly has to find a new way to meet the mortgage in the Michigan economy.

In any case, when, not long after, the college's defenders lost their court case, I withdrew from the fray. I removed my posted exchanges with Nick Healy and Fr. Fessio and stopped writing to the Ave Maria boards. In the years since, I've turned down various requests for media interviews and have not commented on the latest Ave Maria debacles, in particular, the on-going implosion of the Ave Maria School of Law.

Tom Monaghan, in contrast, seems to think that his *paterfamilias* style of philanthropy permits him to show continual scorn for the vanquished, those who dared to question his judgment about various projects, projects to which they, often as much and sometimes *more* than he, contributed, but in which he allowed them little or no voice.

In his latest round of self-congratulatory revels, Monaghan justifies his recent gloating thus: "It makes the moment bigger when people know what you've been through to get here." Gee, that's *just* what Tom Monaghan needs, another bigger moment. Really, it's beyond parody.

Still, may I suggest that what Tom Monaghan needs is not another "bigger moment", but rather a little one: one wherein, instead of recalling what *he* went through to get where he is, he tries to imagine what he has *put* other people through getting himself there.

*Posted By Dr. Edward Peters At This Permanent Link* 📈

**About The Author**

**Edward N. Peters, JD, JCD**
This blog represents my own opinions and I am solely responsible for its content. I believe that the opinions expressed here are consistent with c. 212 § 3, but I submit all to the ultimate judgment of the Catholic Church. The letter "c." stands for "canon" of the Code of Canon Law (CIC). All translations of the 1983 Code are from the 1999 CLSA revision.

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