

THE NEW KNOW-NOTHINGS: CATHOLICS NEED NOT APPLY

So, has it come to this...really? I read a story that made my blood boil, having to do with the confirmation hearings of a candidate for a spot on the federal judiciary. **Brian C. Buescher** is an attorney from Omaha, Nebraska who was nominated by President Trump to sit on the United States District Court for the District of Nebraska. Because it is a federal judgeship, it requires Senate Confirmation. Mind you, in years past, these votes have typically been nearly unanimous, provided that the individual is judicially qualified. In the course of his questioning, it became apparent to two U.S. senators that they were dealing with an extremist who ought to be “outed” for his dangerous views. Their evidence— well, it was overwhelming. You see, Mr. Buescher belongs to an extremist organization— the **Knights of Columbus**. This is no misprint. His membership in the fraternal organization known for its Tootsie roll sales benefitting the handicapped and Youth free throw contests in countless church gymnasiums is apparently quite dangerous.

You see, its support for many Catholic causes has initiatives grave concern for two U.S. Senators. Why? United States Senators **Mazie Hirono** (D-HI) and **Kamala Harris** (D-CA) raised the specific issue of the Catholic fraternal order’s support of Church teaching in the area of marriage and the sanctity of life. Senator Hirono had the gall—that’s right, the unbridled gall— to inquire whether the judge would resign his membership in the organization if confirmed in order “to avoid any appearance of bias.” Hirono’s written question noted: “The Knights of Columbus has taken a number of extreme positions.” The KC’s, an extremist organization? Seriously? Visit www.judiciary.senate.gov and click the drop-down menu under Judicial Nominations to read the questions for yourself. Brace yourself!

For her part, Senator Harris described the Knights of Columbus as “an all-male society comprised primarily of Catholic men.” Wow— where to begin with that one? Considering the fact that the KC’s are a Catholic men’s organization, she was spot on! Harris herself was inducted into Links, Inc. Applying the same logic, she is a member of “an all-female society, composed primarily of women of color.” She asked Mr. Buescher “Were you aware that the Knights of Columbus opposed a woman’s right to choose when you joined the organization?” He joined when he was 18 years old. This is the same Senator Harris who investigated the **Center for Medical Progress** after it produced an undercover video **exposing Planned Parenthood** officials dining over salad and wine in chic restaurants, while discussing the “donation” (i.e. sale) of fetal tissue acquired through abortion, a serious breach of law and ethics. Despite accepting campaign donations from Planned Parenthood, Sen. Harris targeted the videographers. No conflict of interest there!

Make no mistake— anti-Catholicism is making a comeback and doing so big time! It is also unquestionably the case that part of the reason is undoubtedly self-inflicted. The Church has made itself a giant target through the horrific moral failures of clerics and those in charge of oversight. But that does not excuse the **rampant anti-Catholicism** that cloaks itself under the veneer of the senate Judiciary Committee’s duty to advise and consent. So let’s be clear— two U.S. Senators are openly questioning whether being a member of a fraternal Catholic lay organization that upholds Church teaching disqualifies one from being a Federal Judge. The bottom line is abundantly clear — faithful Catholics need not apply!

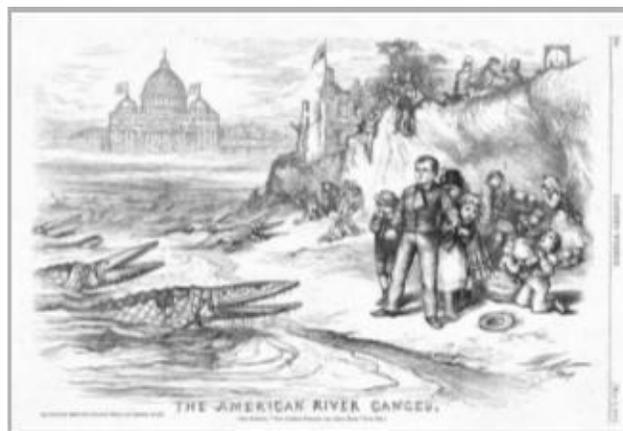
On April 6, 1844, a mob calling themselves “Native Americans” (prior to that being a reference to indigenous peoples) marched towards a Catholic church in Brooklyn, with the intention of burning it down. Parishioners were ready to defend it, but thankfully the mayor called out the military to intervene, avoiding a showdown. Posters in Boston were particularly harsh, as so many of the immigrants were fleeing Ireland following the potato famine, arriving penniless and hungry. One commonly seen poster read: “All Catholics and all persons who favor the Catholic Church are ... vile imposters, liars, villains, and cowardly cutthroats.” The movement was dubbed “Know Nothing” presumably because as a secret society, those who worked behind the scenes to **rid the country of Catholic influence** did so surreptitiously. If asked, they were coached to reply that they “knew nothing” about any such society. At its height, the “American Party” (its original name) counted 100 congressmen, eight governors and control of six state legislators. They were as anti-immigrant as one can imagine and had their own view of what America should look like— most definitely not like the folks from County Kerry or Donegal! (See cartoon in the sidebar.)

On Epiphany Sunday, a feast highlighting the **universality** of the Gospel, we would do well to **clothe our attitudes** towards others in **charity**, even those who despise us. Kudos to the Knights of Columbus, whose response was much more measured than mine! KC Council #11302 in Washington D.C. wrote the senators: “We wish to formally invite you all to join us for any social or charitable event. In fact, this February we are doing the Polar Plunge to raise funds for DC Special Olympics.” They also noted that in recent months their local council had “worked with local parishes ... to raise funds and give away over \$4,000 worth of coats to neighborhood children, collect soda and beer can tabs to donate to the Lt. Joseph P. Kennedy Institute which helps the developmentally disabled, and collect diapers and other supplies for new mothers in need.” Pretty extreme, huh? Clearly, the senators’ target is not the Knights of Columbus *per se*, it is the Catholic Church and her doctrinal teachings. They are merely too faint-hearted to admit what everyone can see is in their hearts.

- Conservatively speaking, approximately **5,300 people attended** one of our Christmas Masses at the Cathedral. We are blessed with many visitors, including many of other faiths. I must have bestowed nearly 100 blessings in my Communion line alone at the Christmas Vigil Mass! I am heartened by the presence of all on this most special day and by your most generous support of our parish.
- Christmas was a little more joyful in Bethlehem this year, following a **painstaking renovation** of the Church of the Nativity, dating to **Constantine** in 330 A.D. Most of what is visible today dates from the 6th century basilica built by Emperor Justinian. **Ancient mosaics** and columns have been restored to their original glory for the first time in 600 years in a project that began five years ago.
- Under a **19th-century agreement** called the Status Quo authored by the Ottoman sultans no less, Catholics, Greek Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox each has its own area and responsibilities at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The famous entrance, a four-foot high “door of humility” was not designed so pilgrims would bow down upon entering, but so that looters on horseback could not enter the Church and trot off with the spoils!
- The **Epiphany House Blessing** is a timeless Catholic custom. Kits are available for this purpose, while supplies last. The traditional “twelfth day” of Christmas nicely falls on a Sunday this year.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel
Rector



Thomas Nast "The American River Ganges" (1871)
Nast, a purveyor of anti-Catholic cartoons, often pictured Catholics with Irish facial features. In this cartoon, an army of bishops, miters transformed into crocodile mouths, crawls onto shore, seeking to destroy the public school system. A public school may be seen in the background on the right.