

OPEN PULPIT NIGHT AT ST. MIKE'S

BY DAN NIELSEN

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *I've performed at many open comedy mics and enjoyed countless Friday fish fries in church basements. It seemed a good idea to combine the two. As a devout ex-Catholic I find it helpful to find gentle humor in the dangerous nonsense that organized religion propagates. In 1965 our high school drama department staged a—rare at that time—production of Samuel Becket's Endgame. It changed my life. Theater of the Absurd led to Pinter, Albee, Shepard, Mamet and their ilk and provided me with a template for my own work. Open Pulpit Night at St. Mike's was written specifically for the Ten-Minute or Fewer Comedy Play Festival: Snowdance. They'd used my work before, but not this time. Happy ending, it found a wonderful home at Fleas on the Dog.*

Open Pulpit Night at St. Mike's

a ten-minute or fewer comedy

Characters:

FATHER SHECKY: in High Mass vestments

SISTER MARY CHORTLE: nun, neatly habited

KITCHEN LADIES: aprons and hairnets

Sound effects of laughter and/or applause

Church basement all-purpose room. Bulletin board on back wall announcing a Bake Sale with a plethora of !!!!!!!! Religious posters with trite quotations fashioned by 3rd-graders. A pulpit center stage. SISTER MARY CHORTLE at the pulpit. Sound of applause.

CHORTLE

Let's keep it going for all the wonderful priests we've had up here so far.

(joins in the applause. signals for it to stop. it stops.)

Okay! One quick announcement. Regarding the recent bathroom controversy, all lavatories will remain locked during school hours. Students are encouraged to go before they leave the house in the morning, and hold it, if at all possible, until school is dismissed, and they are back home.

Thanks in advance for your cooperation. Okay! Next up we have *(refers to signup sheet)* ...

FATHER SHECKY! *(reads from sheet)* FATHER SHECKY is between parishes at the moment and doing freelance grief counseling. So, if any of you have relatives, or close friends recently deceased, or about to die, and you feel bad about it, contact FATHER SHECKY. Okay!

FATHER SHECKY!!!

SHECKY

(takes microphone from CHORTLE)

Hello, St. Mikes! *(cheers and applause)* And wasn't that a wonderful fish fry! *(cheers and applause)* You know, Jesus fed the multitudes with five loaves and two fishes, but the kitchen ladies here at St. Mike's also put out an impressive spread, with hushpuppies, coleslaw, and five-dollar pitchers of Miller Genuine Draft! Let's hear it for the kitchen ladies! *(cheers and*

applause. two KITCHEN LADIES in aprons and hairnets, peek through a doorway and wave. when all is quiet, SHECKY begins his set)

The best thing about being God is you get to have your pronouns capitalized. *(laugh)* God could have created everything much faster, but then a week wouldn't have enough days. *(laugh)* One question I'm often asked is whether God invented torture before or after he created Hell. *(laugh)* God hates telescopes. Every time we develop a more powerful one, He has to make more space. *(laugh)* I asked God why children get cancer. He said it's either genetic or environmental. *(laugh)* When a child dies and God isn't sure if it was good or bad, He asks Santa. *(big laugh)* Adam, alone with God, complained of being alone. Later, he tried to apologize, but it was too late! *(laughter and applause)* When God told Eve that she had sinned, Eve said, "Does that mean I can put some clothes on?" *(huge extended laughter and applause)* Thank you! You are a wonderful audience! *(applause)* Where was I? Right. I was talking about God. God is eternal, and has existed forever, which is a bummer because we don't get a day off for his birthday. *(laugh)* When they asked Jesus where babies come from, he said, "An angel visits your mom." *(laugh)* People often ask me, "Father Mike, what kind of frozen pizza would Jesus eat?" Supreme Self-Rising, of course! *(laughter and applause)* Jesus and Mary Magdalene were in bed together. Jesus said, "Do you want to get stoned?" Mary Magdalene said, "You're right. We'd better not do this." *(big laugh)* All kidding aside, I bet God is surprised and a little annoyed that more people don't smoke weed. *(applause)* Jesus, walking his dog one morning, was confronted by a mob of lepers. The dog barked and pulled at its leash. Jesus said, "Heel!" and the lepers were miraculously cured, and Jesus sayeth unto them, "I was talking to my dog." *(laughter and applause)* If I may get serious for a moment, the only effective treatment for leprosy is a combination of dapson, rifampicin, and clofazimine. *(applause. a light appears on the back*

wall. SHECKY acknowledges it with a nod. he's nearly out of time) If you're bad at being a Satanist, do you go to heaven? *(laugh)* If you don't believe in God, do you go to hell? Yes! Unless you don't believe in hell! *(laughter and applause. the light brightens and pulsates)* Well, that's my time! Thank you all so much! *(applause. standing ovation)* Please, please sit down. You are too kind. *(leans forward. someone is telling him something. the pulsating light continues)* The KITCHEN LADIES would like to say a few words. *(two kitchen ladies enter. SHECKY hands the microphone to KITCHEN LADY 1.*

KITCHEN LADY 1.

There's plenty of everything left. Take-out dinners are seven dollars with double coleslaw. And until the half barrel is empty, Miller Genuine Draft pitchers are three dollars instead of five. Also, we have coffee and pie.

KITCHEN LADY 2.

(slowly, as the pulsating light fades to black) Cherry ... apple ... banana crème ... *(black)* but no pecan ... the pecan went fast ... *(a whisper)* as usual.

(lights up. KITCHEN LADIES bow. SISTER MARY CHORTLE enters stage right. bows.

FATHER SHECKY *enters stage left eating pie and drinking beer.*

THE END

BIO: *Dan Nielsen is a part-time standup comic. His least favorite flavor of jelly is petroleum. Recent FLASH in: Connotation Press, Jellyfish Review, (mic)ro(mac), Necessary Fiction, The Cabinet of Heed, and Cheap Pop. Dan has a website: Preponderous. You can follow him*

[@DanNielsenFIVES](#). He and [Georgia Bellas](#) are the post-minimalist art/folk band [Sugar Whiskey](#).